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Disertační práce

**The Transformative Power of Movement:  
A Conversation between Marcel Mauss and  
Maurice Merleau-Ponty and its Influence on  
Contemporary Theology**

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## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto disertační práci s názvem

### **The Transformative Power of Movement: A Conversation between Marcel Mauss and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and its Influence on Contemporary Theology**

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## **Abstract**

The dissertation explores the transformative power of human movement and seeks to find a complex approach to movement that resists the instrumental treatment of movement. It offers an overview of and engages with the ideas of Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), the main representatives of this dialogue, who paved the way for interdisciplinary collaboration in movement research; it examines the insights of Mauss's disciples Marcel Jousse (1886–1961), André Leroi-Gourhan (1911–1986) and Pierre Bourdieu (1920–2002), who contributed to movement research by revealing new aspects of the movement; and analyzes the ideas of Louis-Marie Chauvet (1942) and Michel de Certeau (1925–1986), who applied the ideas about movement to Christian life and influenced contemporary theology. The dissertation discusses the role of movement in the life of the human self and community, examines the proximity of the ecclesiastical and the artistic spheres in their relationship to transformation through movement, and reveals the transformative aspect of movement and its significance for the survival of the human species. The transformative power of movement has been found to be closely linked to the symbolic treatment of movement, indicating the boundary between the individual and society, between real and imaginary life.

## **Keywords**

Marcel Mauss; Maurice Merleau-Ponty; Marcel Jousse; André Leroi-Gourhan; Pierre Bourdieu; Louis-Marie Chauvet; Michel de Certeau; movement; body; transformative power.

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## **Introduction**

Movement is a fundamental feature of being a living being. It is the trait that connects us humans to all animal life and to the cosmos. There are no things in the world that are not touched by movement. There are no experiences that are not linked to movement. Inside or outside – thanks to the moving body – the movements experienced are given locality and causality.

Movement cannot be the object of study because of its infinite variety. The aim of researching movement must therefore be limited to finding a way of talking about movement that reflects as many complex factors as possible, and to investigate those aspects of movement that remain the least touched upon in contemporary movement studies. Assuming that these two goals are interrelated, the question arises as to what kind of approach to movement should be used in order to bring a fresh perspective to aspects of movement that have been little explored, such as the collectivity, the community building, and the transformative aspects.<sup>1</sup> This dissertation therefore aims at both: to find an approach that allows to think and talk about movement without losing sight of its complex nature, and to explore the transformative power of movement, which is in turn closely linked to the other little-studied aspects of movement, that is to say, the collective and the community-building aspects.

Movement studies beyond human physiology and kinesiology are mainly related to the fields of philosophy, sociology, ethnology, anthropology, and cultural studies.<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that different fields pursue different objectives and apply different methods, there is still a lack of a complex approach to the movement. Movement research tends to be associated with two tendencies in the treatment of human activity: the first, an instrumentalist approach to practice

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<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth A. Behnke, “Dance,” in *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology* Vol. 18., ed. Lester Embree, et al., (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), 132; Selma Jeanne Cohen, “Present Problems of Dance Aesthetics,” *The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 1.1 (1983): 18; Deidre Sklar, “Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance,” in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, ed. Ann Cooper Albright and Anne Dils (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 30.

<sup>2</sup> Among the most prominent in these fields, I will mention the philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (*The Phenomenology of Dance, The Primacy of Movement* and other books); sociologist Helen Thomas (*The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory, Dance, Modernity, and Culture: Explorations in the Sociology of Dance* and other books); choreographer and scholar Susan Leigh Foster (*Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance, Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* and other books). The most influential ethnological and anthropological studies of dance are listed here: Adrienne L. Kaeppler, “Dance Ethnology and the Anthropology of Dance,” *Dance Research Journal* 32, 1 (2000): 116–25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478285> [accessed 09 April 2023].

which is the dominant anthropological conception of action;<sup>3</sup> and the other, phenomenological in nature, which often tends to abstract movement from its tasks in the sociocultural world.<sup>4</sup> The aim of my research is to provide an approach to movement that resists these two reductions, while at the same time maintaining a view of the various aspects of a complex phenomenon.

Accordingly, in this study the terms ‘movement’ and ‘action’ will be used interchangeably, neither reductively nor in opposition. I will use the first term (‘movement’) to denote physical movement in space in a more general sense, and the second to refer to physical movement that is performed to achieve a goal.<sup>5</sup> However, it is important to note that none of the authors presented in this study believed that movement could be studied in isolation from its social and cultural context.

The aims and objectives of the research were inspired by my practical and theoretical involvement in movement study. The need to explore the transformative aspect of movement is related to my role as leader of a movement and dance studio operating in the area which forms the mission field of a religious community. In my practical work I saw how people were changing, regaining the capacity to feel, regaining strength and enthusiasm to live. The reason seemed to be participation in the movement practice and not the uniqueness of the method. What is so transformative about the movement itself, the practice of movement? Where is the potentially life-changing power of movement located? The question of the role of faith, or the presence of a community of faith in the vicinity, has always been there.

On the other hand, my motivation for seeking an approach to movement practice without limiting it to the subjective experience is related to dance art practice and reflection. As a dance researcher and practitioner, I was looking for a way to explore dance without reducing it to a spectacle or introspective experience. I was not fully satisfied with the phenomenological and other approaches to the study of the body and movement, most of which are based on the philosophy of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). Despite the philosopher’s insights being valuable in many respects, the impression has been that his insights about movement of the body have been built on a foundation that was obvious to him, and that was unknown or forgotten by later adopters of his ideas. The themes of

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<sup>3</sup> Knut Christian Myhre, “The Anthropological Concept of Action and its Problems: A ‘New’ Approach Based on Marcel Mauss and Aristotle,” *Journal of the Anthropological Society Oxford* 29.2 (1998): 128.

<sup>4</sup> Such studies of movement for theoretical purposes require the separation of movement from action and behavior. For example, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Morality* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 195, 202.

<sup>5</sup> The generic term ‘physical activity’ will also be used. The term ‘behavior’ (used by Mauss and Merleau-Ponty, albeit for different purposes) will sometimes be used, which can be understood as action in plural. The term ‘gesture’, which will emerge after the discussion of Jousse’s anthropology of gesture, will signify the relational character of a movement, indicating its mimetic origin from its relation to movements in the cosmos.

awareness of bodily movement that dominate the application of Merleau-Ponty's ideas to the study of movement practices do not encompass what dance is – a spatial phenomenon that is temporally situated, deeply rooted in a specific cultural tradition, and that has a multiplicity of social purposes and influences. What was needed was a different approach to movement, or at least a clarification of who was the forgotten predecessor of Merleau-Ponty who provided the foundation on which the philosopher could develop his very original insights.

While researching aesthetic traditions that would be conducive to the study of dance as a very complex social and cultural phenomenon (the most important of which is the Indian cultural tradition, which dance embodies), I came across the works of the French anthropologist and sociologist Marcel Mauss (1872–1950). According to French literature scholar Carrie Noland, it was Mauss who proposed a pioneering understanding of movement that was neither narrowly aesthetic nor instrumental. He was interested in how the physiological body becomes social, in the sense of tribe and class, through movements.<sup>6</sup> Mauss's concept of techniques of the body, which refers to socio-cultural practical knowing about the use of one's body, and his insights into this phenomenon eventually proved useful not only for the study of dance, but also for the study of unexplored aspects of movement, such as the transformational aspect.

British sociologist Nick Crossley<sup>7</sup> suggests using both authors, Mauss and Merleau-Ponty to avoid abstractness and such theorization of 'embodiment', which ends with the body's focus on itself and leads to dysfunction and disability to orient and act.<sup>8</sup> Investigating the human ability to orientate and act, to change living conditions for the better, is the goal of my practice-motivated research as the manager of a movement and dance studio located on the threshold of a church.

Thus, in pursuit of the first goal of my dissertation, related to the discovery of access to the complexity of movement, I will show Mauss's approach as essential for understanding of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body and as one of the most influential origins of all discourses of embodiment. Once Mauss's contribution is explored and understood, I will move to the next goal, employing the approaches of Mauss and his disciples, as well as Merleau-Ponty, in opening up the unexplored aspects of movement. This will allow looking at movement as a totality of physical, mental, and social aspects; to relate subjective embodied

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<sup>6</sup> Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 19.

<sup>7</sup> The sociologist points to a similar theoretical problem (which I encountered in dance research) in sociology. Specifically, it is bringing the philosophical issue of body-mind dualism into a realm that has never had a problem with it.

<sup>8</sup> Nick Crossley, "Researching Embodiment by Way of Body Techniques," *The Sociological Review* 55.1 supplement (2007): 80–94.

experience to the objective social situation; to investigate specific bodily techniques and practices as forms of practical intelligence; to identify the possibilities of modulation and transformation of specific actions or practices through movement and their interaction with social pressure; and to demonstrate the relevance of the actor in contemporary society.

The need to explore the relationship of faith to movement practices intersects with my aim to the investigation of the transformative aspect of movement. This is framed by the main research question about the influence of Mauss (and his disciples) and Merleau-Ponty on contemporary theology. I will work with two significant figures: a French sacramental theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet (1942) and French cultural theorist, historian, and theologian Michel de Certeau (1925–1986). Both, as interested in the themes of the body and movement and influenced by Mauss and Merleau-Ponty, were chosen as representatives of the movement-oriented current of French thinkers in contemporary theology. Here I will look to answer the questions, what ideas about the movement did they adopt and how did they apply them to the context of the Christian faith? Finally, this dissertation intends to address a number of questions that stem from a desire to put into practice what has been researched: what are the characteristics of a theological reflection that is attentive to movement, and what kind of changes in religious practice would it encourage? In this dissertation, when I refer to church life or the life of Christian communities, I will be referring to the communal practices and phenomena common to all the traditional branches of Christianity.

My dissertation is therefore likely to contribute to knowledge about movement by providing a complex theoretical approach that incorporates both objective and subjective factors, and will suggest ways to maintain awareness of movement and its multiplicity in personal experience and community practices. This will not only address the current lack of research in the field of movement and provide practical knowledge to the institutions that organize human movement in one way or another, but will also help individuals to effectively navigate and creatively act in a contemporary environment that is becoming more and more rationally homogeneous and inhospitable to the diversity of human experience. In addition, the research will provide the guide for the future development of a theological thinking that is attentive to movement.

### *Methodology, Sources and Structure*

The dissertation is an interdisciplinary research, mainly combining three scientific fields: anthropology (both philosophical and theological), philosophy, and theology. An

interdisciplinary approach is needed to reveal the unexplored area to which the research is addressed – the transformative power of movement. This is linked to the need for a holistic approach to movement that avoids reductive tendencies (an instrumental approach to practice and the abstraction of movement from its tasks in the socio-cultural world), for which interdisciplinarity is essential. The insights of humanities authors on the topic of movement will serve as a source for the theological research, which seeks to reduce the shortfall somewhat in theological reflections attentive to movement,<sup>9</sup> as well as to apply the findings of the interdisciplinary research to the contemporary life of the church.

The research will apply these scientific methods:

1. The literature review as a method will facilitate following the current of French thinkers of the late 19th and 20th centuries, who were particularly attentive to movement in their writings.
2. The method of philosophical genealogy will help to understand the intellectual influences and highlight the most original insights into movement of each author under consideration in their light.
3. The analysis of concepts as a method will help to penetrate the aspects of movement that each of the authors either showed anew or interpreted in an original way.
4. A comparative method will allow to juxtapose the insights of authors from different humanities (philosophy, anthropology, sociology) on the topic of movement and examine how their complementary aspects contribute to discovering the transformative power of movement.
5. Although the research does not involve a qualitative phenomenological study, a descriptive phenomenological approach will be used because, starting with Mauss, almost all the authors analyzed in this research have emphasized the importance of focusing on the interoceptive, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic<sup>10</sup> experience and have applied descriptive phenomenological method in their research.
6. A combined methodology will be useful in this movement study. The objective outcomes about human behaviour will be combined with the subjective movement

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<sup>9</sup> A focus on movement was not a distinctive feature of Christianity, if one were to look beyond metaphorical reflections on movement.

<sup>10</sup> Interoception refers to the internal bodily sensation – the perception of internal elements of the body; proprioception – the perception of moving the body in terms of bodily sense of position and orientation; kinesthesia – the sensation of movement; exteroception – the perception of external environmental factors. Interoceptive and exteroceptive processes lead to spatial awareness.

experience of the authors and my own in order to understand how objective, meaning-making structures operate and become embedded, and most importantly, what are the possibilities and reasons for their transformation.

7. The hermeneutic phenomenological method will also be used as a tool to investigate the meaning structures of movement experience.
8. I will use the analysis of insights of humanities authors on the topic of movement as a source for the theological research. Using the hermeneutic method, I will look for analogies of the philosophy of movement in the works of two theologians. I will also use a hermeneutical method, making original interpretations of researched facts to uncover unexplored connections and phenomena.
9. After summarizing all the philosophical and theological insights about movement, an applied methodology will be used while looking for how they relate to the contemporary ecclesial life. In other words, it will allow the results obtained by other research methods to be applied to the practical life of the church and to show their importance not only for the vitality of faith communities, but also for ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

The order of the scientific methods (1–7) reflects the way Chapters 1 and 3 are structured, and how parts of other chapters are organized (2.1; 2.2; 2.3; 4.1; 4.2.). Biographical data is followed by a discussion of intellectual influences, then an analysis of the approach to movement, taking into account the original or adapted concepts used by each author, comparing the authors’ approaches, and drawing conclusions about the most original ideas of each author. This enables a clear presentation of how they fit into a complex view of movement, and to open up the transformative aspect of movement (by exploring the meaning structures of movement experience, objective movement data is combined with the authors’ and my own subjective movement experience). The hermeneutic method and the applied methodology (points 8–9 above) are related to the last part of the dissertation (4.3.), in which I summarize the most important thoughts of each author on movement and its transformative power, and apply them to the ecclesial context.

The dissertation will cover a large body of literature related to movement research,<sup>11</sup> the most important of which will be Mauss’s “Techniques of the body” and *The Gift*; Merleau-

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<sup>11</sup> See bibliography.

Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Structure of Behavior*; Jousse's *Anthropology of Gesture*; Leroi-Gourhan's *Gesture and Speech*; Bourdieu's *The Logic of Practice*; de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*; and Chauvet's *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*.

The aim of providing detailed biographical data is to allow seeing the authors' connections, especially the influence of Mauss, and to better understand the origins of their ideas. Particular focus is given to the biography of Mauss to show his pioneering role in the complex study of movement. This is also important in terms of the inseparability of Mauss's ideas and the facts of his life – a point stressed by Mauss scholars.<sup>12</sup>

The dissertation is divided into four main chapters. Each of them will explore different authors' approaches to movement and will relate to different scientific fields. The first (Chapter 1) will be devoted to an in-depth examination of Mauss's anthropological conception of movement, for a better understanding of which biographical factors and the multitude of intellectual influences will also be discussed. The second chapter (Chapter 2) will be devoted to the research on movement undertaken by Mauss's disciples and followers, anthropologists, and sociologists. I will investigate the direction in which the research of movement continued, and what Marcel Jousse, André Leroi-Gourhan, and Pierre Bourdieu contribute that offers new insights into the transformative aspect of movement. The analysis of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical insights to experience of movement will be the subject of Chapter 3. The possible influence of Mauss on them will be examined. This will allow for a clearer sense of what new contributions the philosopher makes to the study of movement and what implications this may have for the research of the transformative power of movement. In addition to the analysis of the insights of the theologians Chauvet and de Certeau, influenced by Mauss (and his disciples) and Merleau-Ponty, on the body and movement, the fourth chapter (Chapter 4) will be devoted to the search as to how a movement-attentive theological reflection relates to the ecclesial life. It will look at the changes in thinking and practice that this entails.

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<sup>12</sup> Marcel Fournier, "Marcel Mauss, l'ethnologie et la politique: le don," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 19.1-2 (1995): 57-69; Keith Hart, "Marcel Mauss's Economic Vision, 1920–1925: Anthropology, Politics, Journalism," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 14.1 (2014): 34-44; David Graeber, "Marcel Mauss Revisited," in *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value*, by David Graeber (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 157; Arpad Szokolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, "Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving or Revisiting Foundations," in *From Anthropology to Social Theory*, by Arpad Szokolczai and Bjørn Thomassen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Grégoire Mallard, "The Gift Revisited: Marcel Mauss on War, Debt, and the Politics of Reparations," *Sociological Theory* 29.4 (2011): 225-247.



It is necessary to acknowledge from the start the limitations of the research. First of all, there are many more French thinkers who have been interested in movement in one aspect or another than I intend to discuss in this dissertation. For example, I leave aside all philosophy focused on the movement as process, French representatives of which are Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze. Those analyzed in this work have been selected as being able to contribute to the issues raised; however, the contribution of other authors remains possible. Also, even with regard to the selected authors, it is impossible to discuss all their movement-related ideas in this study, so they will be modelled according to the raised problematic questions, which in turn will be directed towards the goals of the dissertation. The insights that may be relevant to movement-attentive theological reflection derive exclusively from the insights of the authors analyzed and aim above all at an anthropologically grounded approach to faith. While limiting itself to providing theoretical tools and suggestions as to what needs to be taken into account in the organization of the ecclesial life, the study does not undertake an investigation or evaluation of specific religious practices.

## **Chapter 1. Marcel Mauss's Approach to Movement**

The first chapter deals with the approach to movement offered by the representative of the French school of Sociology Marcel Mauss (1872–1950). After a detailed elaboration of his bibliography (1.1.), where Mauss's scientific activity and participation in the socialist movement are inseparable from the formation of his attitude towards movement, the intellectual influences that may have contributed to the formation of the theoretical foundations of Mauss's approach are discussed (1.2.). Section 1.3 then presents his conception of movement, detailing the three phases of Mauss's research: the first related to the themes of social action, which highlights the creative dynamics of individual and collective action; the second related to techniques of the body, which presents the inextricability of physical, psychological, and social facts in action; and the gift relations, which highlights the qualitative (in a moral sense) aspect of movement. Section 1.4. is devoted to the phenomenon of dance, emphasizing Mauss's importance for the development of ethnographic dance research, While the final section (1.5.) concentrates on the transformative aspect of movement in Mauss's work.

### **1.2. About Marcel Mauss**

#### *1.1.1. Towards the secret of paradoxical influence*

Researchers discuss Marcel Mauss's legacy in various ways. Even if some regret that Mauss's intellectual potential did not have the opportunity to fully unfold,<sup>13</sup> his paradoxical influence is nevertheless striking. Thus, the aura of mystery surrounds this personality. For example, Mauss's biographer Marcel Fournier wonders about the "Mauss mystery": that is, "how Mauss – the tiny Jew of Épinal, Mauss – the Philosophy professor who didn't study at the École Normale,<sup>14</sup> Mauss – the nephew always in the shade of his uncle, Émile Durkheim, Mauss – the intellectual and the militant, became the 'father of modern anthropology,' contributing in a distinct way to the development of the human sciences."<sup>15</sup> Mauss's

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<sup>13</sup> Wendy James, "'One of Us': Marcel Mauss and 'English' Anthropology," in *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute*, ed. Wendy James and N. J. Allen (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> Mauss received an excellent classical secondary education at the Épinal *lycée*, but instead of going to the elite École Normale Supérieure (one of elite institutions of higher education), in 1890 he joined his uncle Émile in Bordeaux. At the Université de Bordeaux he enrolled at the faculty of letters to earn his bachelor's degree in philosophy. He studied philosophy (the training included psychology and sociology) under Durkheim, Alfred Espinas and Octave Hamelin (all of them had a profound intellectual influence on Mauss), also he took law courses. Marcel Fournier, *Marcel Mauss: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 17, 20-21, 23-25.

<sup>15</sup> Marcel Fournier, "Para reescrever a biografia de Marcel Mauss," *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 18.52 (2003): 8.

disproportionate significance relative to the scope of his work can be expressed in the words of Maurice Leenhardt: “Few books, articles dispersed everywhere, an enormous influence.”<sup>16</sup>

This first part of the chapter looks at Mauss’s life, asking how the scientist managed to become the maestro of a new kind of conceptual thinking, which is abstract, but, to use Mauss’s phrase, “applied to material which is concrete and full of movement.”<sup>17</sup> Since Fournier has written a very comprehensive biography of Marcel Mauss,<sup>18</sup> I will only mention here the biographical facts that are connected with the formation of Mauss’s approach to movement.

### 1.1.2. *Life before the war*

#### 1.1.2.2. *Mauss’s youth*

Marcel Israël Mauss was born in the town of Épinal in 1872 to a merchant family.<sup>19</sup> Although Mauss was never involved with the family business, he participated in another fruitful partnership based on family relationships; namely, in science. Émile Durkheim (born 1858) was the uncle of Marcel Mauss, friend, and teacher, and later a comrade, colleague, and collaborator.

After earning his *licence* in letters at Université de Bordeaux, Mauss went to Paris to study for his *agrégation* in philosophy.<sup>20</sup> Mauss found himself in a very lively intellectual context where the literary avant-garde was linked to the political avant-garde.<sup>21</sup> The new role of intellectuals in contributing to policy through intellectual action was being emphasized. Mauss represented the Groupe des Étudiants Collectivistes at various congresses of the socialist and cooperative movement.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Claudine Haroche, Wendy James, and N. J. Allen, “Form, Movement, and Posture in Mauss: Themes for Today’s Anthropology,” in *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute* (1998), 223.

<sup>18</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*.

<sup>19</sup> Both parents—Rosine Durkheim and Gerson Mauss—came from merchant families as well. After their wedding, they took over the Mauss family business, whose company name became Mauss-Durkheim handmade embroidery (Fabrique de Broderie à Main, Mauss-Durkheim). Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> While attending lectures in Sorbonne in the preparation for the exams, he met several friends: Edgar Milhaud, Abel Rey, and Paul Fauconnet. The teachers Mauss and Fauconnet shared were Émile Boutroux, Gabriel Séailles, and Victor Brochard together with other professors of philosophy at the faculty of letters in Paris. They also attended lectures by Alfred Ribot, who was the director and founder of *Revue Philosophique* at the Collège de France at that time. Mauss passed the *agrégation* with very positive feedback from evaluators. Interestingly, his answer to an examination question on the history of philosophy and its relation to Descartes’ theory of the will was not to quote Aristotle, Plato or Hume, but to use the beliefs of the Australian “savages” as a basis for his arguments. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 29-32.

<sup>21</sup> As Fournier tells, “the new journals—*Revue Blanche*, *Entretiens Littéraires*, *Art Social*—granted more and more space to ideological and political questions: individual or collectivity? spontaneity or constraint (and conspiracy)? nostalgia or hope for an imminent renaissance? art for art’s sake or political engagement?” Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. While studying in Bordeaux, Mauss associated with the Groupe des Étudiants Socialistes and also joined the Parti Ouvrier Français. Since that time, he was always active in socialist movements. *Ibid.*, 27.

The next institution of Mauss's education<sup>23</sup> was École Pratique des Hautes Études, where Mauss studied Indo-European comparative linguistics with Antoine Meillet;<sup>24</sup> languages – Sanskrit with Louis Finot and Sylvian Lévi and Hebrew with Israël Lévi,<sup>25</sup> religions of ancient India with Sylvian Lévi and Alfred Foucher, and the primitive religions with Léon Marillier.<sup>26</sup> Henri Hubert, Henri Beuchat, Arnold Van Gennep, Paul Fauconnet, Daniel Halévy, and Isidore Lévy were attendees of the lectures together with Mauss in École Pratique. They became friends and later colleagues and collaborators.<sup>27</sup>

The first book reviews Mauss published were in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* while studying in École Pratique. But the majority of Mauss's writings are associated with *Année Sociologique*, to which team Mauss recruited his friends Fauconnet, Hubert, and Albert Milhaud. The first volume appeared in 1898.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the work of *Année Sociologique* was important for Mauss as a laboratory in which the new science of sociology – its methods of research and its scientific ethos – was being developed. Twelve volumes were published between 1898 and 1913 and, at least until 1906, contributed significantly to understanding the nature of the elementary forms of social and cultural structure.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> More exactly, it was the place where Mauss was willing to “gather material.” Ibid., 43.

<sup>24</sup> Meillet's (1866–1937) close relationship with Mauss was driven by common sociological interests. Later Meillet became a sociologist and collaborated with Durkheim on *Année Sociologique*.

<sup>25</sup> A very important relationship established in the École Pratique was with Israël Lévi and Sylvian Lévi. Their close friendship was based not only on intellectual interests but also on belonging to the same culture and community. Mauss was particularly attached to Sylvian, in whose family was very warmly received. Their friendship was signed in mutual admiration for each other and lasted long after Mauss's studies.

<sup>26</sup> Marillier (1863–1901) was a professor in the section of religious science and co-director of the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 44. At the École Pratique des Hautes Études Mauss also studied with Ferdinand de Saussure.

<sup>28</sup> In “An Intellectual Self-Portrait,” Mauss measures the quantity of his publications within this: “I have published there about 2,500 octavo pages out of the 10,000–11,000 pages of the fourteen volumes published or in press (400 pages in vol.1 of the new series and 300 pages in vol.2 of that series, if I include my bibliographic contribution to all the different section). I shall not discuss the value of this bibliography, the work of selection it presupposes, the labour of keeping up with current developments, maintaining personal contacts and correspondence, and so on.” Marcel Mauss, “An Intellectual Self-portrait,” in *in Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute* (1998), 33. “An Intellectual Self-portrait” was written in 1930 when Mauss was a candidate to the College de France.

<sup>29</sup> This was the laboratory in which Durkheim's rule of “treating social facts as objects” (as an antidote to philosophical and metaphysical explanations and to the earlier purely ideological representation of social affairs) was methodologically developed. Mike Gane, “Introduction. Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss and the Sociological Project,” in *The Radical Sociology of Durkheim and Mauss*, ed. Mike Gane (London: Routledge, 1992), 3. As Mike Gane summarizes, “[...] the overall strategy of the Durkheimians is clear: it is to establish a new type of comparative and evolutionary sociology that would avoid the errors of Comte's positivist methodologies on the one hand, and all the variations of individualistic methodologies on the other. Like Comte, the Durkheimians thought reflection method essential to social science, but unlike Comte they considered method a dynamic element of the practice of sociology that had to change as the science itself developed.” Mike Gane, “Introduction,” in *The Nature of Sociology*, by Marcel Mauss (New York: Durkheim Press/ Berghahn Books, 2005), xi.

In 1900 Mauss accepted the teaching assignment at the École Pratique des Hautes Études. He felt at home in an institution where he had previously studied himself, and where he had a close friend, Hubert, and a “second uncle,” Sylvain Lévi, now as his colleagues.<sup>30</sup> Later, after the death of Marillier, a famous professor and beloved by Mauss, he took up his first important position as a chair in History of the Religions of Uncivilized Peoples.<sup>31</sup> He continued to teach ethnographical courses there until 1930, and after that at the College de France.

### 1.1.2.3. French School of Sociology: focus on the models of behavior

In the same year he came to the École Pratique, Mauss, together with Fauconnet, wrote the “Sociology” entry for *La Grande Encyclopédie*. The aim was to present Durkheim’s ideas and the rules of the sociological method of the school. This created the necessary “demarcation line”, as Fournier puts it, for a new science of sociology, distinct from both psychology and philosophy.<sup>32</sup> It worked as the emancipation of scientific sight, which enabled the treatment of the objects of sociology in terms as social phenomena or social facts.<sup>33</sup>

Social phenomena must be analyzed according their specific nature – that means, sociological explanations proceed “by going from one social phenomenon to another, establishing relationships *only* between social phenomena,” since social facts produce one another.<sup>34</sup> The causes of a social fact must be seen outside that fact, whereas “social phenomena are no more self-moving than the other phenomena of nature.”<sup>35</sup> Even if some links have been

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<sup>30</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 47, 89. If Sylvain Lévi was a “second uncle” to Mauss, Henri Hubert was his “twin brother.” Henri’s social background was slightly different – he came from a well-off Parisian family. Born in the same year as Mauss, Hubert had the same enormous intellectual curiosity as his friend. They collaborated in *Année Sociologique*, starting from the common essay “Essay on the Nature and Function of Sacrifice,” which they started to write during Mauss’s studies abroad. (Following the Sylvain Lévi’s advice Mauss went to study in the Netherlands and Great Britain in 1897–1898.)

<sup>31</sup> He did this with an openly expressed conviction, that “there are no uncivilized peoples. There are only peoples from different civilizations. The hypothesis of ‘natural’ man has been definitively abandoned...” Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 90. It is important to note that Mauss never used the term ‘primitive,’ without quotation marks, and only in the evolutionary framework. Seth Leacock, “The Ethnological Theory of Marcel Mauss,” *American Anthropologist* 56.1 (1954): 60.

<sup>32</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 115. Paul Fauconnet and Marcel Mauss, “Sociologie,” in *La Grande Encyclopédie* (1901), repr. in Marcel Mauss, *Oeuvres* Vol. 3 (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 150.

<sup>33</sup> The word which designates all these facts is “institutions”: “By institutions, therefore, we understand customs and fashions, prejudices and superstitions, just as much as political constitutions or essential legal organizations, because all of these phenomena are of the same nature and differ from one another only in degree. In summary, institution is in the social order what function is in the biological order, and just as the science of life is a science of vital functions, so the science of society is the science of institutions thus defined.” Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology* (New York: Durkheim Press/ Berghahn Books, 2005), 11. Although the definition of institutions was very dynamic and behavior-oriented, Mauss later abandoned the privileged generalization of institutions. Alexander Gofman, “A Vague but Suggestive Concept: The Total Social Fact,” in *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute* (1998), 68.

<sup>34</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 17.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

enumerated<sup>36</sup> in the explanation of the sociological categories, it was emphasized, that “there is no unique universal law of social phenomena. There is a multitude of laws of varying degrees of generality. To explain, in sociology, as in all science, is thus to discover more or less fragmentary laws, that is, to link definite facts in terms of definite relations.”<sup>37</sup> The privileged mode of explanation was circular, since “the group’s forms are presented sometimes as effects and sometimes as causes of the collective representations.”<sup>38</sup>

In presenting the institutions, Mauss and Fauconnet underscored very clearly their dynamic nature. There is no other way to perceive social phenomena than through their manifestation in action. The collective habits of various kind are “the manifestations of life of group as a group.”<sup>39</sup> The models of behavior are the the ‘hows’ of the way society operates – this is how we recognize it (“By the presence of these actions and reactions, these *interactions*, one recognizes societies,”<sup>40</sup>) but also, this is how we experience it on an individual level, because it precedes one. The instituted habits and models of behavior already exist at the time we realize how one should behave. Already in this work it is noticeable how Mauss focuses on movement as the most real and obvious manifestation of social life. This interpretation will not disappear, and the focus on movement will only increase. As I intend to show, this interest will become even more pronounced, encompassing deeper and deeper layers of phenomena that will eventually require not only sociological but also interdisciplinary research.

Mauss’s and Fauconnet’s essay together with other works of *Année* team made a notable contribution to the formation of “strict inductive discipline” and of the ethos of the social science researcher. *A priori* philosophical explanation of a phenomenon was rejected as well as the tendency of psychology to focus on individual mentality. Contributions from other disciplines were appreciated, but no specific one was given priority. A non-dogmatic, sociocentric approach towards social facts needed a number of scientific procedures to be presented. Mauss and Fauconnet’s aim was to avoid “abdications of empiricism” as well as “hasty generalizations,” not to fall into “dialectical discussions” or turn into “scholarly encyclopedias.”<sup>41</sup> The rules of sociological methods, which Mauss together with Fauconnet and Hubert was presenting, were not confined only to methods, and encompassed definition,

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<sup>36</sup> Mauss and Fauconnet enumerated the following links: the link between one collective representation with another; the link of the collective representation to a fact of social structure as its cause; the link of social structure of collective representations which have determined them. *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 116.

observation of facts, systematization of facts, verification of hypotheses “with the aid of well-observed facts, for a well-defined problem.”<sup>42</sup>

Almost a quarter of a century later, when sociology no longer had to defend its boundaries “against the individualistic simplism [...], the brutal simplism [...], and against the metaphysicians of morality and religion,”<sup>43</sup> its influence and links with other disciplines have become more evident. Mauss himself, after the death of his uncle, re-established the links between sociology and psychology, declaring that sociology needed psychology.<sup>44</sup>

In 1903 Mauss and Durkheim published their famous essay “On Some Primitive Forms of Classification” in *Année Sociologique*. Mauss’s contribution to the essay was a factual justification.<sup>45</sup> According to Mauss, this was one of the most philosophical projects the school had ever undertaken.<sup>46</sup> The authors emphasized not only the collective origins of mental habits

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<sup>42</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 26. The main characteristics of the ethos of the social science researcher were “objectivity (setting aside one’s personal feelings and opinions), harsh critique of sources (statistical or ethnological documents), rigorous comparative approaches, and the rejection of absolute truth.” For science, Fournier writes, this was the condition for progress. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 116.

<sup>43</sup> Marcel Mauss, “Rapports réels et pratiques de la psychologie et de la sociologie.” Report presented to the Société de Psychologie on January 10, 1924. Article originally published in *Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique*, 1924. A document produced in digital format by Jean-Marie Tremblay, professor of sociology at Cégep de Chicoutimi: [http://psychanalyse.com/pdf/rapports\\_reels.pdf](http://psychanalyse.com/pdf/rapports_reels.pdf) [accessed 23 January 2022]. Following the congress of religious science in Stockholm in 1897, in which the need for new scientific approaches towards religion was expressed, Hubert and Mauss contributed much to the formation of the sociology of religion. Hubert was asked to write an introduction to the translation of P. Chantepie de la Saussaye’s *Manual of the History of Religion*, which Mauss called a true “manifesto” of religious sociology. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 134. In 1904 they published “Outline of a General Theory of Magic” in *Année*, and in 1908 “Introduction to the Study of a Few Religious Phenomena” in *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions*. The latter also featured Mauss’s “The Origin of Magical Powers in Australian Societies,” and “Note on Totemism” appeared in *Année*. In 1904 Mauss gave a series of lectures under the title “Magic and Its Relationship to Religion” at the École Russe des Hautes Études Sociales. In 1904 Mauss published a long article in the *Annuaire de l’École Pratique des Hautes Études* under the title “The Origin of Magical Powers in Australian Societies.” The work did not go unnoticed – the collection of Mauss’s and Hubert’s articles appeared as a book *Mélanges d’histoire des religions* (*Miscellany: The history of religion*). It was edited by Durkheim and published by Alcan in 1909. “There is not a thing, an essence, called Religion,” wrote Mauss in *L’Année sociologique* 7 (1904), “there are only religious phenomena, more or less incorporated into systems called religions that have a definite historical existence in determinate human groups at determinate times.” He was hoping for new discipline, which together with history and ethnography would seek knowledge of religious phenomena “to a better understanding of the present to help humanity become aware of its future.” Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 135. (Citation from: Marcel Mauss, “Philosophie religieuse, conceptions générales,” *Année Sociologique* 7 (1904), repr. in Mauss, *Oeuvres* Vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1968): 93.)

<sup>44</sup> “[...] for no matter how suggestive the community may be, it always leaves the individual a sanctuary, his conscience, which belongs to [psychologists].” Mauss’s report “The Relation between Psychology and Sociology” presented to the Société de Psychologie on January 10, 1924. Mauss, “Rapports réels et pratiques,” 10.

<sup>45</sup> Rodney Needham, “Introduction to E. Durkheim and M. Mauss, Primitive Classification,” in *Primitive Classification*, by Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (London: Routledge, 2009), xxiii.

<sup>46</sup> Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. *Primitive Classification* (London: Routledge, 2009), 48. The essays had historical significance for the development of the discipline, recognized as theoretical influences for the studies of such authors as F. D. E. van Ossenbruggen, Marcel Granet, W. H. Rassers, J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong, Alf Sommerfelt, Jacques Soustelle, J. Duchesne-Guillemin, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Ph. L. Tobing, Joseph Needham and others. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 119.

but also of emotions. They also pointed out how social organization is related to “the manner in which the ideas of cause, substance, and the different modes of reasoning, etc. were formed.”<sup>47</sup>

It took almost ten years of struggles for Mauss to write his masterwork (the thesis was never completed) – his monograph on prayer.<sup>48</sup> Mauss introduced prayer as one of the main phenomena of religious life, the social action into which persons are socialized, the ritual form of language, and the act of speech that creates a conventional ritual language inseparable from its effects (the direct results sought by prayer) or, in other words, from its effectiveness.<sup>49</sup>

In summary, it can be said that the French school of sociology, represented and shaped by Mauss, emphasized the dynamic nature of all phenomena, including the mental, emotional, and spiritual.

#### 1.1.2.4. *Involvement in the socialist movement*

The reason for giving particular attention not only to Mauss’s intellectual but also to his political activities is that, according to Fournier and others,<sup>50</sup> it is not useful, and is perhaps even dangerous, to separate Mauss’s intellectual activity from his political involvements. The two spheres had a strong influence on each other.

Mauss had been active in the socialist movement since his studies in Bordeaux. After arriving in Paris, Mauss made contact with Lucien Herr, an important figure in socialist circles.<sup>51</sup> Herr helped to reorganize Péguy’s publishing house (to avoid bankruptcy) into a new publishing venture the Société Nouvelle de Librairie et d’Édition.<sup>52</sup> The publishing house also organized the socialist school École Socialiste, which included lectures for the special interests of teachers in the curriculum. Mauss, together with Fauconnet and Simiand, were probing the

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<sup>47</sup> Durkheim and Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, 52.

<sup>48</sup> For the events and personal factors related to Mauss in getting complete the dissertation, see William S.F. Pickering, “Introduction to an Unfinished Work,” in *On Prayer*, by Mauss Marcel (New York: Durkheim Press/Berghahn Books, 2003), 2-5.

<sup>49</sup> Pickering, “Introduction,” 12.

<sup>50</sup> Marcel Fournier, “Marcel Mauss, l’ethnologie et la politique: le don,” *Anthropologie et sociétés* 19.1-2 (1995): 57-69; Keith Hart, “Marcel Mauss’s Economic Vision, 1920–1925: Anthropology, Politics, Journalism.” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 14.1 (2014): 34-44; Szokolczai and Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss: From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving or Revisiting Foundations”; Grégoire Mallard, “The Gift Revisited: Marcel Mauss on War, Debt, and the Politics of Reparations,” *Sociological Theory* 29.4 (2011): 225-247.

<sup>51</sup> Lucien Herr was an activist, inspirational youth organizer, and intellectual who appreciated and promoted the work of Durkheim and his students as a librarian at the École Normale. They met at Péguy’s publishing house, where Mauss was a regular visitor.

<sup>52</sup> Herr was the head of the administrative board, which consisted of Léon Blum, Hubert Bourgin, François Simiand, and Mario Roques. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 98. The Société Nouvelle decided to publish a bibliographical bulletin *Notes Critiques: Sciences Sociales*, in which Mauss, at the invitation of assistant editor François Simiand, published fifteen book reviews on the history of religion and ethnography between 1901 and 1904. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 106.



basis for socialism in sociology and took part in lecturing with the aim to “first inform, then prepare for action.”<sup>53</sup> The favorite subject of Mauss’s talks was the cooperative movement.

During the Dreyfus Affair, Mauss, Fauconnet, André Morizet and Jules Ubry joined the journal *Mouvement Socialiste* team led by Hubert Lagardelle.<sup>54</sup> He also played an active role in the new Fédération des Jeunes Socialistes Révolutionnaires (Federation of Revolutionary Socialist Youth). When the Parti Socialiste Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (S.F.I.O.) was founded in 1905, he became a member and remained so until the 1920s.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, it was Mauss who convinced Jean Jaurès and other socialist leaders of the importance of the cooperative movement, an issue that was subject to differing views across the socialist strata. In 1895 the Bourse des Coopératives Socialistes (Center for Socialist Cooperatives) was set up in which six active workers’ associations immediately took part. Mauss followed the activities of the cooperative organizations and kept the *Mouvement Socialiste* readers informed about them.<sup>56</sup> He drafted a report on the first International Congress of Socialist Cooperatives, organized by the Bourse des Coopératives Socialistes in Paris in 1900.<sup>57</sup> As the delegate of the new Coopérative Socialiste, Mauss gave an encouraging speech (with proposals of activity which must be done) as to the importance of such organizations for workers, which he treated as “a foretaste, so to speak, of all the advantages the future society will be able to offer them, [...] a weapon for struggle by improving their position and ensuring that of their loved ones.”<sup>58</sup> Mauss was involved in co-founding the magazine *L’Humanité* in 1904 and worked as one of its correspondents, taking over responsibility for the Cooperatives section with Landrieu.<sup>59</sup> Mauss believed in the unity of the socialists, despite the ongoing

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>54</sup> Other team members were Philippe Landrieu, Georges Fauquet, and Louis Révelin. Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> The party, unlike its counterparts in other European countries, was a decentralized organization. Until 1918 its secretary-general was Louis Dubreuil, performing more administrative duties, and the real political leader was Jean Jaurès, the chairman of the parliamentary group and director of the party’s newspaper *L’Humanité*.

Fournier describes Mauss’s political involvement: “He was swept along by socialist action: meetings, lectures, articles in *Mouvement Socialiste*, participation at the congresses of the socialist and cooperative movement. Jaurès asked him to come to *Petite République* to meet with him. [...] Lagardelle invited him to dinner at his home with the German socialist Karl Kautsky.”—The list of Mauss’s involvements is extensive and Fournier notes it did not end with the socialist project La Maison du Peuple (People’s center). Ibid., 104-105.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>57</sup> International Congress of Socialist Cooperatives took part in Paris on the 7–10 July in the same year as the General Exhibition.

<sup>58</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 109.

<sup>59</sup> The first issue of *L’Humanité* came out on April 18, 1904. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Léon Blum, and Herr raised funds for it. Jaurès worked as its editor until his assassination on 31 July 1914. After S.F.I.O. split apart into communist and socialist parties at the 1920 Tours Congress, the Communists took control of *L’Humanité*.

disagreements and divisions, which he experienced very sensitively.<sup>60</sup> Later, in 1908, under Robert Hertz's<sup>61</sup> leadership and with Jaurès's support, the Groupe d'Études Socialistes (Socialist Studies Group) was organized, in which the members of the *Année Sociologique* Marcel Granet, Halbwachs, Henri Lévy-Bruhl, and Simiand took part.<sup>62</sup> The topics of their discussions were socialism and cooperation, mutualism, strikes, workers' housing, alcoholism, industrial hygiene, amongst others.<sup>63</sup> As Fournier writes, the group "critically examined the main theses of socialism, seeking to grasp their modes of application."<sup>64</sup> *Cahiers du Socialiste* pamphlets were also published by this group.

Mauss lived in a very intense environment, in the "witch's cauldron" to use his expression,<sup>65</sup> in the center of the intellectual and political life of his country and the whole of Europe. The political situation and the situation of science were very demanding. In both, Mauss was taking a very active, formative role. Unfortunately, two major wars significantly intertwined with his life and brought tremendous losses. Despite the peacekeeping efforts of Mauss and his comrades, World War I broke out. The first loss was experienced just before it began. Fournier describes it thus:

With fierce energy, Jaurès stepped up efforts to preserve peace: articles, political meetings, a session of the Bureau Socialiste International in Brussels. On the night of July 31, as he was dining in Paris with Pierre Renaudel and Philippe Landrieu, his collaborators at *Humanité*, the socialist leader was killed by a bullet to the head.<sup>66</sup>

It was the loss of a friend for Mauss, the death of a hero.

### 1.1.3. Life in loss

"The death of his father and grandfather on his mother's side in 1896, the death of André Durkheim in 1915, the death of Emil Durkheim two years later, the death of his best

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Encouraged by Jaurès, in July 1906 Mauss went to Russia to study an economic and social organization that was very weak there, as well as to advise and support democrats. Even if the trip did not go as planned, Mauss's interest in and criticism of Russia remained long after. Giovanni Busino, "Marcel Mauss, interprète d'un phénomène social total: le bolchevisme," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales* 34.105 (1996): 75-91.

<sup>60</sup> As Fournier writes, "the disadvantages of electoral politics, the clashes of opinion, the conflicts among people are such that there is every reason to keep them out of [cooperative] societies." Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 125.

<sup>61</sup> In 1902 Robert Hertz, student at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, invited Mauss to give a lecture on cooperative action (sponsored by *Prolétarienne*) at one of the people's universities. Hertz later joined the *Année Sociologique* team during the preparation of Volume 8 (1903–1904, the volume appeared in 1905) and became responsible for the section on religious sociology.

<sup>62</sup> Together with Edgar Milhaud, Ernest Poisson, Alfred Bonnet, Jacques Ferdinand-Dreyfus, and Albert Thomas.

<sup>63</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 131.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

friend Henri Hubert in 1927 are significant dates in Mauss's life;"<sup>67</sup> this is how Mauss's biographer Fournier summarizes the important changes in Mauss's life due to historical and political circumstances. In the following subsections I will look at Mauss's work after the First World War and during the interwar period, as well as the difficulties he experienced during the Second World War.

#### 1.1.3.1. *Loss of an entire generation*

Mauss described the loss of an entire generation of scientists as a result of the First World War in an interview for *American Ethnologist*:

The generation of men who would now be from 40 to 60 years of age were cut down by the war – almost their entire generation was wiped out. Over 150 of about 800 students enrolled at L'École Normal [were killed]. Of eight men who became agrégé under me, only two came through the war alive. I was 41 when the war began, 20 years ago. I served four and a half years at the front, practically without a break, the whole time. Halbwachs, Fauconnet, all of us were in the war. Some of the older men came through, but the younger men were almost wholly wiped out, so the generation following us is almost a blank from the standpoint of its productive scholarship.<sup>68</sup>

The war brought not only the loss to science but also great personal sorrow,<sup>69</sup> that deeply affected both Mauss and Durkheim. But when the following December 18, 1915, Durkheim's son André died in a Bulgarian hospital from wounds received while commanding a rearguard platoon during the retreat from Serbia,<sup>70</sup> Durkheim was completely broken and never recovered. Mauss formulated the cause of his uncle's death as follows: "he was one of the casualties of the World War; for he was killed by grief over the death of his son in the French army, and by his own incessant war activities, as definitely as if [he had been killed] on the field of battle."<sup>71</sup>

#### 1.1.3.2. *Continuation of important work*

After returning from the war, Mauss moved back into his apartment in Paris and regained his place in the religious department of the École Pratique.<sup>72</sup> He also continued his

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<sup>67</sup> Fournier, "Para reescrever," 6.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen O. Murray and Marcel Mauss, "A 1934 Interview with Marcel Mauss," *American Ethnologist* 16.1 (1989): 165.

<sup>69</sup> "There was a great deal of bad news," Fournier writes, "Mauss's student and collaborator Maxime David was killed in 1914 at the head of an infantry platoon; Antoine Bianconi met the same fate in 1915; the same year, Jean Reynier was killed in the trenches by a missile. Bianconi and Reynier were both thirty-two. Then it was Robert Hertz's turn: he was first wounded, then later killed during 'the pointless attack of Marchéville on April 13, 1915, at age thirty-three, leading his platoon out of the trenches.'" Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 177.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>71</sup> Murray and Mauss, "A 1934 Interview," 164.

<sup>72</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 187.

political involvement with a special focus on Bolshevism, on cooperative movements, on problems relating to peace and economic crisis. He published numerous articles on the cooperative movement and was involved in the creation of the *Revue des études cooperatives*; he was also a member of the board of directors of *Le Populaire*. His “Observations on Violence” and “The Problem of Nationality” appeared in 1920. He criticized Bolshevism (in a series of articles he puts Bolshevism and fascism in parallel and clearly brings out their common traits – the features of tyranny<sup>73</sup>) and proposed “mixed” economic structures that combined capitalism, socialism, free collectivism, and individualism.<sup>74</sup> As Fournier describes, Mauss recalls, in good Durkheimian style, that freedom and collective control are not contradictions.<sup>75</sup>

The other task for Mauss and his collaborators after the tragic war was to restart *Année sociologique*.<sup>76</sup> More than thirty researchers and academics contributed to the first volume.<sup>77</sup> The volume, which was dedicated to Durkheim and his students, and was seeking, according to Fournier, “to defend the comparative method and research procedures Durkheim had perfected, whose value no one really denied any longer,” received great support from and appreciation in academic circles.<sup>78</sup> Mauss’s essay “Essai sur le don” (“The Gift”), Mauss’s best-known work, which is considered to be his key work and his masterpiece, also appeared in the first volume.<sup>79</sup>

Some months later the French Institute of Sociology was founded. The members of the first executive, responsible for the journal were Marcel Mauss, as president, François Simiand, vice-president, Paul Fauconnet, secretary, and Henri Hubert, treasurer.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Busino, “Marcel Mauss,” 79.

<sup>74</sup> Because, “there are no exclusively capitalist societies and there will probably be no purely socialist ones.” Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 203.

<sup>75</sup> Fournier, “Marcel Mauss, l’ethnologie,” 58.

<sup>76</sup> *L’Année sociologique* was published annually till the 1925. The second volume was the last in a new series. From 1934 to 1942 the journal changed its name to *Annales Sociologiques*. After World War 2, it returned to its original name *Année sociologique*.

<sup>77</sup> In addition to the former collaborators – Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Georges and Hubert Bourgin, Charles Lalo, Claude Maître, Jean Marx, Antoine Meillet, Dominique Parodi – Charles Blondel, André Piganiol, Albert Bayet, and Alexandre Moret also contributed. Students Max Bonnafous, Marcel Déat, Françoise Henry, and others also joined the work.

<sup>78</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 232.

<sup>79</sup> Hart, “Mauss’s Economic Vision,” 39.

<sup>80</sup> Fournier, “Marcel Mauss, l’ethnologie,” 60. Mauss remember this time in a 1934 interview: “Following the war we had the difficult task of gathering up the threads again, so many of which were gone. Durkheim was gone, his *L’Annee* discontinued, our students and many of our ablest faculty men dead in the trenches. All our building had to begin there. Toward restoration, we established L’Institut Francais de Sociologie in 1924. This is the only scientific sociological body in France. [...] We also have reestablished *L’Annee sociologique*. [...] It is under the direction of an editorial board consisting of Fauconnet, Mauss, Bougle, Simiand, and Halbwachs.” Murray and Mauss, “A 1934 Interview,” 165. Mauss did not mention Hubert, because his dear friend died on

### 1.1.3.3. Development of the discipline of ethnology

Although the situation of sociological science in his country was difficult from 1914 onwards,<sup>81</sup> Mauss's scientific authority grew in recognition. Mauss was increasingly influential in English ethnography, and was also well known and recognized by American anthropologists and sociologists.

In December 1925, the Institute of Ethnology of Paris was created with the aim "to bring together specialists from different parts of the world."<sup>82</sup> Paul Rivet, who excelled in methodological science and pragmatic organizational skills, and Mauss, a man of 'encyclopediaic mind', were the pillars of the newly established institute.<sup>83</sup> The Sorbonne philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl was also part of this team. The Institute's teaching and research programs combined practical (in how it related to French colonial interests) and academic motives. Nathan Schlanger records that Mauss's lectures there, and later at the Collège de France when he was elected head of the sociology department in 1930, attracted a wide range of students from the social sciences and the humanities, as well as from art and surrealism.<sup>84</sup>

The discipline of ethnology since 1920 had already attracted great interest from intellectuals and artists as well as from the general public. Mauss, who hoped that aesthetics would become a branch of sociology in the future,<sup>85</sup> collaborated on various editions devoted to the arts: a *Lyon Universitaire* issue on 'native arts', and in *Documents*. He was fascinated about the open-minded new generation and rejoiced "that an ethnographic knowledge of the native arts has already served to advance our own arts."<sup>86</sup>

Before the Second World War other possibilities of the encounter between ethnology and art appeared due to the politics of cultural enrichment of the government of Léon Blum,<sup>87</sup> who was Mauss's friend. The year 1937 was marked by the opening of the Musée de l'Homme

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May 25, 1927, after many years of illness. The fact, that the previous day, as Fournier tells, he had put the finishing touches on a note for *Année Sociologique* illustrates his dedicated collaboration that has supported Mauss for many years. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 253.

<sup>81</sup> This was due not only to the loss of the young generation of scientists in the war, but also to the economic crisis and the attack on the science of sociology after Durkheim's death. *Ibid.*, 291-92.

<sup>82</sup> The project was submitted before the First World War. Fournier, "Marcel Mauss, l'ethnologie," 61.

<sup>83</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 236-237.

<sup>84</sup> Nathan Schlanger, "Marcel Mauss (1872–1950): Socializing the Body through Techniques," *History of Humanities* 4.2 (2019): 313-314.

<sup>85</sup> For more about the efforts of Durkheimians to study aesthetic phenomena, see Marcel Fournier, "Durkheim, L'Année sociologique, and Art," in *Durkheim, the Durkheimians, and the Arts*, ed. Alexander Riley, W. S. F. Pickering, William Watts Miller (New York: Durkheim Press/ Berghahn Books, 2013): 122–127.

<sup>86</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 283.

<sup>87</sup> Léon Blum was a Prime Minister in a Front Populaire government of the left in 1936–1937. The government made a series of major economic reforms (such as reform of the Banque de France, nationalization of the war industries, and granting paid vacations) and cultural reforms (establishment of a state organization for the organization of leisure and sports, adoption of measures of promotion of development of popular culture).

and of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires. But the Front Populaire experiment did not last for long; after harsh critique Blum resigned on June 22, 1937. “Return to the primitive,” – that’s how Mauss evaluated the general tendency of European society towards Bolshevism and fascism<sup>88</sup> as he treated fascism and bolshevism as political episodes in the life of politically uneducated peoples.<sup>89</sup>

#### 1.1.3.4. *Teaching and research work*

An important part of Mauss’s life was devoted to teaching. He had been involved in teaching since 1902, when he began his career as professor of primitive religion at the École Pratique des Hautes Études. After the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Paris opened its doors in 1926,<sup>90</sup> he continued to teach there until 1930 and after that at the Collège de France (1931–1939).<sup>91</sup>

But teaching duties, which he carried out with great commitment and enthusiasm,<sup>92</sup> did not fit well with his productivity as a researcher. He had never completed projected books on prayer, money, and the nation.

Mauss helped his students with advice, letters of recommendation, even financial aid. After Mauss was appointed to the Collège de France, his style of communicating with students did not change.<sup>93</sup> His lectures were widely known as abounding in new and productive ideas as well as new ways to approach to phenomena. “At the Collège, the Institut, and the École, people listened to Mauss as if he were Scheherazade. He loved to astonish and provoke his listeners,” as Fournier reports.<sup>94</sup> “The teaching of Marcel Mauss was one to which few can be compared,” asserts Claude Lévi-Strauss.<sup>95</sup> Having never done any kind of field work himself, Mauss inspired and prepared his students to become competent professionals.<sup>96</sup>

Returning to researchers’ surprise at the paradoxical significance of Mauss, which is disproportionate to the scope of his work,<sup>97</sup> with which the biography began, the phenomenon

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<sup>88</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 314.

<sup>89</sup> Busino, “Marcel Mauss,” 80.

<sup>90</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 238.

<sup>91</sup> Mauss won the chair in sociology on 29 November, 1930, the day before his mother died. *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>92</sup> Mauss helped his students with advice, letters of recommendation, even financial aid. He met his students after his classes, inviting some to accompany him for a walk. Once a year, he had all his students over to his apartment. *Ibid.*, 141, 280, 300.

<sup>93</sup> The summary of 79 lecture courses given by Mauss from 1900 in École Pratique des Hautes Études and onwards, and since 1931 in College de France can be found in Nicholas J. Allen, *Categories and Classifications: Maussian Reflections on the Social* Vol. 8 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 149-150 (Appendix 1).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>95</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Writings of Marcel Mauss* (London: Routledge, 1987), 50.

<sup>96</sup> Such as Lévi-Strauss, Métraux, Leenhardt, and Griaule. Leacock, “The Ethnological Theory,” 60, 71.

<sup>97</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 4.

could be explained by the scientist's priority for generously sharing his time, resources, and his astonishing knowledge, with people.

#### *1.1.3.5. Another war and post-war period*

In February 1938, Mauss became the president of the section of religious science at the *École*. However, in on September 24 1940 he resigned to “safeguard the interests of the *École*,”<sup>98</sup> in a situation where antisemitism was rapidly growing. Marcel Granet, a dear friend of Mauss, was appointed to his seat, but he died suddenly less than a month later. Other of Mauss's friends and family members also faced big difficulties – they lost their jobs, and some had to leave the country. Mauss's colleagues Raymond Aron, André Mayer, Marc Bloch, Paul Léon, Henri Lévy-Bruhl, and Isidore Lévy were dismissed. On October 13, 1940 the Ministry of National Education issued an ordinance concerning “the cessation of services by the Jews in universities.” Mauss had to submit his resignation from professorship in the *Collège de France*.<sup>99</sup> In August 1942, Mauss and his wife<sup>100</sup> were evicted from their large eight-room apartment at 95, Boulevard Jourdan, where the German general was housed. His students helped Mauss put his books in boxes and store them at the *Musée de l'Homme*.<sup>101</sup>

After Paris was liberated in late August 1944, almost everything returned to normal. On November 21, 1944, Mauss was restored to his position at the *Collège de France*.<sup>102</sup> The director of the *Collège de France* Edmond Faral informed his colleague that, beginning on

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<sup>98</sup> Due to the defeat of the French army and the German occupation of Paris in 1940 in June. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 335-6.

<sup>99</sup> 1941 June 27 an order signed by Carcopino confirmed Mauss's retirement and his right to a pension from December 21 1940 onwards.

<sup>100</sup> Martha Dupret, Mauss's wife, died in 1947. They married in 1934. She was ill almost all their marital life. At age 62, Mauss spent 13 years caring for her, even when his own health was not perfect. *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>101</sup> The transfer of the library took place in May, three months before the eviction and was organized by Denise Paulme with the help of her husband ethnomusicologist (also Mauss's student) Andre Schaeffner and other of Mauss's students who prepared around fifty cases of books, some of which belonged to Durkheim and to Hubert. James Clifford, “Mauss's Memory.” *Sulfur* 17 (1986): 149.

<http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/srb/Mauss's%20Memory.pdf> [accessed 14 December 2021]; Jennifer Mergy, “Présentation,” *L'Année sociologique*, 54.1 (2004): 10-28. The decision to donate his personal library to the *Musée de l'Homme* (run at the time by Rivet) was the response to a tragic event a few months earlier, when his pupil Anatole Levitzky with Boris Vildé and other members of the “*Musée de l'Homme* network” who were part of the Resistance, had been shot at Mont Valérien. Mauss wanted to avoid the destruction of his collection by the Germans and at the same time allow researchers to access rare works on Oceania, the Arctic, Asia, the American ethnology, the history of religions and general sociology. Yvonne Oddon, student of Mauss and librarian at the Museum at the time respectfully accepted it. Mauss's library, which now is located in Media Library of *Musée du Quai Branly*, according to Jean-François Bert, is a historical and theoretical crossroads of prime importance both for understanding how Mauss's knowledge is constructed and reorganized, but also, and at another level, the evolution of ethnology in France. Jean-François Bert, “La bibliothèque de Marcel Mauss,” [Research report] (Paris: *Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac*, 2012), 60. <https://hal.science/hal-02188492/document> [accessed 11 December 2023].

<sup>102</sup> For the period between December 20, 1940, and May 10, 1942, and this allowed him to receive a retirement pension from May 10, 1942.

February 23, 1945, Mauss had become a “professor emeritus.”<sup>103</sup> But Mauss himself became immersed in silence, suffering memory losses (symptoms on Durkheim’s side, and with Mauss’s grandmother and mother),<sup>104</sup> symptoms that became more and more aggravating. Fournier recounts,

The war, the Occupation, and all his torments thus prevailed over Mauss, and the vigor and liveliness of his mind were affected. Debilitated by bronchitis, he “gently passed away” at home on February 11, 1950, at the age of seventy-seven, surrounded by his brother and his nephews and nieces. As he turned to look at a photograph of Hubert placed on a bureau near the radio, he is reported to have evoked his old friend and music: “Friendship and beauty are the two most beautiful things in life.”<sup>105</sup>

Pierre Métais, Mauss’s student and friend, was asked in an interview with Fournier about Mauss’s funerals. He replied, “It was sad. We were only five or six.”<sup>106</sup>

## 1.2. The Theoretical Sources for Mauss’s Approach to Movement

To deal with the main theme of the chapter, that is to analyze the approach to movement offered by Marcel Mauss, I will introduce the main authors (sources) with whose ideas Mauss interacted in reflecting on the dynamic nature of society and the role of the movement in it. The list of authors could be endless, as Mauss was renowned for his erudition and encyclopedic knowledge.<sup>107</sup> It will therefore be limited to the most important authors who have made a particular contribution to the development of Mauss’s ideas on movement, either as opponents or as inspirers and providers of useful insights. I will also give some brief background as to Mauss’s interdisciplinary involvement, which was essential for the development of his thought, mostly focusing on the relationship between sociology and psychology. The authors whose work Mauss drew on in his dance studies will be discussed in the fourth part of this chapter (1.4.) focusing here on the more general development of Mauss’s thought.

The discussion begins (1.2.1.) with the relation between Mauss and his uncle sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917). Despite his admiration for his uncle’s personality

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<sup>103</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 349.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>106</sup> Fournier, “Para reescrever,” 11.

<sup>107</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 1. Seth Leacock writes about Mauss’s areas of knowledge: “In addition to his training in philosophy, Mauss had a very broad education. He knew Greek, Sanskrit, Russian, and Latin as well as other languages. He was familiar with the Vedas, and was also well versed in early Greek, Roman, and Germanic literature. Along with this broad knowledge, Mauss had extremely wide interests. His published works include articles on sacrifice, magic, the notion of food in Vedic literature, the origin of money, law, gift - exchange, various aspects of psychology, Bolshevism, and suicide among the Celts, as well as sociological theory and ethnological method. As his students used to say, ‘Mauss sait tout.’” Leacock, “The ethnological theory,” 59.



and his undying loyalty to him, Mauss maintained his intellectual independence and his scientific insights were very different from those of Durkheim. Mauss's effort to establish interdisciplinary relations with psychology were very important for his approach to movement as it marks the emergence of "Techniques of the Body" and the sources for this will be discussed in the second subsection (1.2.2.). Alternative sociological and philosophical influences, such as Hubert and Hertz, as well as Tarde, Bergson, Péguy and Nietzsche helped Mauss in overcoming the limitations of Durkheimian sociology, will be discussed afterwards (1.2.3.). The influence of Arnold Van Gennep, Lucien Levy-Bruhl, and Johan Huizinga to Mauss's approach to movement will be discussed in the fourth subsection (1.2.4.), while the possibility of the influence of Marxist ideas will be the focus of the final subsection (1.2.5).

### *1.2.1. Mauss and Durkheim*

Mauss made an outstanding contribution to the Durkheimian tradition and the thought of the French sociological school.<sup>108</sup> This section sets out the differences between the nephew's and the uncle's views, which are related to Mauss's desire to overcome what he considered to be several shortcomings of Durkheim's intellectual approach:

1. The opposition between the sacred and the profane.
2. The simple causal explanations of psychological, social, and organic factors.
3. The opposition between the sociological and the psychological.
4. The narrow treatment of the term 'the total social fact' as an external constraint to concrete experience.

The contribution of Mauss to Durkheim's heritage is not one-sided. Mauss was not only the custodian of this school, but also played an important role in its transformation. As Wendy James points out, "while not actually rejecting Durkheim's positivism and formalism, [Mauss] did seek out other ways of investigating and comparing what he often referred to as the

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<sup>108</sup> Indeed, it was Mauss's choice to devote his life to the Durkheim school, to the *L'Année sociologique* (his entire scientific life was organized around it). Yet these commitments were not in opposition to searches for his own originality and scientific truth. "It is impossible to detach me from the work of a school. If there is any individuality here, it is immersed within a voluntary anonymity," Mauss said of himself. "The pretentious quest for originality" together with isolation stands in opposition to aspirations of Mauss, who worked as a member as a team, convinced, that "every science is the product of collective work." Mauss, "An intellectual self-portrait," 29-30. Nevertheless, while shaping and reshaping Durkheimian ideas about the phenomena of social life, Mauss reworked aspects of the heritage in "such engaging and persuasive manner", that they retained their vitality and fresh appeal even after the Second World War and had a profound influence on modern disciplines – sociology, anthropology, ethnology. James, "One of us," 5-6. The merit of Mauss, Gane sees in being "someone who continues the first steps with important, even decisive, second steps – the intellectual outcome of this tradition is still to be worked out." Gane, "Introduction," xx.

‘concrete’ phenomena of social life.”<sup>109</sup> These investigations turned into bold, innovative, and significant ideas, which also influenced Durkheim.<sup>110</sup>

Mauss gained a lot from Durkheim,<sup>111</sup> but Durkheim also made good use of Mauss. Beside his involvement in *l’Annee Sociologique*, the nephew worked as kind of assistant to Durkheim, providing him with ethnographic and historical data and reviewing books on religion, which was a fundamental “social fact” in Durkheim's sociological theory.<sup>112</sup> Mauss’s works served as ethnographical background for Durkheim’s “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.”<sup>113</sup> Szakolczai and Thomassen write that Durkheim realized very early on that it was he who should learn from Mauss, and began to develop his ideas together with Mauss. Sometimes he adopted Mauss’s terms, but took the analysis in a direction that Mauss himself could not support.<sup>114</sup>

Mauss, for his part, never openly criticized Durkheim. Moreover, he felt obliged to defend his uncle from criticism. Durkheim and Mauss supported each other, if not openly, then tacitly, W. S. F. Pickering claims.<sup>115</sup> However, Mauss and those closest to him were aware of the shortcomings of Durkheim’s intellectual approach.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, they did not so much try to criticize him from the outside, but to present the alternative within a common framework. This strategy helped to maintain a good relationship with both Durkheim and his critics, even the fiercest ones, such as Gabriel Tarde or Arnold van Gennep, who will be discussed later in this chapter (1.2.3. and 1.2.4.).

The move away from Durkheim’s orthodoxy, according to Szakolczai and Thomassen, is already seen in “A General Theory of Magic,” however, it becomes more and more obvious

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<sup>109</sup> James, “One of us,” 5.

<sup>110</sup> One can read about Mauss’s influence on Durkheim in Frank Adloff, *Gifts of Cooperation, Mauss and Pragmatism* (London: Routledge, 2016), 18-23; Szakolczai and Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving,” 68-69.

<sup>111</sup> Nicholas Allen lists the theoretical paradigms (which he modified in his own way) as the encouragement to specialize in religion (which was in line with his own inclinations), the intellectual vigour, and the pioneering courage. Nicholas J. Allen, *Categories and Classifications: Maussian Reflections on the Social* Vol. 8 (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000).

<sup>112</sup> Szakolczai and Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving,” 68. In this essay one can learn more about the relationship between Mauss and Durkheim.

<sup>113</sup> Particularly, “On Some Primitive Forms of Classification,” published together with Durkheim and “A General Theory of Magic,” written together with Hubert. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

<sup>114</sup> Szakolczai and Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving,” 69.

<sup>115</sup> W. S. F. Pickering, “How compatible were Durkheim and Mauss on matters relating to religion? Some introductory remarks,” *Religion* 42.1 (2012): 11.

<sup>116</sup> Szakolczai and Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving,” 69.

with time.<sup>117</sup> It is the subject of religion, which Mauss and Durkheim treated differently,<sup>118</sup> that is considered to be the beginning of their divergence. According to Alain Caillé, Mauss abandoned the basic and fundamental opposition Durkheim posited between the sacred and the profane. Durkheim had believed that he could explain everything by religion. For his part, Mauss distances himself from the interpretation of a single institution, that is, religion, as the only one that explains everything that matters in society.<sup>119</sup> Mauss thought that everything had to be related to the world of symbols. In contrast to Durkheim's opposition between the sacred and the profane, Mauss continually stresses that the utilitarian and the symbolic are intimately connected. At the same time, Durkheimian radical opposition between the sociological and the psychological collapses. For it is not a break from the social to the individual that takes place, but a gradual and reciprocal translation – the constitutive symbols of one of the plans allow themselves to be translated by the symbols of the other plan.<sup>120</sup>

The features of such wholistic tendencies in the interpretation of social facts was noticeable already in Mauss and Fauconnet's "Sociology" in 1901.<sup>121</sup> There the authors speak of "a spirit" of social groups – a family, a corporation, a nation. "A spirit" refers to habits, characters, certain manners of feeling, thinking, acting, which can differ from the one that could be directly attributable to the individuals who comprise them.<sup>122</sup> Neither will one find in this work the hierarchy of social facts, proposed by Durkheim as more important for the development of society. The sociological explanation proposed by Mauss and Fauconnet is circular, referring to relationships between phenomena rather than hierarchies. They distinguish the "social phenomena of prime importance, because law, morality and religion form a notable part of social life," and add that "in primitive societies hardly any collective manifestations do not fall within one or the other of these categories."<sup>123</sup> Social phenomena can be linked or interlinked to one another, institutions produce one another, but none of them occupies the privileged position in sociological explanation, which must avoid any a priori

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>118</sup> Starting with their different definitions of it: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms*, 44. "There is no such thing as 'religion', only particular religions. Moreover, each of these particular religions is merely a more or less organized set of beliefs and religious practices," states Mauss in *On Prayer*, 49. On the relationship between Mauss and Durkheim in relation to the problem of religion, see Pickering, "How compatible were Durkheim and Mauss on matters relating to religion?," 5-19.

<sup>119</sup> Adloff, *Gifts of Cooperation*, 20.

<sup>120</sup> Alain Caillé, "Marcel Mauss et le paradigme du don," *Sociologie et sociétés* 36.2 (2004): 141-176.

<sup>121</sup> It was first published in *La Grande Encyclopédie*.

<sup>122</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 5-6.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 10.

generalization. “There is no unique universal law of social phenomena. There is a multitude of laws of varying degrees of generality. To explain, in sociology as in all science, is thus to discover more or less fragmentary laws, that is, to link definite in terms of definite relations.”<sup>124</sup> Because, after all, both social facts and institutions are scientific abstractions. The real manifestation of a single society is the totality of collective habits,<sup>125</sup> the people’s behavior, the rules of thought and acting, which undoubtedly affect all its members and their relationship to things. As Alexander Gofman summarizes, “despite the fact that in his early works Mauss was as ‘institutionalist’ as Durkheim [...], his attention was subsequently increasingly drawn to the actions and actors who created norms, values, and social institutions.”<sup>126</sup>

Bruno Karsenti points out that the most important “Maussian shift” from Durkheim is to the theme of the total human being (*l’homme total*). In Karsenti’s view, the strategic aim of this theme was to reorient the sociological heritage and to establish new links between sociology, biology, psychology, history, linguistics and psychoanalysis, and to open up anthropology in this new space.<sup>127</sup> This strategy can be seen as the realization of an old dream of Mauss. He thought that instead of each institution seeking its own (moral, theological, or economic) basis for society, they must be taken together: “one goes in turn from the whole to the parts and that the parts to the whole.”<sup>128</sup> The notion of the total human being signifies Mauss’s attempt to study “the whole human being, seen as complex structure in three dimensions”<sup>129</sup> – psychological, social, and organic.

According to Gofman, Mauss’s conception of the human being differs from Durkheim’s notion of homo duplex, according to which a person is considered an entity in which two forms of existence – the individual (a biological-psychological organism) and the social – are present separately. Meanwhile Mauss defends an idea of the “complete” human being, “a reality whose biological, psychological and socio-cultural characteristics make up an indivisible whole.”<sup>130</sup> Such an approach (“triple alliance”) is very important, because, as

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 20. Therefore, the scientific method of observation, where phenomena are distinguished from others must be seen as an attempt to approach the definite. Ibid., 22.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>126</sup> Gofman, “A Vague but Suggestive Concept,” 68.

<sup>127</sup> Bruno Karsenti, “The Maussian Shift: A Second Foundation for Sociology in France?,” in in *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute* (1998), 73.

<sup>128</sup> Marcel Mauss, “Sociology: Its Divisions and Their Relative Weightings,” in *The Nature of Sociology* (2005): 62.

<sup>129</sup> Karsenti, “The Maussian Shift,” 79.

<sup>130</sup> Gofman, “A Vague but Suggestive Concept,” 66.

Karsenti points out, it “hopes to capture the social in action and hence in relation to behaviour that is always determined on the level of [the] individual.”<sup>131</sup>

In addition to this integrative function, the notion of the total human being also reveals another difference between Mauss’s approach and Durkheim’s. It helps to show the interoperability between the three dimensions of the “complete” human being (psychological, social, and organic) without transposing one into the other and without prescribing simple causal explanations. Karsenti explains that it differs from Durkheimian approach, because it does not take organo-psychic factors together as a bloc, prescribed to the individual, in opposition to the social, but considers all three dimensions as three registers “as distinct as they are solidary.”<sup>132</sup> “Organo-physic factors are organic *and* psychic.”<sup>133</sup> And they are social because they are always to be found, so to speak, in action, which is never pure<sup>134</sup> but mixed with the totality of social phenomena.

Finally, Mauss’s term of the total social fact, which is to be seen as a choice resulting from his general predilection for the terms ‘total’ and the ‘whole’ as well as ‘complete’ and ‘concrete’,<sup>135</sup> does not refer to Durkheimian social fact, as Szokolczai and Thomassen remind. The latter implied an external constraint to concrete experience. For Mauss, the total social fact rather refers to “the totality of society and its institutions.”<sup>136</sup> It was not some bland integrative principle, Wendy James notes, but “the paradigmatic engagement of the material, the organic and bodily, the psychological and political in a wider choreography of social form which itself had a lasting historical character.”<sup>137</sup> It served as an antidote to the dualism which was characteristic to Durkheim – the oppositions between the sacred and profane, the individual and society, the body and the soul, the symbolic and practical behavior.

### *1.2.2. Mauss and psychology*

The newness of Mauss’s approach, relating to concepts of the total social fact and the total human being, lies in his attempt to restore the integrity of humanity from the point of view of sociology. According to Karsenti, the sociality of the individual was made the privileged angle, from which the complete individual was recaptured.<sup>138</sup> But the new object of the total

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<sup>131</sup> Karsenti, “The Maussian Shift,” 79.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 79 (emphasis original).

<sup>134</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 63

<sup>135</sup> Gofman, “A Vague but Suggestive Concept,” 65.

<sup>136</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving,” 86.

<sup>137</sup> James, “One of us,” 20.

<sup>138</sup> Karsenti, “The Maussian Shift,” 74.

human being<sup>139</sup> required the reformulation of the link between psychology, biology, and sociology.

Mauss considered himself not a proponent of Freudian psychoanalysis (which does not mean him completely rejecting its importance<sup>140</sup>), but of psychiatry and French neurology.<sup>141</sup> As Fournier notes, Mauss was friends with psychologists Charles Blondel, Georges Dumas, and Ignace Meyerson. After the First World War, in collaboration with Pierre Janet, Mayerson agreed to relaunch the *Journal de Psychologie*, which had been accepting articles from historians, sociologists, and linguists. Mauss also closely followed the work of his English anthropologist friend Charles Seligman, who was the specialist in the application of psychology and psychoanalysis to the field of anthropology.<sup>142</sup> The works of Wilhelm Wundt, the German physiologist, philosopher, and father of modern psychology, were in Mauss's personal library, and he referred to them in a lecture to psychologists, which I will discuss below.

After Durkheim's death, sociology was already well established in the French university system and Mauss was able to publicly discuss the potential contribution of psychology to sociology, and vice versa, without any worries about the survival of sociology as a discipline.<sup>143</sup> The boundaries of both disciplines as well as between the two disciplines were already stable,<sup>144</sup> so now it was time to establish links to share knowledge. Mauss was not only playing an active role in in the Société de Psychologie, but also agreed to become its president in 1923. On January 10, 1924 he gave a lecture entitled "The Relationship between Psychology and Sociology"<sup>145</sup> where he expressed readiness and the hope for fruitful

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<sup>139</sup> However, the search for the integrity of humanity was not new in human sciences. If one were to look for ideas that might have influenced Mauss's passion for "totality", one could find the philosophical sources in the classical tradition of antiquity, as well as in Dom Deschamps's "totality", not to mention the conceptions of totality as developed by Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Comte, O. Spann and others. But beside these sources, in Goffman's view, it is likely that certain strands of psychology that Mauss followed very closely, in particular Harald Høffdin's the "law of totality", can be considered influential. Goffman, "A Vague but Suggestive Concept," 65. Mauss's notion should not be confused with the 'totalistic' interpretations undermined by the anthropological critiques of the 1980s and 1990s, Chris Garces warns. Mauss's analysis of "total social facts" focused on the identification and rejection of essentialist overdeterminations that guided particular theoretical interests. Chris Garces and Alexander Jones, "Mauss Redux: From Warfare's Human Toll to 'L'homme Total'." *Anthropological Quarterly* (2009): 279-309.

<sup>140</sup> On the difficulties of psychoanalysis to gain a foothold in France, see Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 224.

<sup>141</sup> Mauss was interested in psychology since his youth. Éric Smadja writes that Mauss was intrigued by the works of French psychologist Théodule Ribot, which he read in 1890. Éric Smadja, *On Symbolism and Symbolisation: The Work of Freud, Durkheim and Mauss* (London: Routledge, 2018), 42.

<sup>142</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 223-224.

<sup>143</sup> Gabriel Ignatow, "Mauss's Lectures to Psychologists: A Case for Holistic Sociology," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 12.1 (2012): 3-21.

<sup>144</sup> Mauss, "Rapports réels et pratiques," 5.

<sup>145</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 223.

cooperation.<sup>146</sup> The lecture warrants brief discussion, because it reveals important issues that Mauss was inspired to explore and that required interdisciplinary collaboration between psychology and sociology. These issues are crucial to Mauss's approach to the movement.

Mauss begins the lecture by acknowledging the uniqueness of the two disciplines of psychology and sociology in terms of the specific interest of each of them:

We know that there are two special kingdoms: the kingdom of consciousness on the one hand, and the kingdom of collective consciousness and community on the other. We know that these two kingdoms are in the world and in life, and are in nature. And this is already something.<sup>147</sup>

Mauss provides a general overview of sociology and psychology, a comparison and evaluation of the two sciences, which may be useful for further collaboration. He further mentions several ideas put forward by psychologists that have been and should be useful to sociologists: (i) the concept of mental vigor; (ii) the concept of psychosis; (iii) the notion of symbol and essentially symbolic activity of the mind; (iv) the notion of instinct. In discussing these themes, Mauss demonstrates the need for an interdisciplinary effort to explore the relationships that exists between the various departments of the psyche, the social life, and the body.

Speaking about what matters in terms of the notion of mental vigor, Mauss brings an example from Polynesia and Australia, namely the phenomenon of *thanatomania*: "In these civilizations, individuals who believe themselves to be in a state of sin or bewitchment allow themselves to die and, indeed, die, without any apparent lesion; sometimes at the appointed time, and often very quickly."<sup>148</sup> Mauss expects "more precise and nuanced" descriptions by psychologists of how such a specific social phenomenon manifests itself in individual consciousness. What are we to make of the human vital instinct: to what extent is it suspended from society, and to what extent can the individual abandon it for non-individual reasons? In other words, he was interested in how social and cultural facts affect the individual will, which he understood as the "the raw instinct of life."<sup>149</sup>

Concerning the second theme of psychosis, Mauss welcomes the progress made by French neurologists and German psychiatrists where the concept of psychosis was substituted by the concept of *idée fixe*, that is, an idea or desire that dominates the mind, an obsession. Mauss sees this hypothesis of a state of all consciousness, a state which in itself has the power

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<sup>146</sup> The first lecture was followed by his second on "Techniques of the body" in 1934.

<sup>147</sup> Mauss, "Rapports réels et pratiques," 5.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

of development, expansion, deviation, reproduction and ramification, and a state which overwhelms the whole of psychological existence, as fruitful and in need of joint study by psychologists and sociologists.<sup>150</sup>

Mauss called for a new approach to the symbol, which requires collaboration between disciplines. In his discussion of the concept of the symbol, Mauss emphasizes the symbolic aspect of social fact, which has long interested him. Also, he was interested in the relation of collective and individual mind:

The word, the verse, the most primitive song are worth only by the commentary with which one can surround their mystique. The activity of the collective mind is even more symbolic than that of the individual mind, but it is so in exactly the same sense. From this point of view, there is only a difference of intensity, of species, there is no difference of kind.<sup>151</sup>

Although, according to Mauss, no sociologist has yet delved deeply enough into the problem of instinct, he believes that it certainly leads to a very rich reservoir of facts which reveals the interdependence of functions of the spirit or states of mind with objects. In other words, the relationship that exists between objects and the body, and in particular between the instinct of being as a whole and its psycho-physiological mechanisms taken together, is revealed.<sup>152</sup>

What interests Mauss is the “assembled psycho-physiological mechanisms.”<sup>153</sup> The study of symbol and the study of rhythm are groups of facts (where the physical and the psychological are closely intertwined), from which Mauss brings interesting sociological observations. In this discussion, Mauss reveals the symbolic nature of words and movements and the nature of their functioning in society:

Signs and symbols are the cries and words, gestures and rites, for example, of etiquette and morality. Basically, these are translations. Indeed, they translate first of all the presence of the group; but also they express again the actions and the reactions of the

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<sup>150</sup> Even though mental confusion, inhibitions, delirium, and hallucinations were all of great interest to Mauss, unlike psychologists, he did not consider them to be pathological manifestations. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 225.

<sup>151</sup> Mauss, “Rapports réels et pratiques,” 13-14.

<sup>152</sup> “For you the idea, the representation and the act, whether it is a flight or a catch, do not only translate such function or state of the spirit in its relation with the things, but they manifest at the same time, in a way always symbolic and partial, the relation which exists between the things and the body and especially the instinct, “Trieb” [drive] of all the being, of its psychophysiological mechanisms put together. But if such is the part of the instinct as regards individual psychology, it is still much greater as regards collective psychology. For what is common to men, it is not only the identical images which produce in their consciousness the same things, it is still, especially, the identity of the instincts affected by these things. Men communicate by symbols, we have said; but, more precisely, they can only have these symbols and communicate by them because they have the same instincts. The exaltations, the ecstasies, which create symbols, are proliferations of the instinct.” *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.



instincts of its members, the direct needs of each and all, of their personality, of their reciprocal relations.<sup>154</sup>

For Mauss, the symbol is a genius that lives its own life, acting and multiplying endlessly. It is a fundamental point both in social life and in the life of consciousness. Rhythm is social because it is transmitted from one individual or group to another or others, but it does not function without psychological and even physiological effects. Mauss gives examples of songs and dances, which I will return to in section 1.4.

Asking psychologists to provide a theory of the relationships that exist between the various departments of the psyche, the social life, and the body, Mauss points to the domains of family life and work – the simple, everyday movements that people make. He is very interested in the sequences of instinctive actions that he sees as constituting not only the material but also the social life of human beings.

Mauss points to another area for reflection, which presupposes the totality of the human being: the body, the instincts, the emotions, the will, the perception, and the intellect. This is expectation (not to be confused with attention):

Finally, waiting is one of those facts where emotion, perception, and more precisely the movement and the state of the body directly condition the social state and are conditioned by it. As in all the facts that I have just quoted to you, the triple consideration of the body, the spirit and the social environment must go together.<sup>155</sup>

I conclude this section with a quotation from Mauss that emphasizes the interconnectedness of social facts, and in particular the significance of the totality of social facts for the body, which is a very important remark for our further discussion of Mauss's understanding of movement:

In reality, in our science, in sociology, we hardly ever find, except in pure literature, in pure science, the man divided into faculties. We are always dealing with his body, with his mentality as a whole, given at once and all at once. Basically, body, soul, society, everything here is mixed up. They are no longer special facts of this or that part of the mentality, they are the facts of a very complex order, the most complex imaginable, which interest us. It is what I suppose to call phenomena of totality in which not only the group, but also all personalities, all individuals participate in their moral, social, mental and, above all, corporeal or material wholeness.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

### 1.2.3. Other sociological and philosophical influences

This chapter also introduces authors who can be seen as alternative influences on Mauss in order to find out where Mauss looked for intellectual stimulus and who gave him the intellectual support to develop an approach and methods in sociological research that were completely different from those of Durkheim. This section thus examines Hubert, Hertz, Tarde, Bergson, and Nietzsche.

First of all, the role of Mauss's friends and closest collaborators, Henri Hubert and Robert Hertz, must be highlighted. Hertz, a student of Mauss, joined the team of the *Année Sociologique* in 1905. He was interested in the 'dark' sides of the human mind and also in the secret of forgiveness: how and why does society erase and forget sin and crime.<sup>157</sup> Mauss referred to Hertz's work throughout his life to show the importance of the work of his young colleague who died in the war.

Hubert, Mauss's "twin brother"<sup>158</sup> was also the member of *Année Sociologique*. Since its founding, they jointly published a series of works, that, according to Szokolczai and Thomassen, "became increasingly distant from Durkheimian terminology and methodology, hardly even referring to Durkheim by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century."<sup>159</sup> Hubert was Mauss's faithful partner in correcting what they perceived as the shortcomings of Durkheim's sociology.

As Mauss and his close friends searched for the alternative, Szokolczai and Thomassen highlight Tarde, Bergson, and Nietzsche as important influences.<sup>160</sup> I start my discussion with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), because he was an author whose works Mauss discussed a lot with his students and closest friends.

Mauss and Hertz used to read Nietzsche in order to "escape the monotonic boredom of French positivism and German neo-Kantianism, moving beyond Durkheim in search for new ideas and new tools."<sup>161</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen regard Nietzsche's influence as evident in two respects: firstly, in how Mauss uses the etymologies, and secondly, in his creative usage of facts and hypotheses.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 146.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>159</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen, "Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving," 70.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* Szokolczai and Thomassen also mention Péguy. Given the complicated relationship between Mauss and Péguy, and Mauss's criticism of Péguy's "unilateral and monolithic thinking," as described in Fournier's biography, I will not discuss his influence on Mauss. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 97-99.

<sup>161</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen, "Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving," 71. After the loss of his friends Hubert and Hertz (the latter was characterized by a very lively and vivid interpretations of Nietzsche), Mauss remained interested in Nietzsche.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 80, 82.

As for Henri Bergson (1859–1941), Mauss definitely was acquainted with his work. Bergson can be seen as the author whose opposing ideas led Mauss to articulate his own understanding. In response to “The Two Sources of Morals and Religion” (1932), which brought up the opposition between technology, civilization, and *homo faber*, the essential and constitutive attribute of humanity, Mauss openly criticized Bergson for relegating the facts studies by sociologists.<sup>163</sup> Bergson’s idea of linking morality to biology, as opposed to “superficial” civilization and reason, Mauss posited, could not escape such criticism. But most importantly, Mauss responded to Bergson’s entire oeuvre at a deeper, more fundamental level. As Nathan Schlanger comments, “it was with his technology, with the study of traditionally efficacious actions (*acts traditionnels efficaces*) which he now advocated, that Mauss sought to overturn Bergson’s individualist and mystical *Homo faber* with a rationalist and humanist conception of the whole human being, *l’homme total*.”<sup>164</sup> To summarize briefly, Schlanger points out that Mauss, in his publications and teaching from the 1920s to the 1940s, made it clear that this mysterious figure of *Homo faber*, endowed with “creative virtue,” does not belong to a deep life of the spirit, as Bergson thought, but to a common life, and that this is a reflection of a practical mind that is both collective and individual.<sup>165</sup> Hence, for Mauss’s interest in the body’s “physiology, the coordination of articulated motions by which it function and by which it embodies and conveys meaning”<sup>166</sup> one must be in part thankful to Bergson and his vitalist and theological trust in the organic body.

Last of these key influences comes Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904), who was Durkheim’s main rival for the title of inventor of French sociology. Tarde was interested in crime and criminality, as well as in psychological motivation, especially unconscious impulses and madness. He observed “waves” and patterns of criminal activity. Szokolczai and Thomassen note that in terms of areas of empirical research, Tarde’s research was very similar to Durkheim’s – law, crime, the impact of the division of labor, and the understanding of

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<sup>163</sup> Nathan Schlanger, “The Study of Techniques as an Ideological Challenge: Technology, Nation, and Humanity in the Work of Marcel Mauss,” *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute* (1998): 196-197.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>165</sup> Nathan Schlanger, “L’insaisissable technologie d’André Leroi-Gourhan. Des tendances et des faits des années 1930 à l’après-guerre,” in *André Leroi-Gourhan: l’homme, tout simplement*, ed. Philippe Soulier (Paris: De Bocard, 2015), 112. <https://hal.science/hal-03889260> [accessed 12 December 2023]. For more about Mauss and Bergson, see Nathan Schlanger, “Introduction. Technological Commitments: Marcel Mauss and the Study of Techniques in the French Social Sciences,” in *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, ed. Nathan Schlanger (New York: Durkheim Press/ Berghahn Books, 2006), 16-18.

<sup>166</sup> Schlanger, “The Study of Techniques,” 198-199.

collective behavior were overlapping themes.<sup>167</sup> It is no secret that he was focused on individual creativity. But perhaps this, together with his research methodology, which was criticized by Durkheim, may have had some influence on the development of Mauss's ideas. Tarde's insights into the chaotic nature of social reality, which is governed by regularity and repetition, guaranteeing order and change at the same time, as well as his focus on the social aspect of imitation, could not have escaped Mauss's attention. The same can be said of Tarde's rejection of the distinction between nature and culture, as well as between consciousness and the unconscious, as absolute distinctions contrary to the spirit of science,<sup>168</sup> also Tarde's critique of "art for art's sake."<sup>169</sup> Mauss treats Tarde's "doctrine" of imitation as "unrealistic and lightweight" and criticizes his books as those which "contain copious descriptions, albeit banal, lacking in historical perspective and, even more so, in logic."<sup>170</sup> In other words, Mauss does not accept Tarde's "rule of imitation,"<sup>171</sup> just as he never accepted the other 'ruling' principles in sociology. Moreover, he regards imitation as an aspect of behavior that must be considered in the light of other social facts. This phenomenon cannot be confined to individuals, but must be seen in a social and cultural context: "these 'habits' do not just vary with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestige."<sup>172</sup>

If one were to compare with Tarde, Mauss's way to bring the phenomenon of imitation to the social and cultural context is to speak about education and "borrowing," because "borrowing presupposes indeed a definite genre of historical connections between societies and social facts."<sup>173</sup> Mauss adds an important educational factor to the phenomenon of imitation in "Techniques of the Body": "the notion of education could be superimposed on that of imitation."<sup>174</sup> Both education and "borrowing" refer to the communicative and symbolic nature of phenomena. This interpretation was a key feature of Mauss's approach to movement, to which I will return in section 1.3.

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<sup>167</sup> Arpad Szakolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, "Gabriel Tarde and René Girard. Imitation and the Foundations of Social Life," in *From Anthropology to Social Theory*, by Arpad Szakolczai and Bjørn Thomassen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 48. In this essay one can read more about the relationship between Durkheim and Tarde.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>169</sup> Fournier, "Durkheim, L'Année sociologique," 128-129.

<sup>170</sup> Marcel Mauss, "The Nation (1920/1953, extracts)," in *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, ed. Nathan Schlanger (2006), 45.

<sup>171</sup> Marcel Mauss, "Civilisations, their Elements and Forms (1929/1930)," in *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, ed. Nathan Schlanger (2006), 67.

<sup>172</sup> Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body (1935)," in *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, ed. Nathan Schlanger (2006), 80.

<sup>173</sup> Mauss, "Civilisations, their Elements and Forms," 67.

<sup>174</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 81.

Most importantly, Mauss, as always, emphasizes all three dimensions of *l'homme total*:

It is precisely this notion of the prestige of the person who performs the ordered, authorized, tested action vis-a-vis the imitating individual that contains all the social element. The imitative action which follows contains the psychological element and the biological element. But the whole, the ensemble, is conditioned by the three elements indissolubly mixed together.<sup>175</sup>

It is true, that “the internal, spiritual aspect of imitation is central for Tarde’s theory.”<sup>176</sup> Nevertheless, Tarde was also known for his original insights into society. Mauss rejected Tarde’s attempt to explain, through imitation, the whole of society, but not the phenomenon itself. Mauss’s suggested additions to the interpretation of imitation and his critique should not be seen as a negation of the importance of Tarde’s insights. Also, Tarde’s belief that civilization is based on love and not fear<sup>177</sup> is in line with Mauss’s insights into graceful benevolence as the driving force behind relationships and actions in society.

#### *1.2.4. Influences from ethnography and anthropology*

In this subsection I discuss authors whose work was important for Mauss’s insights into the role of the movement who are not part of the French sociological school and its struggles. These include Van Gennep, Levy-Bruhl, Huizinga, and Radin.

I begin with Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957)<sup>178</sup> who influenced Mauss in particular because of his “organic” or even “cosmic” understanding of social rhythms, and “his careful balancing act between change/movement and stability/order within the orders of reality.” Szokolcz and Thomassen also note that Van Gennep avoided of a Tarde-like “celebration” of liminality or boundary breaking.<sup>179</sup> Van Gennep was interested in the rites, which he classified conceptually – according to Szokolcz and Thomass, the sequential structure of rites was his central innovation.<sup>180</sup> He distinguished rites that mark the passage of individual or social

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen, “Gabriel Tarde,” 55.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>178</sup> Although Van Gennep is someone not uninvolved in the Durkheimian struggles – he was one of Durkheim’s fiercest opponents. Arpad Szokolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, “Arnold Van Gennep. Liminal Rites and Rhythms of Life,” in *From Anthropology to Social Theory* (2019), 23. In this essay, one can read more about Van Gennep’s criticism of Durkheim, which led to Van Gennep’s status as an “outsider” to the Academy. However, as Szokolcz and Thomassen summarize, “Without ever holding an academic position in France, Van Gennep would become known as the father of French folklore.” Ibid., 28.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>180</sup> Szokolcz and Thomassen note Van Gennep’s “mathematical” ambition to classify the rites – he identifies “sixteen possible ways of classification of any single rite.” Ibid., 38. On the other hand, Mauss blamed Van Gennep for the tendency “to jump all over history and ethnography rather than analysing a few representative examples.” Jenny Hockey, “The Importance of Being Intuitive: Arnold Van Gennep’s the Rites of Passage,” *Mortality* 7.2 (2002): 210.

groups from one status to another, and rites, which mark transition in the passage of time. He stressed the importance of transitions in societies, calling transitional rites liminal rites.<sup>181</sup> Van Gennep's "in-depth study of material and symbolic culture," his understanding of social phenomena as complex, vibrant, and dynamic, his attention to performance and rhythms,<sup>182</sup> were all in one way or another incorporated into Mauss's works and lectures. In particular, his insights on boundaries of embodied experience will remain relevant for my later reflections on the transformative aspects of movement. Change is inherent in the structure of social life and takes place across boundaries that create and maintain symbolic meaning. As Szokolcz and Thomass summarize:

Van Gennep's theory does not essentialise the boundary [...]. Change is inherent to the structure. Movement is part of 'order' in his cosmic vision. In rites of passage human beings touch the 'prohibited' land of unbound freedom and danger. The pivoting of the sacred emerges in the constant movement between the limitless and of the familiar and the foreign; social life, conceived as such, is a constant movement of sanctification, de-sanctification and re-sanctification of the boundaries that are necessary to render human and social life both possible and meaningful.<sup>183</sup>

The second influence, Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1857–1939), was one of the founders of the Institute of Ethnology in Paris in 1925. The main question to which Levy-Bruhl dedicated his scientific attention was how people participated in the world at different times and in different spaces.<sup>184</sup> The answer to this question was important for Mauss's approach to movement.

According to Szokolcz and Thomass, Levy-Bruhl strongly argued that thinking can take place without concepts. His notions of "recognition" and "presence" were the equivalents of such thinking.<sup>185</sup> Levy-Bruhl emphasized the fundamental unity of experience given by participation. The presence is the presence of an overwhelming supernatural force or of simply another living being relating in the same space and time which must be understood as the ultimate gift. In this way Levy-Bruhl's interpretation relates to Mauss's ideas about the gift, which I will discuss in detail below (1.3.2.). The unity of presence is given, though it should not be taken for granted, neither can it be explained through conceptual thinking, because it is in no need of explanation at all.<sup>186</sup> Levy-Bruhl's ideas on participation emphasize the concreteness of experience as an essential feature of the modes of thinking of "men living in

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<sup>181</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen, "Arnold Van Gennep," 25.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>184</sup> Arpad Szokolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, "Lucien Levy-Bruhl and Colin Turnbull. Participation, Experience, and Home," in *From Anthropology to Social Theory* (2019), 90. Lucien was a close friend of Mauss. *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-102.

groups.”<sup>187</sup> This linking of experience, understood as immanent to individuals and inseparable from participation and to the concrete conditions of experience, as well as his emphasis on the “realness” of the imitational activity in ritual or theatre that produces a genuine effect on reality,<sup>188</sup> are important contributions in the development of thinking of his contemporaries about movement, including Mauss.

The author who influenced Mauss’s reflections on movement and provided the most insights into the transformative aspect of movement<sup>189</sup> was Johan Huizinga (1872–1945). Huizinga was an anthropologist and historian, but his approach to history was far from conventional. He criticized traditional historiography for its focus on historical laws and the priority of social and economic history over culture.<sup>190</sup> Drawing on the common root of the Greek words culture (*paideia*) and game (*paidia*),<sup>191</sup> Huizinga argues that culture and civilization emerged from play. He presents *Homo Ludens*, Man the Player, as an alternative to the understanding of man as *Homo Sapiens* and *Homo Faber*.<sup>192</sup>

According to Szokolcz and Thomass, Huizinga’s focus on play – an area neglected by social theorists – shows affinities with the work of Mauss.<sup>193</sup> Like Mauss, he stresses the non-utilitarian nature of activity. Play, music and rhythm are sources of cultural development and transcendence because they create order through the experience of beauty and gratitude, which is the order of the sacred.<sup>194</sup> Dance is a perfect form of play:

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>189</sup> Moreover, Huizinga’s ideas about play may have also influenced Mauss’s alternative classification of aesthetic phenomena, which I will discuss in section 1.4.2. However, both authors were developing these ideas at the same time, so it is not easy to determine who influenced whom. Mauss’s “Manuel d’ethnographie” resulted from the courses he gave from 1926 to 1939 at the Institute of Ethnology of the Sorbonne. Huizinga’s “Homo Ludens” was originally published in Dutch in 1938.

<sup>190</sup> Arpad Szokolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, “Gregory Bateson and Johan Huizinga: Schismogenesis and Play,” in *From Anthropology to Social Theory* (2019), 160.

<sup>191</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens. The Study of a Play Element in Culture* (London: Routledge, 1980), 160-162.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>193</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen, “Gregory Bateson and Johan Huizinga,” 165.

<sup>194</sup> “Play, we said, lies outside the reasonableness of practical life; has nothing to do with necessity or utility, duty or truth. All this is equally true of music. Furthermore, musical forms are determined by values which transcend logical ideas, which even transcend our ideas of the visible and the tangible. These musical values can only be understood in terms of the designations we use for them, specific names like rhythm and harmony which are equally applicable to play or poetry. Indeed, rhythm and harmony are factors of all three—poetry, music, and play—in an absolutely equal sense. But whereas in poetry the words themselves lift the poem, in part at least, out of pure play into the sphere of ideation and judgement, music never leaves the play-sphere. The reason why poetry has such a prominently liturgical and social function in archaic cultures lies precisely in its close connection, or rather indissoluble union, with musical recitation. All true ritual is sung, danced and played. We moderns have lost the sense for ritual and sacred play. Our civilization is worn with age and too sophisticated. But nothing helps us to regain that sense so much as musical sensibility. In feeling music we feel ritual. In the enjoyment of music, whether it is meant to express religious ideas or not, the perception of the beautiful and the sensation of holiness merge, and the distinction between play and seriousness is whelmed in that fusion.” Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 158-159.

The connections between playing and dancing are so close that they hardly need illustrating. It is not that dancing has something of play in it or about it, rather that it is an integral part of play: the relationship is one of direct participation, almost of essential identity. Dancing is a particular and particularly perfect form of playing.<sup>195</sup>

The transformative power of play is related to its performative nature, as well as to its spatial and temporal constraints.<sup>196</sup> Moreover, as Szokolcz and Thomass point out, it is very important to distinguish and maintain the boundaries between play and ‘real’ life, in other words, not to destroy play by saying that “everything is play,”<sup>197</sup> but to perceive the sphere of play as an activity with its own disposition. “In play we move below the level of the serious, as the child does; but we can also move above it – in the realm of the beautiful and the sacred.”<sup>198</sup>

The combination of freedom and constraint, the acceptance of the rules of the game, the relationship-oriented nature of the play, and the establishment of the game as a new boundary between the dreamland and the everyday, its reality-transforming magic and its implications for social life – all these aspects of play, together with aspects already mentioned above, are crucial aspects of the embodied activity in which Mauss was interested. Especially if one recalls Huizinga’s Indo-European etymology of play, with its references to “bodily exercise and rhythmic movement, including dancing, and especially the sense of ‘leaping’,” and its English references to “‘rapid movement’, ‘gesture’, and ‘clapping of hands’.”<sup>199</sup> Embodied, actual involvement and participation, or real participation (“the lived experiences by which we become what we are”) as Szokolcz and Thomass underline, are the crucial aspects of the ritual. Play is a ritual. It is not only a real event, but an event that inspires the imagination – another foundation of Huizinga’s anthropology. As Szokolcz and Thomass explain,

A proper sacred performance must evoke the experience of beauty, and even if what we see is a performance, not a real event, our experience of beauty immediately makes

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 164-165.

<sup>196</sup> “Play is distinct from ‘ordinary’ life both as to locality and duration. This is the third main characteristic of play: its secludedness, its limitedness. It is ‘played out’ within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning.

Play begins, and then at a certain moment it is ‘over’. It plays itself to an end. While it is in progress all is movement, change, alternation, succession, association, separation. But immediately connected with its limitation as to time there is a further curious feature of play: it at once assumes fixed form as a cultural phenomenon. Once played, it endures as a new-found creation of the mind, a treasure to be retained by the memory. It is transmitted, it becomes tradition. It can be repeated at any time, whether it be ‘child’s play’ or a game of chess, or at fixed intervals like a mystery. In this faculty of repetition lies one of the most essential qualities of play. It holds good not only of play as a whole but also of its inner structure. In nearly all the higher forms of play the elements of repetition and alternation (as in the refrain), are like the warp and woof of a fabric.” Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>197</sup> This levelling leads to the commodification of the game – “the play becomes a business.” Ibid., 200.

<sup>198</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen, “Gregory Bateson and Johan Huizinga,” 167.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 171.



it real, by spiritually transfiguring the staged scene into piece of reality, even into a reality of higher order than ‘mere’ everyday life. The encounter with beauty is always moving; in extremis, it moves us to tears, making tears of joy, beyond laughter, into the most characteristic human gesture of expressing playfulness.<sup>200</sup>

The spirit of playfulness, which Huizinga attributes not only to humans but also to animals, is a factor that has been very active throughout the cultural process and determines many of the fundamental forms of social life.<sup>201</sup> It is the guardian of living culture.

Lastly, the American anthropologist Paul Radin (1833–1959) needs to be mentioned as one of the influential thinkers of the time. Radin taught in various places and inspired people wherever he went, but he never secured long-term employment in any institution. He preferred intensive fieldwork. Mauss called him “one of the best ethnographers of his generation.”<sup>202</sup> According to Szakolcz and Thomassen, Radin’s *trickster*<sup>203</sup> is one of the most important and useful concepts developed by anthropologists to understand contemporary reality. Its central feature in practically every tradition, that of ambivalence or ambiguity,<sup>204</sup> along with other interesting insights, very likely influenced Mauss’s ideas about the multidirectional, diversely motivated, and creative interaction between the protagonist and the (socio-cultural) environment. In other words, Radin’s ideas contributed to Mauss’s emphasis on the creativity of the individual actor.

#### 1.2.5. Mauss and Marx

In a later section that is dedicated to Mauss’s approach to movement, the question will arise (1.3.1. footnote 231), did Mauss read Marx? David Graeber in particular addresses this, explaining that Mauss must be familiar with *Das Kapital*, but he probably was not aware that he was addressing many of the same questions as Marx. Mauss was approaching the issue of alienation from a very different intellectual tradition,<sup>205</sup> and because of that, he was able to provide “a useful corrective to some of the more common blind spots of Marxian anthropology.”<sup>206</sup> Thus, Graeber states, Mauss’s and Marx’s works can be viewed as a perfect complement. Marx was criticizing capitalist society, meanwhile Mauss was searching for

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>201</sup> Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 1, 173.

<sup>202</sup> Arpad Szakolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, “Paul Radin. The Trickster,” in *From Anthropology to Social Theory* (2019), 128.

<sup>203</sup> Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian mythology* (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1956).

<sup>204</sup> Szakolczai, Thomassen, “Paul Radin,” 124, 135.

<sup>205</sup> Graeber, “Mauss Revisited,” 158.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 163.

possible alternatives. Mauss's knowledge and methods of comparative ethnology – “the only discipline capable of addressing the full range of human possibilities”<sup>207</sup> – were much more suited for such a task. On the other hand, Fournier comments that Mauss was concerned with the inadequate interpretation of Marx in intellectual circles in France,<sup>208</sup> suggesting that Mauss's knowledge of Marx's works was certainly not superficial.<sup>209</sup> Moreover, Mauss's intense socialist political activity and his journalistic writings were aspects of Mauss's life<sup>210</sup> that undoubtedly brought him to the ideas and questions that Marx raised and addressed.

## 1.2. Marcel Mauss on Movement

In this part of the chapter, I will deal with the topic of movement as presented by Mauss himself. As I have already shown, he was influenced by a number of theoretical sources that shaped his own approach. I will present Mauss's approach to movement as a particularly complex one, and one that can serve as an alternative to both an instrumentalist approach to human action and an approach that tends to abstract movement from its tasks in the sociocultural world. I will do this by reviewing three phases of Mauss's research, firstly related to the themes of social action, which highlight the creative dynamics of individual and collective action (1.3.1.); then the gift relations, which highlight the qualitative (in a moral sense) aspect of movement (1.3.2.); and finally, techniques of the body, which presents the inextricability of physical, psychological, and social factors in action (1.3.3.). I aim to show how Mauss's approach can be useful for the study of some of the least explored aspects of movement, namely the transformative aspect of movement to the last part of the chapter, and that of community building.<sup>211</sup>

The complexity of Mauss's approach to movement will be presented by discussing his theory of social action as well as two of his works – “The Gift” (1925) and “Techniques of the Body” (1934), which will be examined in chronological order to emphasize the development of Mauss's thought, connected with his life and intellectual journey as presented in the first part of the chapter (1.1.).

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>208</sup> “By what right do our critics limit us to a narrow, distorted, and intentionally diminished Marx?” Mauss indignantly exclaimed. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 101.

<sup>209</sup> Unlike Arnold van Gennep, Paul Radin and Johann Huizinga, Mauss's personal library archive (now housed in the Media Library of the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris) does not contain any of Karl Marx's works.

<sup>210</sup> Which, according to John Gledhill, only recently entered into anthropological discussions of Mauss's scholarly ideas. Hohn Gledhill, “Taking Another Look at Marx and Anthropology,” *Dialectical anthropology* 35.1 (2011): 9-10.

<sup>211</sup> In the search for the community-building aspect of the movement, Mauss's theory of social action provides a comprehensive answer. A summary of the aspects of a social action theory that are relevant to community building can be found in footnote 231.

The presentation of the theory of social action will reflect Mauss's early quest for the unity of intellectual work with the challenges of life, as well as his own efforts to bring the practical benefits of science to society. The discussion of social action theory will emphasize the collectivity aspect, as the theory sought conscious transformative action through involvement in the economic movement from below. The discussion of "The Gift" will help understand the role of human actions in society, understood as a symbolically mediated interaction. It will also point to a socially oriented, communicative, and therefore non-reductive nature of human action. The analysis of "Techniques of the Body" will present the final stage in the articulation of Mauss's ideas, as he continues the dialogue with psychology and focuses on the role of body movements in maintaining or changing life patterns, which means maintaining and changing social institutions. The creative potential of human movement is brought to the surface. The chronological presentation should not be taken as indicating that in taking a closer look at the phenomena of human activity, Mauss abandoned the ideas he previously held. I suggest that they should be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. All these aspects brought together can be seen as the axis of Mauss's anthropology of movement.

### *1.3.1. Social action*

From the time of his May 1899 lecture to the Groupe des Étudiants Collectivistes that attempted to define "social action,"<sup>212</sup> Mauss repeatedly returned to this topic. As was described in earlier (1.1.), Mauss was not the intellectual of a kind "cut off from the world."<sup>213</sup> Even if he never subordinated sociology to political ideas, because, in Keith Hart's words, he "kept a sort of Chinese wall between his academic and political interests,"<sup>214</sup> his personal involvement in the three arenas of political, intellectual, and the administrative life<sup>215</sup> could not fail to affect and fruitfully benefit each another and thus it is important to see them in relationship.

As Mauss was convinced as to the importance of economic structures, his aim was to provide socialism with economic knowledge and methods. Mauss drew inspiration from

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<sup>212</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 101.

<sup>213</sup> As Fournier writes, Mauss did not understand life overly intellectually. Mauss considered himself, to use his own expression, as a person "ill-suited for the intellectual life." Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 204, 52.

<sup>214</sup> Hart, "Mauss's Economic Vision," 35.

<sup>215</sup> Marcel Fournier, "Marcel Mauss ou a dádiva de si," (Conference given at the 16th national meeting of ANPOCS, Caxambu, October 1992), 10.

[https://repositorio.ufsc.br/bitstream/handle/123456789/1884/marcel\\_fournier.pdf?sequence=1](https://repositorio.ufsc.br/bitstream/handle/123456789/1884/marcel_fournier.pdf?sequence=1) [accessed 13 December 2021].

English anthropologists such as William Halse Rivers, Charles Gabriel Seligman, James George Frazer, Bronisław Malinowski, and Robert Ranulph Marett, and from established socialist cooperatives in that country.<sup>216</sup> As a journalist with *L'Humanité*, *Le Populaire*, and *Mouvement Socialiste* he became familiar with the situations in different countries. And as a sociologist with a deep understanding of the complexity of societies, he advocated a revolution that would use not only political but also economic and legal means for its ends.<sup>217</sup>

Mauss criticized both communists and social democrats for their “fetishization of politics” and the role of the state. As Graeber shows, Mauss saw the role of the state as limited to creating a legal framework that would make it easier for workers to control their industries.<sup>218</sup> His vision of social revolution was that the common people of different nations would be allowed to understand how they could have control over themselves.<sup>219</sup> Therefore, socialism must be created from the bottom up, not imposed by a party or a state. The economic movement from below must be based on syndicalism, cooperation, and mutual insurance.<sup>220</sup> In other words, he was looking for the social revolution without pain or suffering.

This section aims to draw attention to two important and interconnected points of the theory: first, the relation between the individual and collective in social action; second, Mauss’s understanding of the consciousness in action. The significance of action or of the activity must be seen as the underlying imperative, in conjunction with aspects of the theory. The subsequent discussion on “The Gift” and “Techniques of the Body” will also touch on these points, revealing new aspects of the issues at stake. What is important in the theory of social action, however, is that it was a real search for transformation – for new ways to act, renewed practices and social institutions. Mauss was convinced that “nothing comes from nothing: new institutions can only be created from old ones, because the later are the only ones that exist.”<sup>221</sup> It was the search for action that would change the prevailing structure of society and,

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<sup>216</sup> Such as the Rochdale pioneers, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, the Fabian Society, and the Labour Party.

<sup>217</sup> He wrote in *Mouvement Socialiste* that a socialist cooperative is “a society whose members are driven not only by the legitimate desire to improve their well-being but also by a wish to abolish wage labor by every path and every means [...]” Fournier, “Marcel Mauss,” 108; Marcel Mauss, “Le Congrès international des coopératives socialistes,” *Mouvement Socialiste*, year 2 (October 15, 1900): 499–501.

<sup>218</sup> Graeber, “Mauss Revisited,” 156.

<sup>219</sup> Hart, “Mauss’s Economic Vision,” 39.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. Mauss’s critique of the Bolsheviks was connected with this vision. Graeber writes, “He was, from the start, an enthusiastic supporter of the revolution, but highly suspicious of the Bolsheviks. Mauss felt the whole project of imposing socialism by force was oxymoronic; he was repelled by the notion of a party line, and while he made due allowances for the difficult wartime situation in which the Soviet regime was forced to operate, decried its use of terror, its contempt for democratic institutions and above all for the rule of law. If there was one common theme to his objections, it was his disgust at the Bolsheviks’ cold-blooded utilitarianism (‘their cynical notion that ‘the end justifies the means,’) he later wrote, ‘made them seem mediocre even amongst politicians.’” Graeber, “Mauss Revisited,” 156.

<sup>221</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 11.

consequently, people's consciousness. It was Mauss's complex knowledge put in practice in service to the goals of society.

In terms of a definition of social action, Mauss formulates it as essentially a conscious action aimed at the interests of the community.<sup>222</sup> Clearly, the definition covers two points, but to take the latter issue of community first, this leads directly to the question of how did Mauss understand the relationship between the individual and the collective in the context of economic exchange?<sup>223</sup>

Mauss emphasized the need for collectivity for the individual, as the former is a prerequisite for the latter be able to assert any sense of power. But the individual should not get lost in the collective totality. Unionism and cooperation are activities that, from the one side, "improve the destiny of the individual," but also they teach subordination to each other, sacrifice, and a sense of the collective. Mauss advocated giving a lot (his own example was to give much of his time and money for the socialist cooperative movement<sup>224</sup>), but without giving too much. Thus, as Fournier puts it, a fair balance between collective ideals and healthy pragmatism<sup>225</sup> can be found in Mauss's theory.

To go deeper into this theme, Mauss saw the opposition between communism and individualism as the fundamental error.<sup>226</sup> This may help understand concerns such those raised by Seth Leacock, that "for Mauss, the individual was of no importance and was usually completely ignored, even in his later work on psychological problems."<sup>227</sup> Leacock was right that Mauss was not interested in an individual in terms of a person independent and isolated from society, because in fact he was certain that there was no such thing at all. Mauss was convinced that "everything in a society – even the most special things – everything is above all a function, and is functioning" and that "nothing can be understood except in relation to everything else, to the complete collectivity and not simply to particular parts." If "there is no

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<sup>222</sup> Fournier, "Marcel Mauss ou a dádiva de si," 5-6.

<sup>223</sup> It should be mentioned that Mauss did not restrict Cooperatives to economic goals. He considered that they needed to have social goals as well, to develop charitable works, and community centers. As Fournier writes, "Mauss believed this was the only way to 'cement not only the interests but also the collective soul of cooperators.' Not everything was commerce or business: there was also the 'moral world.' The watchword for the immediate future was therefore: 'More internal effort, more moral effort, more productive effort. [. . .] With that as our aim, cooperation will prevail.'" Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 209.

<sup>224</sup> Mauss was personally involved in cooperatives. In 1900 he founded a small society with Philippe Landrieu. La Boulangerie (The bakery) was called the new Coopérative Socialiste, founded by thirty-eight members. Although it was not very successful project, it did not lessen Mauss's interest and belief in cooperative action. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 110; Fournier, "Marcel Mauss ou a dádiva de si," 6.

<sup>225</sup> Fournier, "Marcel Mauss ou a dádiva de si," 5-6.

<sup>226</sup> Graeber, "Mauss Revisited," 159.

<sup>227</sup> Leacock, "The Ethnological Theory," 61.

social phenomenon which is not an integral part of the social whole,”<sup>228</sup> then the individual is also a part of the social whole and its development. However, that the way in which the modern human being perceives itself is a consequence of the development of society, past and present practices, is not a denial of the individual’s own individuality. What Mauss was intending to do in the later works, as mentioned by Leacock, was to make psychologists and other scholars interested in the individual mentality aware of the social facts surrounding its formation. Thus, the informative impact of sociology is also present in the social action theory.

The second point of the definition concerns the understanding of the consciousness in action. It is worth noting that Mauss understood socialism as a “phenomenon of consciousness,” therefore social action is mental in the first place. It is a rational act, and to be such it needs two things: inspiration from facts which exist in society; and the scientific explanation of these facts (scientific explanation for Mauss is inseparable from scientific method of observation). But the intervention of science must not bring generalizing interpretations, rather, it must inform those who want to act. In other words, it is not just the activity or perception of an action, not just the awareness of what drives to action, that forms a conscious act. The scientific knowledge does not prove its consciousness. As Fournier writes, Mauss saw social action “equally distant from pure passivity and blind revolt, as far from empty scholastic disputes as from negation.”<sup>229</sup> So what, then, is a conscious act according Mauss?

I argue that what Mauss understands as a conscious act is a transformative act. Mauss’s understanding of conscious action, at least in the context of social action theory, is very much connected with actions of actors of the group, who

1. are very much “sociologically” informed;
2. are aware of their time;
3. are ideologically inspired;<sup>230</sup>
4. search for behaviors which would replace the preexisting ones according new ideas and knowledge.

Since the theory of social action was inspired by the socialist ideas of the time, it is worth noting the aspect of time. Speaking in favor of socialist cooperatives, Mauss stressed the

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<sup>228</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 61.

<sup>229</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 101.

<sup>230</sup> In addition, actors look for ideas that are and will remain vital and faithful to people’s lives.

need to act, inspired by time. He uses such phrases as “immediately practicable” to describe cooperatives, which he believes is a way “to live the socialist life immediately.”<sup>231</sup>)

The aspect of creativity is essential in social action theory, but it must be seen in relation to the other features of conscious (and transformative) action listed above,<sup>232</sup> which itself should be crowned by the presence of action as an end in itself and not as a tool or instrument for various manipulations. For example, Mauss did not see the cooperatives as the instrument of political indoctrination. The “foretaste” of change, the idea that life can be different, the belief in such ideas comes from the experience of the difference as such. The consciousness of one’s own situation comes from the comparison, which takes its roots in the experience of the cooperative movement. This is very important theme which I will return to in the last part of the chapter (1.5.). Here I finish with movement as the end in itself, and such an understanding of movement is most present in the next work of Mauss to be discussed below, “The Gift”.

### 1.3.2. *The Gift*

As mentioned earlier (1.1.2.5), it is not useful, and perhaps even dangerous, to separate Mauss’s intellectual activity from his political activity, especially in relation to “The Gift”. According David Graeber and others,<sup>233</sup> it is very important to read the most famous of Mauss’s essays, “The Gift,” in the context of his other sociopolitical writings such as “A Sociological Assessment of Bolshevism,” which was published in the same year, 1925. Also, Hart reminds

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<sup>231</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 102. The question may arise here as to whether Mauss was influenced by Marx, because the theory of social action is somewhat reminiscent of the philosophy of praxis. The assumption of direct influence must be rejected in the light of the facts of Mauss’s intellectual journey discussed in the previous section. However, I will make some remarks on Marx’s philosophy of praxis and Mauss’s theory of social action here as well. Marx passionately believed in humanity’s ability for conscious creative activity, which he believed to be the essence of humans as a species. He, like Mauss, cared about how to realize the creative nature of man. But Marx saw the solution in the idealized form of communist society (Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 651.), while Mauss was preparing a method that could bring about change without completely destroying existing structures.

<sup>232</sup> If one wants to grasp the aspect of the community building in movement, one should emphasize the individuals’ attentiveness to the factors of life, their observation and analysis, and, above all, the desire to act in order to change the conditions of life. Individual experience comes at the interface with science, which provides tools for analyzing empirical experience. Politics helps to find creative solutions to the totality of social facts. Action does not become a tool, it does not lose its creative tension, the epicentre of which is the tension between the experiencing individual and the collectively created and therefore collectively re-created life.

<sup>233</sup> Marcel Fournier, “Marcel Mauss, l’ethnologie et la politique: le don,” *Anthropologie et sociétés* 19.1-2 (1995): 57-69; Hart, “Mauss’s Economic Vision,” 34-44; Arpad Szokolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving or Revisiting Foundations,” in *From Anthropology to Social Theory* (2019); Grégoire Mallard, “The Gift Revisited: Marcel Mauss on War, Debt, and the Politics of Reparations,” *Sociological Theory* 29.4 (2011): 225-247. “It was no coincidence then that Mauss’ two most important published works of that decade were, on the one hand, his *Sociological Assessment of Bolshevism*, and on the other, “The Gift,” both published in the same year of 1925. They were clearly meant as two legs of the same intellectual project. Mauss apparently decided it was time to bring the results of comparative ethnography—crude and undeveloped though he well knew them to be—to bear, in order to sketch out at least the outlines of what a more viable alternative might be like.” Graeber, “Mauss Revisited,” 157.

that during the exchange rate crisis of 1922–1924, Mauss was a prolific financial journalist for *Populaire*,<sup>234</sup> thus, besides reading “The Gift,” it is worth getting acquainted with his reports as well.

Without a doubt, “The Gift” has much to do with Mauss’s theoretical and practical interests in the cooperative movement, and hence, with the theory of social action. The last chapter of “The Gift,” sets out a series of conclusions and is divided to “Moral Conclusions,” “Conclusions for Economic Sociology and Political Economy,” and “Conclusions Regarding General Sociology and Morality.” Concerns about the situation of workers, and arguments for the need for social insurance<sup>235</sup> as well as for the fair payment<sup>236</sup> take place in the first two sections, but the last section is also permeated with great concern for the happiness of people of all social classes. After all, Mauss was seeking “to create [for the worker] a little security in this unnatural and cruel society in which he lives.”<sup>237</sup> The bottom-up economic movement he promoted in his political journalism – syndicalism, cooperatives, mutual insurance – can, Hart suggests, be seen as a secular version of what Mauss identified in archaic societies.<sup>238</sup> But what Mauss was trying to do in “The Gift” in the first place, was not only to indicate the existential state of his contemporaries,<sup>239</sup> but also, to suggest an alternative. In this way he made useful additions, even corrections, to some blind spots of the contemporary thinking and of Marx’s anthropology and ideas about alienation.<sup>240</sup>

In Graeber’s opinion, Mauss felt it was time to present the results of comparative ethnography so, that at least the outlines of what a more viable alternative could be drawn<sup>241</sup> in the growing power of an impersonal capitalist market. The decline of religious solidarity and traditional forms of authority, along with the rise of problems of individualism,<sup>242</sup> were the preconditions for the capitalist market to become the main instrument of human relations. Mauss revealed the danger of human beings in Western societies becoming an “economic animal”<sup>243</sup> and the fact that, to use Frank Asloff’s words, “human economic activity was

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<sup>234</sup> Hart, “Mauss’s Economic Vision,” 38.

<sup>235</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 2002), 86, 89.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>237</sup> Hart, “Mauss’s Economic Vision,” 35.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>239</sup> In doing so, according to Szokolczai and Thomassen, he made Nietzsche’s ideas about modern nihilism more clear. Szokolczai, Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving,” 80.

<sup>240</sup> Graeber, “Mauss Revisited,” 160-163.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>242</sup> Questions that were addressed not only by Mauss, but also by Durkheim and other French and British thinkers. *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>243</sup> Adloff, *Gifts of Cooperation*, 98.



embedded in social relationships prior to the nineteenth century, whereas today social relationships are embedded in the economy.”<sup>244</sup>

In addressing these issues, Mauss used a two-sided critique. From the one side, in “The Gift” Mauss ruled out Adam Smith’s idea that barter exchanges were the equivalent of subsequent markets with money and that their motivation by material self-interest is an expression of human nature,<sup>245</sup> arguing that archaic cultures do not even have a word for self-interest – “only with great difficulty and the use of periphrasis can these two words be translated into Latin, Greek, or Arabic.”<sup>246</sup> From the other side, he refused to agree that it is at all possible to abolish buying and selling.<sup>247</sup> Whereas, “over-generosity, or communism, would be as harmful to [the individual] and to society as the egoism of our contemporaries and the individualism of our laws.”<sup>248</sup> As Graeber says, Mauss showed “a difference between ‘the market’ as a mere technique for the allocation of certain types of economic good, for instance, between democratically organized cooperatives or professional organizations, and ‘the market’ as it had come to exist in the industrial West, as the basic organizing principle of social life, the ultimate determinant of value.”<sup>249</sup>

Researchers unanimously agree that for Mauss, who usually had a difficult time completing his work because of many interests, it was especially important for this work to see the light of day. So important, that he decided to argue for the alternative even with relatively raw and underdeveloped arguments.

Mauss’s statement is that a purely voluntary act of gift-giving creates a sense of obligation and involves one in the relations of giving, receiving, and reciprocating. It is how society’s members agree not to harm each other. Mauss invokes an abundance of ethnological facts (about a gift system operating between American Indians, in Oceania, between Eskimo and Australian hunters, as well as in Roman, Germanic, and other Indo-European laws) to present the theory of obligation. “What imposes obligation in the present received and exchanged,” Mauss notes, “is the fact that the thing received is not inactive. Even when it has been abandoned by the giver, it still possesses something of him. Through it the giver has a hold over the beneficiary just as, being its owner, through it he has a hold over the thief.”<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>245</sup> Hart, “Mauss’s Economic Vision,” 40.

<sup>246</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 97.

<sup>247</sup> The Russian experiment, Graeber says, was the proof for his conviction. Graeber, “Mauss Revisited,” 157.

<sup>248</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 88.

<sup>249</sup> Graeber, “Mauss Revisited,” 157-8.

<sup>250</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 15. Most of the authors quoted in this work use the masculine pronoun to cover all people. I have respected the original source in this.

Nevertheless, Mauss's aim is not to show gift circulation, as this had already been done by Franz Boas and Malinowski,<sup>251</sup> but to highlight that "it is indeed something other than utility that circulates in societies of all kinds, most of which are already fairly enlightened."<sup>252</sup> Mauss opens up the radical truth – gift relations (not sacrificial rituals or exchanges of goods) are the foundation of society, of its social order, and the only condition for its meaningful existence.<sup>253</sup>

The central aspect of any gift relation, Szakolczai and Thomassen note, is the act of giving.<sup>254</sup> But it is impossible to separate the act of giving from gift relations. "The Gift" presents a picture of contract and exchange, where "feelings and persons are mixed up together. In short, this represents an intermingling. Souls are mixed with things; things with souls. Lives are mingled together, and this is how, among persons and things so intermingled, each emerges from their own sphere and mixes together."<sup>255</sup>

From observations of Melanesian and Polynesian peoples Mauss draws a clear, definitive picture of the system of the gift:

Material and moral life, and exchange, function within it in a form that is both disinterested and obligatory. Moreover, this obligation is expressed in a mythical and imaginary way or, one might say, symbolic and collective. It assumes an aspect that centres on the interest attached to the things exchanged. These are never completely detached from those carrying out the exchange. The mutual ties and alliance that they establish are comparatively indissoluble. In reality this symbol of social life—the permanence of influence over the things exchanged—serves merely to reflect somewhat directly the manner in which the subgroups in these segmented societies, archaic in type and constantly enmeshed with one another, feel that they are everything to one another.<sup>256</sup>

This leads to the topic of the main difference between Mauss and Durkheim – namely, Mauss's symbolic treatment of society in comparison with his uncle's conviction, that society can be explained by its religious roots.<sup>257</sup> Mauss's symbol theory is not logocentric, rather, in

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<sup>251</sup> Mauss states, "[...] the system of gift-through-exchange permeates all the economic, tribal, and moral life of the Trobriand people. It is 'impregnated' with it, as Malinowski very neatly expressed it. It is a constant 'give and take'. The process is marked by a continuous flow in all directions of presents given, accepted, and reciprocated, obligatorily and out of self-interest, by reason of greatness and for services rendered, through challenges and pledges." *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>253</sup> Szakolczai, Thomassen, "Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving," 80.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>255</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 25-6. These comments are in part a reflection on Alfred Radcliffe-Brown's observations in Australia.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-3.

<sup>257</sup> Adloff identifies the shift from the religious to the symbolic explanation of society as a comprehensive paradigm change in Mauss's understanding of society. See his "Durkheim and Mauss in comparison," in Adloff, *Gifts of Cooperation*, 18-23. Adloff as well as Szakolczai and Thomassen agrees in seeing Mauss's move away from Durkheim's orthodoxy starting from his and Hubert's essay "A General Theory of Magic" (1904). Szakolczai, Thomassen. "Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving," 71. Mauss's symbolic treatment of

Frank Adloff's opinion, it points towards the symbolically mediated interaction.<sup>258</sup> All of its components are equally important and it is very difficult to determine, as already noted, what the causes of this interaction are – nonverbal communication, embodied activity, or gift exchange. Mauss understood the symbols not as a representation of the social, nor as a derivative from it. As Adloff comments, “Symbols, are for Mauss, however, necessary entities – without symbols no group is able to exist, and without symbols no consciousness would come into existence. Hence, words or symbols not only represent the social, they are necessary; meanings are themselves something powerful and unifying.”<sup>259</sup>

The symbolic is what combines the social with the individual consciousness. The human spirit at the individual and collective levels works symbolically. Symbols and signs are the only ‘how’ community and communication take place. They are outside of the individual as much as they are inherent in the whole group.<sup>260</sup> But even if collective representations encompass the individual, the individual remains a source of their own impressions and actions.<sup>261</sup>

How this works is best described in Mauss's essay “Techniques of the Body,” which I will discuss below (1.3.3.). The clarification of society as an effective symbolic system or symbolic network of values embedded in the depths of the individual<sup>262</sup> very much impressed Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose ideas will be presented in the third chapter.<sup>263</sup> Merleau-Ponty's key work in forming a new, action-based interpretation of consciousness may have been influenced by Mauss's ideas about transformative action as conscious action and the role of the symbolic in conscious existence.

Returning to the topic at hand, attention must be shifted to the theme of movement to determine what the ideas in “The Gift” add to the discussion about conscious action as set out in the previous section on social action. To reiterate, the role of behaviors as the foundation of social institutions was already emphasized in the “Sociology” entry for *La Grande Encyclopédie*, which Mauss wrote together with Fauconnet in 1900 (discussed in 1.1.2.3.). Social action theory is an example of a more detailed look at purposeful, creative action of

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society required cross-disciplinary approach to phenomena - integration of biology, psychology, and sociology. It may be the reason why Mauss actively participated in the dialogue with psychology.

<sup>258</sup> Adloff, *Gifts of Cooperation*, 23.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>261</sup> Mauss, “Rapports réels et pratiques,” 10. My translation. Unless otherwise stated, all French sources quoted in this thesis are my translations.

<sup>262</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 115.

<sup>263</sup> The issue will be discussed in the chapter “The Influence of Mauss on Merleau-Ponty.”

actors of the group. In this way “The Gift” challenged not only free market theory but action theory as well.

According to Adloff,

A long-neglected paradigm of action theory, which acknowledges actions that can be reduced neither to the utilitarian nor to the normative, can be found in Marcel Mauss’s 1925 essay ‘The Gift’. In the essay, an approach can be found that hints at actions that are simultaneously self-interested *and* disinterested, voluntary *and* obligatory. The mistake of modern sociology and philosophy was to suppose that every action is either utilitarian or normatively orientated. Even in modern society, however, actions cannot be reduced to one of these approaches, but either explicitly follow a logic of gift-giving or are accompanied by such a logic.<sup>264</sup>

Ideas presented in “The Gift” can serve as an alternative to the reduction of human activity to the instrument of achieving goals, such as economic benefits, or making particular order in the world of things. According to Mauss, the goal of the activity is the partaking in it! This does not mean that people do not seek economic and other goals by their actions, but what Mauss’s study showed is that the nature of human activity is social, thus people’s actions correspond to the maintenance of social relationships – which are the foundation and the primal goal of all actions. In other words, gift exchange, as Knut Myhre puts, is a practice, “where the end is inseparable from the activity.”<sup>265</sup> It is communicative<sup>266</sup> rather than instrumental action.<sup>267</sup>

Accordingly, by freeing action from the utilitarian and normative reasoning, Mauss binds it with another, that of moral paradigm. He describes the activity of the gift relationship as “eternal morality,”<sup>268</sup> and this point can be seen as supplementing the understanding of conscious action. Mauss is concerned about society, about its members – their feelings, their situation, what “holds [them] together.”<sup>269</sup> The concepts of *total services* as well as *potlatch*, *mana*, *tonga* are invoked to reveal this arrangement in archaic societies. The above concepts

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<sup>264</sup> Adloff, *Gifts of Cooperation*, 4.

<sup>265</sup> Myhre, “The Anthropological Concept of Action,” 130.

<sup>266</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1987).

<sup>267</sup> Myhre notes that the latter can parasitize thanks to the former: “According to Mauss, the intrinsic end of communicative action is social reality. Being constitutive of social reality, communicative action preconditions instrumental action, or rather, instrumental action is parasitic upon communicative action. The concept of communicative action as a form of action more fundamental to, and different from, instrumental action has thus saved us from the problems raised at the beginning.” Myhre, “The Anthropological Concept of Action,” 132. A parallel can be drawn with capitalism, which was built on an unsustainable and extreme version of exchanges of goods. Hart, “Mauss’s economic vision,” 43. However, even increasingly popular parasitic approaches (which now even include the commodification of communicative acts) have not been able to incorporate such actions as creativity, freedom, spontaneity, love, care and etc., which, according to Adloff, cannot be assigned to utilitarianism or normative reasoning. Adloff, *Gifts of Cooperation*, 4.

<sup>268</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 89.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

served as “a sort of emotional cement between the multitudinous facts which he had to link together,” to use Merleau-Ponty’s metaphor.<sup>270</sup>

But what Mauss was doing was much more than providing conceptual tools to somehow to define the complex structure of the functioning of society or the relationship between the individual and society.<sup>271</sup> As was mentioned at the beginning of the subsection, he wanted to provide an alternative; the way, by which “nations today can make themselves strong and rich, happy and good.”<sup>272</sup> In the last sentences of “The Gift” (besides listing various motivations of human behavior, and reminding that the sum of them together with other interrelated factors constitute a common life) he stresses/highlights/underlines that “conscious” direction is very important in our common life and it involves the critical evaluation of all its components.<sup>273</sup>

It is important for Mauss, that “no longer are we talking in legal terms: we are speaking of men and groups of men, because it is they, it is society, it is the feelings of men, in their minds and in flesh and blood that at all times spring into action and that have acted everywhere.”<sup>274</sup> His quotation below should be seen as an expression of these concerns:

In societies one grasps more than ideas or rules, one takes in men, groups, and their different forms of behaviour. [...] We perceive numbers of men, forces in motion, who are in movement in their environment and in their feelings.<sup>275</sup>

In search of a symbolic connection between the environment, between people, groups, forms of behavior, movement forces, feelings, ideas, rules, and traditions, Mauss puts forward actions in support of the gift relations to emphasize not only the role of the activity but also its qualitative aspects. Mauss’s observations of Melanesian and Polynesian peoples,<sup>276</sup> as noted above, support this remark. While opening new interpretation of the foundations of society –

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<sup>270</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 116.

<sup>271</sup> Therefore, it is “a serious misinterpretation,” in Szokolczai and Thomassen’s opinion, that the chief person to reveal Mauss’s heritage and merit is considered to be Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose introduction to the collected essays was designed to harness Mauss’s reputation to his own theory of reciprocity. Szokolczai and Thomassen, “Marcel Mauss: From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving,” 66; Keith Hart, “Marcel Mauss: In Pursuit of the Whole: A Review Essay,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49.2 (2007): 482. “The Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss,” originally written as an introduction to the first major collection of Mauss’s writings, *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (1950), was first published as a stand-alone book in 1987. The contents of *Sociologie et Anthropologie* are available in English as three books: *The Gift, A General Theory of Magic*, and *Sociology and Psychology*. Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie, précédé d'une Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss par C. Lévi-Strauss* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950).

<sup>272</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 106.

<sup>273</sup> “Studies of this kind indeed allow us to perceive, measure, and weigh up the various aesthetic, moral, religious, and economic motivations, the diverse material and demographic factors, the sum total of which are the basis of society and constitute our common life, the conscious direction of which is the supreme art, Politics, in the Socratic sense of the word.” Mauss, *The Gift*, 107.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 102–03.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

gift relations, which are inseparable from acts of giving – Mauss emphasized the fact that modes of acting, guided by intentions and aspirations in a more general sense, have tremendous importance. It can be said that he problematized the quality of human actions. The quality, the mode, the ‘how’ of action has symbolical value. They are inseparable. Human movements, although polygonal in meanings, are never neutral.

Undoubtedly, the action acquires its features, imprints from the collective and from tradition, from the cultural environment. However, as action theorists agree, traces of the gift relationship still exist even in Western societies. It is impossible to reduce human action to the logic of self-interest and instrumental, normative reasoning. Mauss’s intention in referring to the actions of the gift relationship is not only explanatory but also obligatory. An important task is assigned to groups, but also to individuals – especially in the times when the communal rituals that enable the features of ‘gift’ actions are gradually disappearing – to choose to act believing in the value of gift relations in the face of prevailing ideologies. The question arises as to whether it is possible to act without succumbing to the capitalist logic of commodity value. What capacities do people have in their bodies? This I will discuss in the next subsection.

### *1.3.3. Techniques of the body*

“The Gift” made a significant contribution to the symbolic treatment of society and the non-instrumental treatment of human action within it. The concept of techniques of the body marks Mauss’s attempt to understand the role of the body in society and to explore the embodied ways in which society converges and interacts. Drawing on Mauss’s own definition of techniques of the body,<sup>277</sup> I will examine this phenomenon both as an acquired ability (1.3.3.1.) that differs between individuals and societies (1.3.3.2.), and as practical intelligence (1.3.3.3.). This will be followed by a discussion on the structure of the concept of techniques of the body (1.3.3.4.). I will begin by explaining how and why the need for this concept arose.

Mauss’s participation in the First World War as a soldier interpreter was a kind of “field work” for Mauss, where his interest in techniques of the body emerged.<sup>278</sup> But his curiosity had been roused even earlier, beginning in 1898, when Mauss came into contact with the author of a forthcoming article on “Swimming” for the 1902 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 80.

<sup>278</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 290.

<sup>279</sup> Nicholas J. Allen, “Mauss, India, and Perspectives from World History,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 14.1 (2014): 24. In addition, it is worth to mention Mauss’s 1901 encyclopedia entry on yoga, the subject on which he was teaching that year. Mauss’s article “Yoga” appeared in the same volume of *La Grande Encyclopédie* in which “Sociology” was published. In Noland’s opinion, through his study of yoga, Mauss

He had already determined “how everything could be described, but not how it could be organised.”<sup>280</sup> Observation of movement, comparisons, and the examination of his own movement experience eventually led to the key discovery.<sup>281</sup>

The topic of technology – the study of techniques<sup>282</sup> and practices as well as products from anthropological and sociological perspectives – was the research area on which Mauss remain consistently focused through his entire career. Mauss may be portrayed by critics and admirers as “an inconsistent genius,” but as Nathan Schlanger notes, this topic remains one into which Mauss “consistently invested the best of his conceptual and didactic efforts.”<sup>283</sup> So it is no surprise that the concepts of technology as well as techniques of the body,<sup>284</sup> have been widely recognized in scientific circles as well as utilized/expanded/built on by Mauss’s students and followers, such as André Leroi-Gourhan, whom I will discuss in the second chapter (2.2.).

Mauss came to look at the phenomenon of bodily activity in terms of their meaningful mechanics being something much deeper and broader than being a tool for a specific purpose. Plato was an important partner in the discovery.

I made, and went on making for several years, the fundamental mistake of thinking that there is technique only when there is an instrument. I had to go back to ancient notions, to the Platonic position on technique, for Plato spoke of a technique of music and in particular of a technique of the dance, and extend these notions.<sup>285</sup>

Mauss choice to use the example of dance in description of techniques of the body will be discussed in detail in section 1.4.; here the focus of attention is on what Mauss understands as constituting the ‘technique of the body’:

The body is man’s first and most natural instrument. Or more accurately, not to speak of instruments, man’s first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body.<sup>286</sup>

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became aware of the relationship between the ways the body moves and states of consciousness. Carrie Noland, “Chapter One. The ‘Structuring’ Body: Marcel Mauss and Bodily Techniques,” in *Agency and Embodiment*, by Carrie Noland (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 35-36.

<sup>280</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 78, 82.

<sup>281</sup> Mauss was leading very active life. From his teenage years he enjoyed swimming, running, boxing, and, after he moved to Paris, fencing. He was a great lover of mountain hiking and climbing. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 11.

<sup>282</sup> Techniques differ from technology as musicology from music, where the ‘-ology’ indicates the study in relation to the object – its logos, its discourse. Nathan Schlanger, “Introduction. Technological commitments: Marcel Mauss and the Study of Techniques in the French Social Sciences,” in *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation* (2006), 2.

<sup>283</sup> Schlanger, “The Study of Techniques,” 192.

<sup>284</sup> Robert Cresswell and Pierre Lemonier might also be added to the list.

<sup>285</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 82.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

In saying this, Mauss is not diminishing human action to instrumental means, but is emphasizing the importance of the body in symbolically mediated interaction (this is how he understood society). In other words, techniques of the body mean embodied ways of convergence and interaction in society.

Mauss himself expresses techniques of the body as “the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies.”<sup>287</sup> This knowledge, according to Mauss, is the corporeal and technical habitus, which includes the “total” human being—in all three dimensions of the biological, psychological and sociological.<sup>288</sup> Social anthropologist Wendy James claims that Mauss was the first to call this level of material or corporeal life and its public face by the Latin term ‘habitus’, which later was developed by his disciple Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>289</sup> Mauss points out,

Please note, that I use the Latin word, it should be understood in France – *habitus*. The word translates infinitely better than ‘*habitude*’ (habit or custom), the ‘*exis*’, the ‘acquired ability’ and ‘faculty’ of Aristotle (who was a psychologist). It does not designate those metaphysical *habitudes*, that mysterious ‘memory’, the subjects of volumes or short and famous theses. These ‘habits’ do not just vary with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestige. 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.<sup>290</sup>

It is worth summarizing the important aspects of techniques of the body that emerge from this quotation. First, it is an acquired ability. Second, these acquired abilities or habits vary in individuals (because of their imitative nature and the way/manner of their application) and societies (where they collect more variation due to the history of education; the prevailing pattern of use of bodily techniques; and its relationship to other values in a particular society). Third, it is the practical reason of an individual or of society. I will deal with these three aspects in more detail below and then return to the structure of the concept of body techniques.

### *1.3.3.1. Techniques of the body as acquired abilities*

First, Mauss sees techniques of the body as a learned way of being part of a particular society. “Each society has its own special habits,” states Mauss, “Every technique properly so-called has its own form.”<sup>291</sup> Every attitude of the body, all actions persons acquire come from

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>289</sup> James, “One of Us,” 20.

<sup>290</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 80.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 79.



cultural and historical environment. That is why it is not so easily transmitted or customizable to the other contexts. All movements “form a social idiosyncrasy, they are not simply a product of some purely individual, almost completely psychological arrangements and mechanisms.”<sup>292</sup> Habits of this social idiosyncrasy are gained through education and practice. Viewed in this way, the movements that an individual acquires are also a force that shapes the individual. “An adaptation of the body to their use”<sup>293</sup> does not go without close social contact,<sup>294</sup> and all qualities of life – “the modes, the tonus the ‘matter’, the ‘manners’, the ‘way’”<sup>295</sup> – do not escape it in continuous training. The formative force of education as the integral part of every technique of the body must be taken to account.

All body techniques, including their transmission, belong to tradition. A study of techniques of the body cannot be carried out without paying attention to the purpose of the action in society (techniques of the body are related to tradition because of their effectiveness in it) and the tradition that underpins it:

I call technique an action, which is *effective* and *traditional*, (and you will see that in this it is no different from a magical, religious or symbolic action). It has to be *effective* and *traditional*. There is no technique and no transmission in the absence of tradition.<sup>296</sup>

Mauss points out the transmission of the form of the technique as an essential part of the theme.

### 1.3.3.2. *Techniques of the body as continuous variations*

The second characteristic of techniques of the body is their ability to adapt and to vary according to contextual circumstances. The “adaptation of the body to their use,”<sup>297</sup> which, as already mentioned, takes place in close social contact, determines the variations of techniques of the body due to their transfer to a different context, whether that is social, historical, or geographical. The relationship of bodily technique with new life circumstances inevitably adjusts variations in its performance. It happens on both individual and collective levels.

It can be said that techniques of the body are in a constant search for efficiency, an efficiency that can only be grasped in the complex context of a particular technique. Mauss gives comic examples of the application of specific techniques in another culture.<sup>298</sup> Also, as

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 92-93.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 92-93.

<sup>298</sup> For example, see an anecdote about marching given by Mauss. Ibid., 79-80.

Mauss's examples suggest, the succession of specific bodily techniques from one generation to the other, even within the same culture, can be very complicated. However, variations are needed for the maintenance of efficiency. Nevertheless, as Mauss's experience of the performance of the swimming technique suggests, it is not always easy to abandon what is no longer effective.<sup>299</sup> It is not easy to get rid of a technique which people invested much time and energy in mastering.

Mauss's interpretation of educational process is very important in this discussion. "The notion of education could be superimposed on that of imitation."<sup>300</sup> In other words, there can be a part of imitation in educational process. But with an emphasis on education, Mauss reveals the dialogical nature of movement's transmission. The interception of motion or mode of action, or the acquisition of habit do not go without critical, emotional, physical evaluation. The role of the transferee<sup>301</sup> is stressed. Every technique of the body refers to the conditions of its formation, adaptation, and transmission. "The constant adaptation to a physical, mechanical or chemical aim (e.g., when we drink) is pursued in a series of assembled actions, explains Mauss, and assembled for the individual not by himself alone but by all his education, by the whole society to which he belongs, in the place he occupies in it."<sup>302</sup>

Acquisition of techniques of the body has a comparative effect. The performance of body technique is accompanied by kinesthetic feedback that evaluates it. I will look at this idea more closely in the last part of the chapter (1.5.).

### *1.3.3.3. Techniques of the body as practical reason*

Finally, it is necessary to talk about techniques of the body as a practical intelligence. To discuss this subject I need to start with Mauss's classification of social facts to help better understand Mauss's attempts, as described by Schlanger, "to restore the reasonable nature of [the living body's] thinking activities" in the same way that he "undertook to socialize [its] the organic endowment."<sup>303</sup>

In the divisions in sociology proposed by Mauss, one will not find any hierarchy of social facts where one type is deemed more important for the development of society, or any real existing divisions between mental and bodily activities. For understanding each society's actual behavior, all "the data . . . must be taken into account," data, which, according Mauss,

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>301</sup> Or 'successor', 'assimilator' of techniques of the body.

<sup>302</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 83.

<sup>303</sup> Schlanger, "The Study of Techniques," 199.

“are aesthetic, technical, and linguistic, and not only religious or scientific.”<sup>304</sup> As Schlanger notes, “Mauss did not put in opposition to each other the rational and the irrational in human life. In technical matters as well as the others.”<sup>305</sup> As Mauss states,

The human being is an animal who does reasonable things on the basis of unreasonable principles and who proceeds from sensible principles to accomplish things that are absurd. Nevertheless these absurd principles and this unreasonable behaviour are probably the starting point of great institutions.<sup>306</sup>

In other words, Mauss forges the link between techniques and reason: “aspects of knowledge and of consciousness deployed and acquired by technical actions.”<sup>307</sup> According to Schlanger, this marks the end of Mauss’s earlier (Durkheim influenced) thinking that the origins of the categories were purely institutional or religious.

Mauss is convinced that activities such as the navigation of a canoe or construction of a spear all similarly generate knowledge: “the knowledge which is practical rather than discursive in its nature, without being for that any less social.”<sup>308</sup> Techniques are very important for the “construction and edification of reason.”<sup>309</sup> According to Schlanger, the following quotation from Mauss echoes Marx’s conception of *praxis*:

Man creates and at the same time he creates himself; he creates at once a means of livelihood, purely human things, and his thoughts inscribed in these things. Here is elaborated practical reason.<sup>310</sup>

But instead of being an instrument of achieving mastery over nature or the expression of an individual will to power, techniques, in the Maussian sense, are, in Schlanger’s words, “a tactic for living, thinking, and striving in common: they are above all means and mediums for the production and reproduction of social life.”<sup>311</sup> The practitioner of technique, Schlanger states, is “as much *Homo sapiens* as *Homo faber*, far from being some Nietzschean *Übermensch*, this practitioner is above all *l’homme total*.”<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Mauss, “Sociology: Its divisions,” 72.

<sup>305</sup> Schlanger, “The Study of Techniques,” 199.

<sup>306</sup> Marcel Mauss, *Manual of ethnography* (New York: Durkheim Press/ Berghahn Books, 2007), 52-53.

<sup>307</sup> Schlanger, “The Study of Techniques,” 199.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>309</sup> Mauss, “Sociology: Its divisions,” 72.

<sup>310</sup> Schlanger, “The Study of Techniques,” 199. Original quotation comes from: Marcel Mauss, “Divisions et proportions des divisions de la sociologie,” *L’Année sociologique (1896/1897-1924/1925)* 2 (1924): 98-176. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27883975.pdf?casa\\_token=1t9flAl\\_CtQAAAAA:HRuouZq58gvgnxPBuMvuCMTh8H\\_-ocu\\_cJngL6qD0H5FNRJ-mPkWVd19hfUjgvr9rOoJqawof9Nyn\\_N49DLnIqXIIVG0ilccMScjsALlmOZUc2w](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27883975.pdf?casa_token=1t9flAl_CtQAAAAA:HRuouZq58gvgnxPBuMvuCMTh8H_-ocu_cJngL6qD0H5FNRJ-mPkWVd19hfUjgvr9rOoJqawof9Nyn_N49DLnIqXIIVG0ilccMScjsALlmOZUc2w) [accessed 20 October 2023].

<sup>311</sup> Schlanger, “The Study of Technique,” 199.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 1.3.3.4. Structure of the concept of techniques of the body

The appearance of the concept of *l'homme total* – “the total human being,” together with the concept of “total social fact” signifies Mauss’s post-war attempt to move beyond Durkheim’s *homo duplex*. Such an attempt was already present in Mauss’s and Fauconnet’s “Sociology” (in an entry for *La Grande Encyclopédie* in 1901), where the authors tried to show the mismatch between collective representations and individual consciousness.<sup>313</sup>

*L'homme total* opened up a new approach to the interaction of the human body, mind, and soul,<sup>314</sup> an approach which proved that it is not possible to determine either the sovereignty of the individual or of the collective life.<sup>315</sup> Accordingly, Mauss’s triple viewpoint of “the total human being” proposes a triple consideration of movement and action, applied in “Techniques of the Body.”<sup>316</sup> Action is conditioned by the social element, psychological element, and the biological element. Also, other facts – technical, magical, ritual – are involved in the consideration. “Technical actions, physical actions, magicoreligious actions are confused for the actor.”<sup>317</sup> Furthermore, the inseparability of the symbolic and the practically efficacious becomes evident. “There is no pure action,” as Mauss earlier stated.<sup>318</sup> The conception of techniques of the body as well as the conception of the total human being allowed this “impurity” to be comprehensible. The approach to the body as “the coordination of articulated motions by which it functions and by which it embodies and conveys meaning”<sup>319</sup> led to the possibility of understanding very complex phenomena without the need of their “purification.” As Schlanger puts it, techniques, like the *homme total* who practices them, “are made out of synthesis rather than distillation, that their lack of ‘purity’ is their source of strength, that *metisage* or *creolisation* is not their worst nightmare but their salutary fate.”<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> “It has often been noted that a crowd or an assembly does not feel, does not think, and does not act as would separate individuals who constitute them; that the most diverse groups – a family, a corporation, a nation – have a ‘spirit’, a character, and habits, as individuals have theirs. In all these cases, observers consequently feel that the group, crowd or society has a truly unique nature, which determines certain manners of feeling, thinking and acting by the individuals, and that the individuals would have neither the same tendencies, nor the same habits, not the same prejudices, if they had lived in other human groups. The conclusion may be generalized. Between the ideas that he has and the act that an isolated individual would do, on the one hand, and collective manifestations on the other hand, there exists such an abyss that these latter should be related to a new *nature*, to forces *sui generis*, for otherwise they would remain incomprehensible.” Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 5-6.

<sup>314</sup> Best seen in Marcel Mauss, “Effet physique chez l’individu de l’idée de mort suggérée par la collectivité,” *Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologie* 23 (1926): 653-669.

<sup>315</sup> Jones Garces, “Mauss Redux,” 296.

<sup>316</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 81.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>318</sup> Mauss, “Sociology: Its Divisions,” 63.

<sup>319</sup> Schlanger, “The Study of Techniques,” 198-199.

<sup>320</sup> Schlanger, “Introduction,” 28.

Accordingly, Mauss's theory of the total social fact must be viewed as a matrix of techniques of the body. It should be recalled that the concept has a completely different meaning than in Durkheim's work (as mentioned in 1.2.1).<sup>321</sup> The theory of the total social fact according to Mauss has two dimensions of meaning. The first dimension of this conceptual framework, according to Alexander Goffman, is the attempt to consider social phenomena as integrated (objects-and-subjects), not closed and sufficient to themselves, but related to the "whole," and interpret "each phenomenon in close relation to the others and the social system in which they are set."<sup>322</sup> The second dimension is developed by the desire to study the interdependence of the social and the individual. The concept of the total social fact, Goffman suggests, encompasses both the "totality of the system" and the "totality of actor," the individual and collective.

In the "Techniques of the Body" Mauss invokes the metaphor of cogwheel in the description of "an enormous biological and physiological apparatus," which is presupposed by the movement of the body. The psychological facts are seen as connecting cogs rather than causes (with some exception in moments of creation and reform).<sup>323</sup> This not only liberates movement from the slavery of "inner" motivation and dependence on states of mind, but also shows how the latter also depends on movements of the body (that means, it depends on all formative factors of movement as well). The question then arises as to how the techniques of the body viewed as social, psychological, and biological phenomena can re-interpret a person's "inner" life. To what changes it can lead? I will search for answers to this in the last part of the chapter (1.5.), after first discussing Mauss's dance research.

#### **1.4. Marcel Mauss on Dance**

As already mentioned, Mauss relied on Plato in the explaining of the conception of techniques of the body, because Plato helped him to notice technique not only when an instrument is used. Particularly Plato's focus on dance technique helped to expand the concept of technique.<sup>324</sup>

However, Mauss was interested in dance from much earlier than the appearance of the concept of techniques of the body. In this part of the chapter, I am going to explore the merits

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<sup>321</sup> As Szokolczai and Thomassen point out, the concept of Mauss does not correspond to Durkheim's understanding of the social fact referring "to what is an external constrain to concrete experience." By the "total" Mauss means "the totality of society and its institutions." Szokolczai and Thomassen, "Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving," 86.

<sup>322</sup> Goffman, "A Vague but Suggestive Concept," 66.

<sup>323</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 92.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

of Mauss for dance studies. His contributions are important for both dance theory and practice, as he has provided a movement friendly approach to aesthetics, and has proposed methods for dance classification and observation in ethnography.

Mauss's extension of the Western conception of the arts is very beneficial for dance studies, as dance has been highly marginalized in the Western aesthetic tradition due to its bodily nature. An aesthetic approach to the performativity of the body has been, and continues to be, sorely lacking and is worth discussing. The section begins by outlining Mauss's interest in dance (1.4.1), before moving on to examine/present his movement-friendly approach to aesthetics (1.4.2) and the place of dance in it (1.4.3), and concludes with suggesting that dance should be seen as a symbol of Mauss's dynamic approach to society (1.4.4.).

#### *1.4.1. Mauss's interest in dance*

The importance of Mauss's research for the studies of dance is presented by Carrie Noland:

Mauss may have been influenced by early musings on the role of dance movement in the works of E. E. Evans-Pritchard and studies by American anthropologists, but the remarkable efflorescence of ethnographies on dance and bodily techniques over the course of the twentieth century can only be attributed to him.<sup>325</sup>

Noland also reminds that it was Mauss's students and associates to whom the leading role in movement and dance studies must be attributed. Marcel Granet, Curt Sachs, Michel Leiris, and Alfred Métraux were pioneers in the revealing the role of dance movement in the transmission of belief systems.<sup>326</sup>

As Noland notes, Mauss had definitely read the works of E. E. Evans-Pritchard and his "The Dance," which was, according Noland, "the earliest account of danced movement in Africa as serving 'physiological and psychological' as well as collective needs."<sup>327</sup> But the fact that very important descriptions of dance in magical rites were provided by Mauss in "A General Theory of Magic" in collaboration with Henri Hubert already in 1902, the year when Evans-Pritchard<sup>328</sup> was born, serves to emphasize/underline/underscore Mauss's role not only in the "efflorescence" of dance studies, but also in pioneering the disclosure of the role of dance in the "physiological and psychological" needs of the individual and the group. Already in "A

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<sup>325</sup> Noland, "The 'Structuring' Body," 19.

<sup>326</sup> Not to mention that Mauss was André-Georges Haudricourt's teacher. The works of his student inspired the next generation of scholars – for example, Jean-Pierre Sérís's and Bernard Steigler's research on technology. Noland, *Agency*, 223.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973) was an English anthropologist and the developer of social anthropology.

General Theory of Magic,” Mauss demonstrated the role of dance in ritual drama, its fusion with other aesthetic phenomena, the characteristics of movement, the motivation to achieve a goal, and the interdependence of moving bodies and the collective mental state:

All the people are merged in the excitement of the dance. In their feverish agitation they become but one body, one soul. It is then that the corporate social group genuinely manifests itself, because each different cell, each individual is closely merged with that of the next, like the cells which make up an individual organism. In such circumstances—circumstances which in our society can never be realized, even by the most overexcited crowd, though elsewhere they have been found—a feeling of universal consensus may create a reality. All those Dayak women, dancing and carrying sabres, are really at war. Acting in this way, they actually believe in the success of their ritual. Here the laws of group psychology have more meaning than laws of individual psychology. A whole series of normally sequential phenomena—volition, idea, muscular movement, satisfaction of needs—becomes completely simultaneous in this case.<sup>329</sup>

If one were to look for studies that might have influenced Mauss’s interest in dance, one should look at the work of the English social anthropologist Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, with whom Mauss became acquainted during his stay in London in 1912.<sup>330</sup> Since then Mauss was in correspondence with Radcliffe-Brown, and in 1924 invited him to join the Institut Français de Sociologie.<sup>331</sup> Other influences in terms of studies of dance that should be mentioned at this point are Mauss’s fascination with Nietzsche, discussed in the second part of the chapter (1.2.3.); the work of English theologian William Oscar Emil Oesterley (1866–1950) *The Sacred Dance: a Study in Comparative Folklore*, released in 1923;<sup>332</sup> and Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941), who together with Mrs Lilly Grove (who as the future Lady Frazer, edited the monograph on dance released in 1895)<sup>333</sup> very much contributed to the earliest studies of dance.<sup>334</sup> That Oesterley and Frazer were influential can be inferred from the

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<sup>329</sup> Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic* (London: Routledge, 2005), 164.

<sup>330</sup> Smadja, *On Symbolism*, 46. For more about Mauss’s relationship with Radcliffe-Brown, see James, “One of Us,” 7-8.

<sup>331</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 231. Fournier offers a summary Evans-Pritchard’s work “The Dance,” in which Pritchard cites Radcliffe-Brown: “The elation, energy, and self-esteem of the individual dancer are in harmony with the feelings of his fellow-dancers, and this harmonious concert of individual feelings and actions produces a maximum unity and concord of the community which is intensely felt by every member.” What Evans-Pritchard adds from his own observations to Radcliffe-Brown’s is some adjustments on a strong emphasis on the subordination of the individual to community action, which is very present in Radcliffe-Brown’s summary. Also, Evans-Pritchard draws attention to the idea that the aspects of age play a role as well in different situations and motives, and opposes the generalized view, emphasizing, that details are of tremendous importance. Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, “The Dance,” *Africa* 1.4 (1928): 460.

<sup>332</sup> Oesterley, William Oscar Emil. *The Sacred Dance: A Study in Comparative Folklore* Vol. 13. (New York: Macmillan, 1923).

<sup>333</sup> Lilly Grove (ed.), *Dancing*. London: Longmans, Green, and co., 1895.

<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=IXRXfYMqAX0C&pg=GBS.PR12&hl=lt> [accessed 10 01 2022].

<sup>334</sup> William Oscar Emil Oesterley refers to Mrs Grove and Sir Frazer as well Crowley, de Cahusac, Blackman, and Farnell, alongside other authors. (Farnell’s two volumes of “The Cults of Greek States” (1896) is present in Mauss’s library.) Oesterley, *The Sacred Dance*, 4, 12.

fact that Oesterly's book was present in Mauss's library, now located in in Media Library of Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, along with close to fifty works of Frazer. Fournier also speaks of the very friendly relationship between Mauss and the Frazer family in Mauss's biography,<sup>335</sup> and readers are left to imagine the exchanges of professional interests during their meetings, probably on the topic of dance as well.<sup>336</sup>

During his trip to Morocco in 1930, which, according to Nicholas Allen,<sup>337</sup> was Mauss's nearest approach "fieldwork" as he was more of an "armchair anthropologist,"<sup>338</sup> he insisted on visiting one of the Negro brotherhoods of Bori in Marrakech to see and learn about their cultic dances.<sup>339</sup> The fact that dance was chief among the social facts that Mauss wanted to explore through his own experience shows his deep interest in it. The multitude of examples of dance throughout Mauss's works witness his dedication to the phenomenon. The special role of dance among other aesthetic facts is strongly emphasized, and it is to the broad picture of aesthetic phenomena and dance that the next two sections turn.

#### 1.4.2. *Aesthetics*

The importance of phenomena of the life of art is very much stressed through different works of Mauss,<sup>340</sup> but most attention is devoted to it in his *Manual of Ethnography*.<sup>341</sup> Here the narrow approach of the "modern period and still [...] restricted circles"<sup>342</sup> to art (art for art's sake,) is criticized and explained.

I will start with a presentation of the Maussian approach to aesthetics. The discussion should not imply a lack of recognition of the importance of his methodological guidance in the research of aesthetic facts for young ethnographers, which is the original aim of the manual,<sup>343</sup> and which contributed a lot to the expansion of the study field. However, in this case, it is

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<sup>335</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 62.

<sup>336</sup> Also, it is important to mention again Mauss's teacher Sylvian Lévi, who had written his thesis on Indian theatre. It was one of Lévi's favourite subjects to teach on. The close understanding of the relationship between drama, dance, and music seems to have been ingrained in his student's heart.

<sup>337</sup> Allen, *Categories and Classifications*, 35.

<sup>338</sup> Mauss, according to Schlanger, remained an "armchair anthropologist" par excellence (except for three weeks in Morocco in 1930 and, of course, four years in the trenches of the First World War). Schlanger, "Marcel Mauss (1872–1950)," 315.

<sup>339</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 269-270.

<sup>340</sup> Mauss, "Sociology: Its Divisions," 46.

<sup>341</sup> Marcel Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography* (New York: Durkheim Press/ Berghahn Books, 2007).

"Manuel d'ethnographie" resulted from the courses Mauss gave from 1926 to 1939 at the Institute of Ethnology of the Sorbonne.

<sup>342</sup> Mauss, "Sociology: Its Divisions," 46.

<sup>343</sup> "[...] it is meant to teach how to *observe* and classify social phenomena." Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 7. This is an important point in the discussion about dance, connected with the efflorescence of ethnographical studies of dance in the twentieth century, which Noland has attributed to Mauss (see the quotation in the beginning of the section).



Mauss's ethnographic guidelines that are the most important because they can counteract the narrow understanding of art that has resulted from the division of disciplines and disciplinary isolation caused by secularization. Mauss criticizes this narrow understanding of art, but not art in general, and this is evident in his terminology – although the anthropologist prefers to talk about aesthetics, of aesthetic phenomena in general, he also uses the concept of art (and when necessary, he opposes it to the notion of “art for art's sake”).

To study aesthetic phenomena, according to Mauss, is to study an aspect of the object and of behavior.<sup>344</sup> One can find the highly developed aesthetic domain in games, dancing, and in behavior itself. To distinguish the aesthetic component in an object or an action Mauss uses the Aristotelian distinction, the *theoria*, which leads to the finding out of “a capacity for disinterested enjoyment, for pure sensitivity and even a sense of nature”<sup>345</sup> in societies. An aesthetic object is seen as the contemplative object, but besides its contemplative element, the element of pleasure is very much present. The notion of beauty is very much connected with sensory pleasure: “There can be no beauty without sensory pleasure.”<sup>346</sup> Mauss brings the notion of *corroboree*, a term from Australian society that translates as “one which unravels the belly,” which signifies two things: sensory pleasure and a mixture of arts. These are both very important phenomena of aesthetics, according to Mauss.<sup>347</sup>

Mauss criticizes the classification of arts proposed by Wundt, which distinguishes plastic arts, that is sensuous ones such as music and dance, and the ideal arts, which are supposed to be “governed by an idea.”<sup>348</sup> Nothing but “an expression of our contemporary pedantry in matters of art”<sup>349</sup> can turn out to be a matter of reality, which is that “all arts are ideal arts:”

The notion of ideal art, of art that is only the representation of the ideas and feelings of the authors and spectators, is a modern one. One of its extreme forms, the doctrine of art for art's sake, is a nineteenth-century phenomenon; in literature, it was launched by Théophile Gautier, Baudelaire, and their successors in France, and prior to Baudelaire, by the great English Romantics. There is no such thing as ideal art, but on the other hand art has lost its symbolic/religious decorative value. Ideal art is a certain conception of art.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 68. “[...] an aesthetic object is an object one can contemplate; an aesthetic phenomenon contains an element of contemplation, of satisfaction extrinsic to immediate need, a pleasure that is sensory but disinterested.”

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 68, 69.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 82.

Modern societies are characterized by a regression in the significance of aesthetic phenomena compared to previous civilizations. In other civilizations, and, Mauss is sure, so will it be in the future, “art serves for everything and colour everything.”<sup>351</sup> Hence, the distinctions between the arts, must have another logic. Mauss provides examples, which inevitably lead to a smile: it is obvious that the painting, separated from the wall after the invention of paper, did not become more ideal. Likewise, the fact that a motif is found on a practical object does not cause its practical treatment.<sup>352</sup> It is Westerners, who “have invented art for the sake of art and who have detached the design from what it ornaments.”<sup>353</sup>

Accordingly, instead of the criticized classification, Mauss offers another (with qualification that it cannot be regarded as absolutely rigid) – the distinction between games or play and arts proper.<sup>354</sup> The arts differ from games in that they have an exclusive quest for beauty. However, if the purely aesthetic phenomena are fairly clearly separated, the situation with games is more complicated. While most games are related to entertainment and relatively disinterested pleasure, not all games are “accompanied by the sensation of the beautiful,” so not all games can be treated as an aesthetical phenomenon.<sup>355</sup>

Also, “the arts can also be distinguished according to the techniques they embellish.”<sup>356</sup> Here I go back to the techniques of the body. The use of “the body or of a temporary or permanent object” determines the division of Mauss’s aesthetic phenomena into the plastic and musical arts.<sup>357</sup>

Rhythm is a very important aspect of aesthetic phenomena. Rhythm has certain connections with techniques of the body – “work derives from rhythm even more than rhythm derives from work.”<sup>358</sup> Whilst holding the essential features of aesthetic phenomena, techniques of the body and rhythmicity do not define art, rather, it remains a description of the human activity of which art is a significant part. Not all bodily techniques are arts. “All art is rhythmic, but there is more to art than rhythms.”<sup>359</sup> To understand art, one must consider the relations between all the arts and different techniques of the body.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Mauss, “Sociology: Its Divisions,” 46.

<sup>352</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 82.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

In sum, Mauss's approach to aesthetics emphasizes the importance of techniques of the body and makes it a key criterion for the evaluation of aesthetic experience and aesthetic objects. The comparative method, which Mauss uses, leads to the extension of the Western conception of arts and question existing institutions.<sup>361</sup> This development is very beneficial for dance studies, as dance has been highly marginalized in the Western aesthetic tradition due to its bodily nature. Mauss, as it has progressively emerged from the discussion, emphasized the bodily nature in all artistic activity: "the first plastic art is that of the individual who works on his or her body: dance, gait, rhythm of the gestures, etc."<sup>362</sup> Accordingly, dance in Mauss's approach to aesthetics occupies an honorable place: "dance is at the origin of all the arts."<sup>363</sup> However, aesthetic phenomena such as the synthesis of the arts must be borne in mind in trying to grasp the aesthetic value of dance, which forms the subject of the following subsection.

#### 1.4.3. Dance

Mauss's definition of dance could be paraphrased thus: "dance is a technique of the body which includes aesthetic movement." Dance belongs to the section of musical arts, whose characteristics are listed accordingly:

In the musical arts we find two elements: a sensory element corresponding to the notions of rhythm, balance, contrasts and harmony, and an ideal element, an element of *theoria* – the dancer sees herself dancing and experiences the joy of it; the simplest of the musical arts includes an element of imagination and creation.<sup>364</sup>

Similar to his contemporaries,<sup>365</sup> Mauss sees dance in the center of ritual ceremonials. Here the connections with other arts must come to the surface. Mauss refers to a number of interfaces: dance's closeness to play,<sup>366</sup> its connections with drama, with vocal and instrumental music, as well as the interrelation of dance with all musical arts – "music and

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<sup>361</sup> Michèle Richman, "Marcel Mauss on Art and Aesthetics," *Durkheim, the Durkheimians, and the Arts* (2013): 150.

<sup>362</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 75.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>365</sup> For comparison, one can read the aforementioned essay by Evans-Pritchard: Evans-Pritchard, "The Dance," 460-462.

<sup>366</sup> "Dance is very close to play – the progression from one to other is almost imperceptible." Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 74.

singing; poetry, drama and literature.”<sup>367</sup> In other words, in a similar way to what Mauss was saying about action, dance is never pure.<sup>368</sup> It has its function:

Dances can also be distinguished according to their function: funeral dances, totemic dances, or dances pertaining to jural status (e.g., the bride’s dance); they may accompany wrestling, or a hunting expedition; war dances, dances for play or work.<sup>369</sup>

In “Techniques of the Body” Mauss also opposes some generalizations on dance provided by pioneering ethnomusicologists Erich Maria von Hornbostel and M. Curt Sachs. Without going deeply into the theme, Mauss writes that he is not against accepting their proposed division of dances into dances at rest and dances in action. However, he criticizes the division of dances according to the masculine or feminine nature. Due to “the fundamental error which is the mainstay of a whole section of sociology” it was thought that there were “supposed to be societies with exclusively masculine descent and others with exclusively uterine descent.” The uterus, being feminine, tends to dance on the spot; others of male descent move.<sup>370</sup> Mauss criticizes such a view as well as the psychoanalytic approach which tends to divide dances into extravert and introvert dances, arguing, that “in fact the sociologist has to see things in a more complex way.”<sup>371</sup> He mentions that the opposition between men and women in dance is definitely present, but it does not restrict the dancing patterns in space.<sup>372</sup> He also agrees with Sachs that there are psychological aspects in dance, so this may be reflected in the division of dances. However, these aspects cannot be a reason for generalization. Mauss’s evaluation reflects his criticism of Jung and Seligmann’s psychoanalysis of races and societies and their references to “introversion” and “extraversion” in his work “Sociology: Its divisions and their relative weightings,” first published in *L’Anee* in 1927.<sup>373</sup> The critique is based on the understanding that “societies must be classified from multiple points of view,”<sup>374</sup> not only from a psychological perspective.

While not diminishing his concept of function in the lives of societies, Mauss places significant emphasis on mimetics and playfulness in dance. This may reflect the influence of

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<sup>367</sup> “The musical arts include dance, music and singing; poetry, drama and literature.” Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 84. This perception of Mauss, according to Allen, is influenced by his teacher Lévi. As already noted, the latter was particularly interested in Indian performative arts, and had written a thesis on Indian theatre, which intimately combines drama, dance, and music. More about Mauss’s relationship with Lévi, and Mauss’s interest in Indology, can be found in Nicholas J. Allen, “Mauss, India, and Perspectives from World History,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 14.1 (2014): 22-33.

<sup>368</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 63.

<sup>369</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 85.

<sup>370</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 89.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Mauss, “Sociology: Its Divisions,” 73.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 73.

the ideas of Tarde and Levy-Bruhl, discussed in the second part of the chapter (1.2.3. and 1.2.4.). Mauss's sophisticated approach to mimetics is shown by the fact that he rejects the distinction between dances of mimicry and dances of feeling as inadequate, proposing instead the distinctions of dances according to their objects, function, according to the indications of the dancers.<sup>375</sup> Playfulness and relaxation are important part of art, not its degradation:

The reactions to which humanity is susceptible are of two types: reactions of exaltation, and reactions of laughter and relaxation. Relaxation is common to all the effects of art, especially relaxation due to a series of expectations that have transported you elsewhere, into a setting which is not your own, one where even if you participate in the action, you know that it is in a different mode from the one in which you would participate in the same action in ordinary life.<sup>376</sup>

The way Mauss treats games, play, and mimesis explains what at first glance seems a strange place allocated to dance among bodily techniques in their classification in "Techniques of the Body," (a classification adapted by Mauss from Erich Maria von Hornbostel and M. Curt Sachs), where dance falls in the section of "active rest."<sup>377</sup> The emphasis on the contextuality of dance and encouragement of researchers to pay attention to every detail sounds similar to Evans-Pritchard, who portrayed dance as a local activity,<sup>378</sup> while Mauss's consideration of aesthetics and religion can be supported by hypothesis of Lilly Grove (Frazer): "There must have been a period of the world's history when every action in life, every game, every banquet, every dance, was a game, a repast, a dance, in honour of the gods."<sup>379</sup>

Mauss states that in terms of all arts, including dance, aesthetic phenomena are closely linked to religious phenomena. He relies on the teaching of Konrad Preuss,<sup>380</sup> pointing out that both have a common origin: "the religious origin of art and the artistic origin of religion."<sup>381</sup> More on the proximity of these spheres will be set out in the next chapter in the presentation of anthropological insights attentive to movement made by Mauss's student Leroi-Gourhan (2.2.6.). This will contribute to one of the final conclusions of this study about the need to pay attention to aesthetics in keeping the life of church vibrant, which in turn will contribute to the continuity of human culture.

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<sup>375</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 85.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>377</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 89.

<sup>378</sup> Evans-Pritchard, "The Dance," 456.

<sup>379</sup> Oesterley, *The Sacred Dance*, 4.

<sup>380</sup> Konrad Theodor Preuss (1869–1938) was a German ethnologist, and the chairman of the Lithuanian Literary Society (1890–1898).

<sup>381</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 69.

#### 1.4.4. Dance as a symbol of social life

The aim of sociological research, which for Mauss was a work similar to aesthetics regarding its purpose of perceiving the totality of a group,<sup>382</sup> is to understand people's behavior, which is the basic manifestation of society. In "The Gift" Mauss wrote that "the principle and the end of sociology is to perceive the whole group and its behaviour in its entirety."<sup>383</sup> As already discussed in the previous part of the chapter, Mauss was searching for examples of the dynamic interactive activities in societies which would be driven not by economic rationalism, but by other values than utility. In "The Gift" he identified the different forms of exchange, which included not only material goods, but also services, politeness, feasts and such like.<sup>384</sup> In this subsection I propose the idea that dance for Mauss was another symbol as well as a real existing practice in society, which can represent an understanding of society. Similarly, Wendy James proposes drama "as a scene in movement, a potentially creative experience of living encounters" to retain a Maussian view of society as "the theatrical arenas where we have to find our 'selves' in order to interact effectively with others."<sup>385</sup> I will justify my proposal<sup>386</sup> by discussing some parallels between Mauss's understanding of dance and his approach to society.

First of all, Mauss's intention was to describe "a social whole integrating individuals who are themselves wholes."<sup>387</sup> This integration, as discussed in the previous section, is not at the expense of individuality. On the contrary, the "social whole," which is more than mere collectivity, is the totality of rhythms, tonalities, "spirits," characters, habits, which serves as an arsenal for the development of individuality and as an arena of its expression. However, this does not in any way mean that the individual is identical with this arena and with society's dynamic forces,<sup>388</sup> which Mauss sometimes describes with expressions from music – rhythm or tonality.<sup>389</sup> Mauss uses the German word *Wetanschauung*, a "conception of the world" to describe "a tonality of life [...] what forms every society."<sup>390</sup> This *Wetanschauung* governs

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<sup>382</sup> Richman, "Marcel Mauss on Art," 149.

<sup>383</sup> Evans-Pritchard, "The Dance," 461.

<sup>384</sup> Leacock, "The Ethnological Theory," 66.

<sup>385</sup> Wendy James, "Human Life as Drama: A Maussian Insight," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 14.1 (2014): 78, 89.

<sup>386</sup> A similar proposal made by Edward Tiryakian is mentioned by Michèle Richman. Richman, "Marcel Mauss on Art," 149.

<sup>387</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 60.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>389</sup> Perhaps, not without Nietzsche's influence, who assigned a unifying power to music. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>390</sup> Mauss, "Sociology: Its Divisions," 69.

people's actions and feelings, "inspires a mental attitude, even a physical attitude."<sup>391</sup> This 'inspiration' is essential for the activity and creativity of the individual.

Parallels with dance are evident. What would be left of the dance if this art form denied its performers? How would dance inspire a person if dancers lost their individuality? On the other hand, the art of dance as an institution, like other institutions, provides potentiality and purveyance for an individual to become a dancer. Every art embellishes certain techniques of the body, this is their distinguishing feature. Dance provides its own techniques of the body according to its functions and goals, always in relation with education, tradition, dominant style,<sup>392</sup> authority, imitation, social relations, the state, the collective mentality and so on,<sup>393</sup> – all social phenomena, which Mauss calls to be borne in mind in the study of an aesthetic element.

To put it simply, it can be said that the happening of dance is determined by different techniques of the body, which individuals, driven by the desire to become a dancer or to perform, have acquired. But the individuals who take part in dance make this kind of determinism part of their own story, which becomes interesting and inclusive. Their individuality, in a sense, negates determinism due to the plethora of possible variations in the performance of techniques of the body (which may be more or less noticeable due to the equilibria of social facts with which the dance finds itself in relation and which make up its style). But in the end, it is not the individual who dances about themselves – they dance about life, of which they and all other dancers are a part. Mauss's note that "nothing can be understood except in relationship to the whole"<sup>394</sup> goes in line with attempts to understand what movements of dance signify.

The aesthetic phenomenon of *corroboree* must also be taken into account. It signifies the mixture of arts as well as sensory pleasure, as mentioned above. As Michèle Richman writes, the totality of dance, of the art, "where music, the production of instruments, mime, decorations and masks, the role of persons who clap, those who make sounds with their mouths, those who move other body parts, how bodies coordinate with the instrumentation, the chorus as well as spectators, all contribute to the total effect and are inseparable from their promotion of social interaction."<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> Mauss about style: Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 81.

<sup>393</sup> Mauss, "Sociology: Its Divisions," 70.

<sup>394</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 61.

<sup>395</sup> Richman, "Marcel Mauss on Art," 149.

Dance can be viewed as a symbol of society because of the dynamism of relations between the individual and collective revealed in it as well as an interaction of all arts. According to Mauss, the latter is an endangered feature of dance, at least as far as the inclusion of or interaction with singing is concerned.<sup>396</sup> At this juncture, it might be worth emphasizing that the discussion concerns dance as Mauss saw it, which in contemporary terms might equate more to the idea of ‘drama’. Mauss’s note of caution does, however, point to the contemporary “solitude of arts” caused by their isolation from one another as well as from daily life, politics, and religion, which does not go hand in hand with the well-being of communities.<sup>397</sup>

What else one can notice, which is specific only to dance beside being the perfect illustration of Mauss’s theory of the “total social fact”?<sup>398</sup> Dance uses bodily movement as a permanent object. It is the expansion, the development of human movement, which is the embryo of creation and the manner or the medium of the maintenance of human relationships, that signifies meanings, institutions, and collective mentality. If one applies the statement of Mauss that “there is enjoyment in materials, and enjoyment in the use of these materials”<sup>399</sup> to the context of thinking about dance, it might denote that dance is the *theoria* of the liveliness of the body, of its physical and social potentialities; the sensual enjoyment of the locus of sensuality; the ceremony of life and embodiment. Dance is the exposure of the vitalism, which acquires its power only from social forces, the vitalism that only exists because of its “social make-up,”<sup>400</sup> or, better to say, ‘skin’. On the other side, dance is the exposure of these social forces – “movements, alterations and dynamisms,”<sup>401</sup> which can be observed in time. Because dance is an art that happens in time, it allows one to do it. It is for these reasons that dance can be seen as a miniature of society, as understood by Mauss, whose style of thinking can be characterized as “full of movement.”<sup>402</sup>

Finally, dance is an art that aestheticizes change. In this aestheticization of change, an important condition to which I will return in the next section, is the relation of the creative movement to the “whole,” which, according to Mauss, is what defines art, and it is precisely this kind of activity that has the potential for transformation.

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<sup>396</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 85.

<sup>397</sup> Richman, “Marcel Mauss on Art,” 151.

<sup>398</sup> As it was highlighted in 1.3., Mauss’s theory of “total social fact,” according to Alexander Gofman, encompasses both the “totality of the system” and the “totality of the actor,” the individual and collective. Gofman, “A Vague but Suggestive Concept,” 66.

<sup>399</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 70.

<sup>400</sup> Schlanger, “The Study of Techniques,” 198.

<sup>401</sup> Mauss, “Sociology: Its Divisions,” 69.

<sup>402</sup> Haroche, “Form, Movement, and Posture in Mauss,” 223.



In summary, Mauss made three important contributions to the field of dance: first, he proposed an alternative, more realistic conception of dance aesthetics; second, he proposed how to classify dances and formulated methods for their observation; and third, he presented an understanding of dance that could become a symbol of society. By emphasizing the bodily nature in all artistic activity, Mauss contributed greatly to the broadening of the Western conception of art. His approach can be very useful for dance studies, since dance has been largely marginalized in the Western aesthetic tradition because of its corporeal nature.

### **1.5. Mauss on the Transformative Power of Movement**

In his study of techniques of the body, Mauss pointed out how the movements that an individual acquires are at the same time the individual's formative force. On the other hand, Mauss also argued for the dialogical nature of the transmission of movements. The adoption of a movement or a mode of action, or the acquisition of a habit, does not come without a critical, emotional, and physical evaluation. The role of the transferee is highlighted, on whom depends the maintenance of the effectiveness of the technique of the body within the framework of the tradition and, at the same time, the survival of the tradition itself.

The acquisition of techniques of the body has a comparative effect. The performance of a body technique is accompanied by kinesthetic feedback which evaluates it. I will explore this idea in detail here, as the phenomenon that comes closest to understanding the transformative aspect in movement.

I will start from the discussion of the most obvious example of the incompatibility between the individual and societal habits from Mauss's "Techniques of the Body," which concerns the gait of Maori women. I will show that Mauss had already addressed this mismatch between the individual and society in his early works; however, in "Techniques of the Body," he focused more on this topic. Mauss's ideas inspired me to look in detail at a phenomenon which, following Noland, I call kinesthetic feedback – a phenomenon that accompanies the performance of body techniques. I will show how kinesthetic feedback relates to the transformative potential of movement.

The quotation below serves as an example of a very important insight from Mauss's "Techniques of the Body," namely, the actor's reaction of resistance to social pressures and expectations:

In a book by Elsdon Best that reached here in 1925 there is a remarkable document on the way Maori women (New Zealand) walk. (Do not say that they are primitives, for in some ways I think they are superior to the Celts and Germans.) 'Native women adopted a peculiar gait [the English word is delightful] that was acquired in youth, a loosejointed

swinging of the hips that looks ungainly to us, but was admired by the Maori. Mothers drilled their daughters in this accomplishment, termed *onioni*, and I have heard a mother say to her girl: “*Hal Kaore koe e onioni*” [you are not doing the *onioni*] when the young one was neglecting to practise the gait’.<sup>403</sup>

The theme of the creative potential of the clash between the individual and social order comes to the surface. This was not something completely new in Mauss’s thinking.

In his early writing on Sociology (in collaboration with Fauconnet), Mauss drew attention to the possible discrepancy between a “spirit” of the group, which manifests itself in the ways individuals of a particular group feel, think, and act, and an isolated individual. Although a “spirit” determines certain manners of feeling, thinking, and acting, which implies that individuals “would have neither the same feelings nor the same habits, nor the same prejudices, if they had lived in other human groups,” Mauss points out that “between the ideas that he has and the acts that isolated individual would do, on the one hand, and collective manifestations on the other hand, there exists such an abyss that these latter should be related to a new *nature*, to forces *sui generis*, for otherwise they would remain incomprehensible.”<sup>404</sup> The individual always feels, thinks, and acts in a complex relationship with the “spirit” of the group, but the impact of the “spirit” on the individual must not be seen in an unambiguous and straightforward way. The following quotation from Mauss refers to the components in this relationship, the multiplicity of components, and even their contingency:

Humanity has built its spirit by all means: technical and non-technical; mystical and non-mystical; using its spirit (sense, feeling, reason), using its body; at random of choices, of things and times; at random of nations and their works or their ruins.<sup>405</sup>

Each individual expression thus speaks of individual reactions to the “spirit,” but at the same time of the “spirit” of the society of which it is the collective expression. This was the insight of Mauss in 1901. In 1934, when he gave lecture on “Techniques of the Body,” he seems to have taken an interest in the ‘abyss’ he referred to earlier. His focus is on the realm of the transmission and appropriation of bodily techniques, where an individual appreciation of the socially embodied heritage is manifested. Noland observes,

As a close reading of “Techniques of the Body” demonstrates, hidden in Mauss’s Durkheimian sociology, in his conviction that the social precedes and forges the individual, is a radical phenomenology according to which the performance of acquired social practices – involving kinesthetic feedback – may create forms of resistance that no inscription can entirely fix.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 81 (emphasis original).

<sup>404</sup> Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 5-6.

<sup>405</sup> Mauss, “Rapports réels et pratiques,” 26.

<sup>406</sup> Noland, “The ‘Structuring’ Body,” 20.

In the following subsections I offer a more detailed investigation of kinesthetic feedback (1.5.1.), including kinesthetic resistance (1.5.2.). This represents a modified version of material I wrote for a chapter in the book “Image and Imagination in the Phenomenology of Religious Experience.”<sup>407</sup> I conclude the part with general reflections on the transformative power of movement that arise from reading Mauss’s work (1.5.3.).

### *1.5.1. Kinesthetic feedback*

Kinesthetic feedback is what follows every performance of techniques of the body and is connected with the dialogical nature of its transmission and acquisition.

Since every technique is inseparable from its transmission, which is also tradition-specific,<sup>408</sup> evaluative or kinesthetic feedback always exists. It is more noticeable in the learning process when a person acquires a new set of actions or a new form of technique, or when a person moves to a different social or geographical environment, which requires a change in the usual body technique. If a person does not notice any feedback, it is because the person learnt the body technique many years ago and is familiar with an environment or context in which their movements are considered ‘natural’ (because they originate there and are culturally and socially efficient to perform). Evaluative feedback can also be inhibited by the long-term use of body techniques. On the other hand, when one finds oneself in unfamiliar conditions – other cultures, other customs – kinesthetic feedback is much more pronounced. The same applies to actions that are new to one. Since body techniques have to be evaluated in the light of other social factors, I assume that any change in these facts may lead to a strengthening of the evaluative kinesthetic feedback within the individual.

An important feature of kinesthetic feedback is the comparative effect. When the social or geographical environment changes, one evaluates it and feels the need to change one’s movements in comparison to what one used to perform before. In addition, a comparative effect occurs when one masters a technique. The word itself implies that one becomes a master of what used to belong to others. The comparative effect is part of the adaptation process when transferring a technique. An individual’s life experience is never identical to that of other

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<sup>407</sup> Gilija Žukauskienė, “The Role of Movement in Religious Experience,” in *Image and Imagination in the Phenomenology of Religious Experience*, ed. Martin Nitsche and Olga Louchakova-Schwartz (Herzberg: Verlag Traugott Bautz, 2003), 297-322.

<sup>408</sup> “There is no technique and no transmission in the absence of tradition.” Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 82.

people. So, the comparative effect will lead to the realization of this difference in the individual's performance of a particular technique of the body.

Kinesthetic feedback has implications for the sense of time. On a new route, in an unfamiliar place, the journey feels longer. Changes in experience of time in old age can be attributed to habituation to one's bodily activities and environment. Also, the experience of time differs together with the changes in health status – time passes much more slowly when one suffers. This can also be viewed as the influence of kinesthetic feedback: when ones get sick, feels unwell, or feels differently, and in performing usual bodily techniques, one focuses on the 'difference'.

The purpose of kinesthetic and evaluative feedback is to correct, modify, recreate bodily technique so that it remains (or becomes) effective and legitimate in a particular society. Already one can see here the transformative power of movement, but on a very individual level. The possibilities for modifying body techniques are endless because of the many directions in which transformations can take place. In addition, the focus on the kinesthetic feedback itself, modifies techniques of the body in a specific way.

Techniques of the body vary according to the environment and traditions from which they come. In some (religious) traditions techniques of the body have a “special kind of effectiveness,”<sup>409</sup> that makes them special. The effectiveness of such techniques derives from something other than mechanical effectiveness, thus these techniques become “the prefiguration of techniques”—bodily techniques in progress.<sup>410</sup> The kinesthetic feedback these techniques generate is specific; it is not aimed at correction/ variation/ re-engineering of the technique itself, but at correction/ variation/ creation of something else, which becomes possible (to think, to compare, to see alternatives) through this particular technique. Kinesthetic feedback is directed towards a more general creativity, towards changes in life through that particular technique. In other words, the transformative potential of kinesthetic feedback can be used to transform more than just what it is directly derived from. The creative potential can be applied to other things. Kinesthetic feedback can be altered from its original task, redirected in a different direction, slightly intensified or, for specific reasons, greatly highlighted. Since it depends on body technique, a particular body technique can produce the desired effect. The belonging of body technique to the specific environment and traditions should not be overlooked.

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<sup>409</sup> Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, 25; Jean-Pierre Warnier, “Technology as Efficacious Action on Objects . . . and Subjects,” *Journal of Material Culture* 14.4 (2009): 459–470.

<sup>410</sup> Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, 176.

Kinesthetic feedback in religious experience, especially in the Western Christian tradition, can be linked to the desire to nurture the ‘soul’. This is achieved through bodily techniques that create and use kinesthetic feedback to focus on its very continuity. The possibilities to feel and critically evaluate life and/or change life, through kinesthetic feedback, can go hand in hand with religious goals. Again, even if this kinesthetic feedback effect is used to enhance self-awareness, it is closely linked to body technique. However, body technique must not distract from the goal. This means avoiding situations that require focus on social and environmental factors. An alternative could be being alone, in silence, focusing on a few simple actions, sights, tastes or sounds, doing something very familiar or habitual, walking, reading, praying and so on.<sup>411</sup> Or conversely, kinesthetic feedback is much more pronounced when moving in unfamiliar conditions, in complicated circumstances. This is why exclusively ‘sacred’ places are so important. Unusual, out-of-the-ordinary actions also contribute well to self-awareness, which can be directed accordingly.

As kinesthetic feedback is the result of the performance of a body technique, the transformative potential is closely related to movement. Even if the focus is on kinesthetic feedback as such, body techniques do not lose their relevance. Whatever kinesthetic feedback one wants to get – a soothing return to the self, a sense of awareness, or a sense of meaningful activity – I suggest that the difference will be related to certain techniques of the body.<sup>412</sup>

Kinesthetic feedback is an experience of the self that comes through action and leads to action. It leads to change, adaptation, development, or modification of aspects of the technique, and to transformation. Although techniques of the body must be seen as a formative element of the social order, the creativity inherent in them must also be noted. The kinesthetic feedback stimulates and necessarily leads to a creative response – individual evaluation and suggestions in relation to collective knowledge and expectations.

### *1.5.2. Kinesthetic resistance*

Kinesthetic resistance can be seen as a person’s ability to consciously avoid the application of techniques of the body and to remain in confrontation with social orders and expectations. It is very important that the question of kinesthetic resistance in Mauss’s work arises in the context of social pressure.<sup>413</sup> This means that the creativity of techniques of the

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<sup>411</sup> Reflections on how environmental changes affect religious experiences can be found in Martin Nitsche, “Transformative Impact: The Environmental Significance of Religious Conversions,” *Open Theology* 5.1 (2019): 241–248.

<sup>412</sup> Understanding techniques of the body within the matrix of the totality of social facts is implicated.

<sup>413</sup> Noland, “The ‘Structuring’ Body,” 20-21.

body can challenge the established powers of society or even lead to the transformation of regimes.

Kinesthetic resistance is the result of kinesthetic feedback. The initial inclination towards others, the need to trust and follow the action, is overcome by a critical evaluation which results in a creative response that emphasizes the necessary distance. This is linked to the orientation of kinesthetic feedback towards change.

Kinesthetic resistance's manifestations can also be very different and omnidirectional. In normal cases (such as the Maori example at the beginning of the chapter), this can take the form of sabotage, caricature, non-conformism, subversion, and so on. However, their diversions can be very extreme. Mauss's discussion about *thanatomania* – a violent negation of the life instinct by the social instinct<sup>414</sup> – can be viewed as a possible example.

To summarize, Mauss's analysis of techniques of the body exposes the complexity and openness of *habitus*. Individual creativity and social cohesion are not opposites; the creativity of individuals ensures the strength and flexibility of the social fabric. On the other hand, Noland argues, Mauss's insights, especially his remarks about Maori women, "indicates that the *habitus* is not solid, uniformly applied and acquired, but instead vulnerable to resistance of an albeit subtle kind."<sup>415</sup> Such a position of *habitus* results from the symbolic meaning of body techniques. "Symbolic" involves the sphere where the social combines with the individual consciousness (as discussed in 1.3.2.). In the next subsection I will explore the boundaries of the "symbolic."

### 1.5.3. *The connection to the "whole"*

Mauss's view of movement activity, which emphasizes its relationship to the "whole" – the social system in which it occurs and its relationship to other social facts – does not prevent one from seeing what is happening on an individual scale, and vice versa. In this section I focus on the relationship of the individual actor to the complex and dynamic nature of society, emphasizing the paradoxical understanding of the boundaries of embodied experience as creating meaning in both individual and collective experience. I shall also highlight which activities Mauss considers have the greatest potential for transformation, and why.

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<sup>414</sup> Ignatow, "Mauss's Lectures to Psychologists," 12.

<sup>415</sup> Noland, "The 'Structuring' Body," 30.

Mauss saw the divisions in sociology<sup>416</sup> as very useful as they help to discover the existing morphological and physiological as well as religious, economic, legal, and linguistic relations. The aim and method of general sociology, according to Mauss, is to discover and study all these relationships:<sup>417</sup> “Among social phenomena there exist the most varied relationships. Customs and ideas push their roots in all directions.”<sup>418</sup>

Let us pause for a moment on this metaphor from Mauss. It depicts social customs and ideas as a kind of plant whose development is determined by its environment, but whose viability cannot be based on a simple calculation of environmental factors. For every encounter between the individual and an aspect of the “spirit” of society creates the possibility of transformation through the boundary between them. Bringing Arnold van Gennep’s insights (as discussed in 1.2.4.) into the context of everyday life, people are constantly going through liminal experiences, perhaps without always paying attention to them. Mauss probably had this in mind when he explored the adoption of techniques of the body. I would suggest that these boundaries of encounter of experiences are more pronounced in sensitive people, and more specifically in those who have a developed attention to kinesthetic feedback.

Understanding kinesthetic feedback as a sense of the “spirit” of a society, a group, or the environment in general, as experienced through action, brings one back to the theme of imitation. This also encourages attention to the aspects of sympathy and love, which are closely linked to imitation, as they usually precede or accompany imitation. Tarde (discussed in 1.2.3.) even thought that constant imitation and repetition is the expression of hidden love, which individuals show “in life as in art.”<sup>419</sup> Accordingly, the unpleasant feelings experienced by the potential transferee during this encounter can be seen as an expression of a lack of love and sympathy.<sup>420</sup> This is again a reference to the relationship of a given society to the individual, in general and in particular.<sup>421</sup> The imitation’s relation with sympathy explains (in addition to the unquestionable data on cognitive development) the simplicity of the imitative processes in adopting techniques of the body at an early age and their complexity at a later age. In the first

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<sup>416</sup> Mauss proposed the following divisions: social morphology, which studies groups and their structures, and social physiology, which studies the same structure, “but structure in motion” – the facts of mental and moral life, which in itself can be divided to the physiology of practices and the physiology of representations. Mauss, “Sociology: Its Divisions,” 55-57.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>419</sup> Arpad Szakolczai and Bjørn Thomassen, “Gabriel Tarde and René Girard. Imitation and the Foundations of Social Life,” in *From Anthropology to Social Theory* (2019), 58-59.

<sup>420</sup> Even Bourdieu’s observation about how actors extract themselves from environments to which they do not belong (which will be discussed in 2.3.6.) does not contradict this insight.

<sup>421</sup> This leads to a related question: how might such an analysis of the relationship between the individual and the “spirit” influence our reflection on the morality of the individual?

case, it usually takes place in a very close, secure circle of loving people.<sup>422</sup> The lack of such an environment makes the adaptation of techniques of the body more complicated. The same goes for ideas: would we be quick to adapt to the way of thinking of someone we find repulsive and unacceptable?

The link between imitation and sympathy is important and needs to be taken into account in the generalization of conscious and unconscious actions. When one considers certain body techniques to be ‘natural’, meaning that they are very habitual and therefore performed ‘unconsciously’, one is referring, as mentioned above, to techniques that have been learnt in childhood or that one has been practicing for years. Practicing for years implies the condition of constant repetition, which in turn brings us back to the theme of love and attachment.

However, conscious action is not at all related to a lack of sympathy, at least in Mauss’s understanding. As discussed earlier (in 1.3.1.), conscious action, as Mauss understood it, is about transformation. In other words, it is a conscious encounter with the boundary between what ‘I am’ and what ‘I am not (yet)’, because the acquisition of each technique of the body changes the status of one’s experience in the world.<sup>423</sup> The evaluative effect of kinesthetic feedback plays an important role here. In the case of social action, a ‘taste’ of a future social order (a more egalitarian one) is given through the engagement in economic community activity. As I have already pointed out, the awareness of one’s own situation stems from a comparison rooted in the experience of movement. Such a comparison leads to conscious changes in life. Hence, conscious action, according to Mauss, is a deliberate choice made by an individual or a group to create change in society and influence the course of history through their actions. It is not disconnected from sympathy and love (nor from imitation and repetition), but also has a very rational motivation.

Nonetheless, rational motivation is far from being the dominant theme in Mauss’s movement research in terms of the transformative power of movement. Quite the contrary; if one wants to look for transformative impulses through movement, one has to look for them in aesthetics and especially in games!

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<sup>422</sup> If this is not the case, the slow pace of a child’s development also acts as a testimony to the validity of this insight. However, these insights should only be seen as complementary to the science of cognitive development.

<sup>423</sup> Mauss argues, that “in practical arts, humans recede their limits. They progress in nature, at the same time as beyond their own nature, since they adjust it to nature. They identify with the mechanical, physical and chemical orders of things. They create and at the same time they create themselves, according to the means for living [. . .] and their thought is inscribed in things. Herein resides true practical reason.” Richman, “Marcel Mauss on Art,” 146.



The first thing that links games (and creative activities) to transformation is the knowledge of the rules and process. Again, it seems paradoxical that a prior agreement to obey the rules can lead actors to change. The same applies to participation in a ritual or theatrical event, which has clearly defined conditions in time and space and its own status in social life. Nevertheless, clear boundaries between the game or drama and ordinary life do two important things:

1. The boundary creates a similar comparative effect to the one discussed in the analysis of kinesthetic feedback. In other words, the effect is produced by the kinesthetic feedback, but it comes from a comparison between the ritual or game-world in which the person participates and the ordinary.<sup>424</sup>
2. The boundary ensures the safety of participants. However, ‘safety’ must be understood in the context of the ideas already discussed about the ideal environment for imitation – an environment based on prior sympathy and trust.

The other reason for the transformative power in games is their aim in sensory pleasure, which according to Mauss, is an aesthetic feature. “Some very simple games have as their sole aim the relaxation produced by laughter, an effect of surprise; others can be far more complicated, for example acting games.”<sup>425</sup> The boundaries of games and other aesthetic practices allow one to enjoy, to indulge in a new experience full of surprises, and to compare these two selves that are one and the same. Kinesthetic and evaluative feedback ensures this unity. The lack of vitality, wonder, meaningful relationships and ultimately the lack of activity as an end in itself in ordinary life can be identified through this comparison, which can lead to certain life changes. The reaction that an actor experiences during a play is very important for a possible change:

The reactions to which humanity is susceptible are of two types: reactions of exaltation, and reactions of laughter and relaxation. Relaxation is common to all the effects of art, especially relaxation due to a series of expectations that have transported you elsewhere, into a setting which is not your own, one where even if you participate in the action, you know that it is in a different mode from the one in which you would participate in the same action in ordinary life.<sup>426</sup>

Aesthetic activities provide a relaxation that takes one elsewhere, away from one’s environment, away from the routine of everyday life, from the usual ways of doing things.

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<sup>424</sup> This observation will be important for the ecclesial practices I will discuss in the last chapter.

<sup>425</sup> Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography*, 72.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

Reactions to it are therefore purified, culturally modelled. But they are embodied experiences gained through participation. So, they become part of life through kinesthetic feedback.

The last feature of aesthetic activity, which is connected to transformative power, is its relation to the “whole.” Every creative activity in relation to the whole, is art, according to Mauss.<sup>427</sup> From this point of view, all activities that seek a connection with the whole are patently transformative. An activity that is an end in itself is more open to a variety of possible symbolic links. The more interfaces, the more possibilities for meaning and transformation.<sup>428</sup>

The willful pursuit of meaningful action in relation to the reality of life in its wholeness is human destiny, and it is the destiny of transformation.

### **Summary**

The first chapter was devoted to Marcel Mauss’s approach to movement. Biographical data was used to better understand Mauss’s intellectual development in relation to the formation of his approach to movement (1.1.), followed by a discussion of the disciplines and personalities that influenced it (1.2.). Mauss’s approach to movement and dance was the focus of the following sections (1.3. and 1.4.), and the chapter concluded with examining the transformative power of movement according to Mauss (1.5.).

What the chapter has showed is that Mauss’s dynamic approach to social facts and institutions was already evident in his early works. According to him, there is no other way to understand social phenomena than through their manifestation in action. Collective habits and models of behavior are ‘how’ society functions. In addition to the objective form, it is also how one experiences it on an individual level.

Mauss understood society as a symbolically mediated interaction. The symbolic is what combines the social with the individual consciousness. Progressively, Mauss devoted more and more attention to the study of this connection. This is evident from my discussion of Mauss’s approach to movement (1.3.), which comprised a discussion of his theory of social action, as well as two other important works, “The Gift” (1925) and “Techniques of the Body” (1934). The relationship between the individual and society, which potentially produces creativity and change, was present in all three of the works, but with a different slant. Social action theory

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<sup>427</sup> This is why he also treated sociology as art. Richman, “Marcel Mauss on Art,” 149.

<sup>428</sup> “Every social state, every social activity, however fleeting, must be related to this unity, to this total integration, of an extraordinary nature [. . .] For what assembles them and causes them to live together, what makes them think and act in common and at once, is a natural rhythm, a willed unanimity, arbitrary perhaps, but always necessary.” Mauss cited in Richman, “Marcel Mauss on Art,” 149. A voluntary unity of individuals and institutions in creative actions could be the vision of good functioning of healthy society.

emphasized the aspect of collectivity, as it was about engaging in an economic movement from below, which had to satisfy both individual and community interests. The theory attempted to combine scientific information, political inspiration, individual awareness, and the community's desire to act together, continuously gaining good transformative experience that shapes future action. The discussion of "The Gift" emphasized the socially oriented, communicative, and therefore non-reductive nature of human action. "Techniques of the Body" referred to the deepest level of Mauss's ideas, where he focused on the role and mechanics of bodily movements in maintaining or changing patterns of life. In this work, the tension between the actor and the environment or tradition in which they operate became most evident.

Mauss's view of movement, which stresses its relation to the "whole" – the social system in which it takes place and its relation to other social facts – does not preclude a view of what is taking place on an individual scale, and vice versa. Mauss saw this encounter of the individual with social structures and expectations as a source of symbolic communication, the first and most important manifestation of which takes place in movement – in the constant change of ways and modes of behavior.

The creative potential of human movement stems from the phenomenon of the kinesthetic feedback that follows an actor's performance of techniques of the body, a phenomenon that I analyzed in detail in section 1.5 on the transformative aspect of movement in Mauss's work. This phenomenon is very closely linked to the renewal of institutions and traditions, and therefore to their continuity, and hence to the little-studied aspect of the community building in movement.

The aim of kinesthetic and evaluative feedback is to correct, modify, recreate a technique of the body so that it remains or becomes effective and legitimate in a given society. I have shown that the possibilities of modifying techniques of the body are unlimited, as transformations can take place in different directions. Moreover, there are techniques of the body that focus on the kinesthetic feedback itself. This is the case with religious practices. Kinesthetic feedback in religious experience, especially in the Western Christian tradition, can be linked to the desire to nurture the 'soul'. This is achieved through techniques of the body that create and use kinesthetic feedback to focus on its very continuity. On the other hand, in religious experience, kinesthetic feedback can be directed in an 'external' direction, allowing the person to experience and critically evaluate life and change it (or themselves). I have also shown kinesthetic resistance as a result of kinesthetic feedback. It can be understood as a person's ability to consciously avoid the application of techniques of the body and to remain in confrontation with the social order and expectations.

Mauss's aesthetic theory and methods for dance research (discussed in 1.4.) are of great importance, giving rise to the development of ethnographic dance research. Mauss, who argued that modern societies are characterized by a decline in the significance of aesthetic phenomena compared to earlier civilizations, also proposed a broader approach to aesthetic phenomena, which emphasized the nature of the body in all artistic activity.

Mauss's dynamic view of society can be expressed by the symbol of the dance, which complements the message he clearly stated in "The Gift" – gift relations, the central aspect of which is the act of giving, are the foundations of society.<sup>429</sup> Dance contributes to this message by further emphasizing embodiment and adding the aspect of imitation, which comes from sympathy and love. It is also a non-instrumental activity, limited in time and space, an activity that evokes relaxation and wonder, qualities that Mauss attributed to the aesthetic. All of these aspects are very important transformative factors inspired by the experience of the movement, which Mauss described in terms of techniques of the body. Since the performance of techniques of the body is accompanied by kinesthetic feedback which has a comparative effect, participation in a dance, a game, a drama, a ritual can ultimately 'test' the ordinary life, through evaluation and comparison with participation in a communicative, non-instrumental action, an action directed towards the "whole." Mauss showed that the limits of embodied experience are paradoxically crucial in making sense of both individual and collective experience.

In examining both social and individual life, Mauss avoided the dualism characteristic of Durkheim: the categorical conflation of the sacred and the profane, the individual and society, the body and the soul. Mauss's notions of the "total human being" as well "total social fact" demanded an interdisciplinary dialogue, in which the scientist willingly engaged. He was one of the few scholars who could fully participate in scientific debates that required knowledge of sociology, anthropology, ethnology, psychology, history, and linguistics. This erudition and the social and physical activity in his life gave him a special insight into movement and helped to open up it as a field of behavioral heritage for future research.

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<sup>429</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen, "Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving," 84-85.

## **Chapter 2. The Students of Marcel Mauss on Movement**

In his essay “Techniques of the Body,” Marcel Mauss laid the foundations of what was to become the systematic study of the use of the body across cultures. The aim of this chapter is to examine the directions in which Mauss’s insights into movement were developed by his followers, asking in particular, what new insights does their approach to movement bring to the question of the transformative power of movement?

The chapter is devoted to an analysis of the attitudes towards movement of three of Mauss’s students, Marcel Jousse, André Leroi-Gourhan and Pierre Bourdieu, who are characterized by their attentiveness to movement in their research. Moreover, these authors can be seen as representatives of different disciplines – theology, anthropology, sociology – which demonstrates Mauss’s cross-disciplinary influence. In order to understand the original insights of Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, and Bourdieu, some biographical facts about their lives, intellectual journeys, and relationships with Mauss will be discussed. I present these authors in chronological order, taking into account their historical closeness to Mauss.<sup>430</sup>

I begin with Marcel Jousse, the author of *The Anthropology of Gesture*<sup>431</sup> (2.1.). His action-based cosmology will be presented together with his interpretation of the gestural relation of human beings with the cosmos. I then take a closer look at Jousse’s understanding of the mechanisms of the human body and how they relate to human creativity, and lastly examine the way Jousse interprets creativity.

The second part of the chapter (2.2.) will analyze André Leroi-Gourhan’s contribution to the research of technology, an area that he fruitfully developed following Mauss. Concepts of the environment, tendency, symbiosis as well as operational chain will be presented. The concept of the operational chain, which appeared in the context of research on technology, and which refers to a technical operation performed by a chain of gestures, will be analyzed in more depth, as it was crucial for Leroi-Gourhan’s further studies on evolution, aesthetics, and religion. These themes were an abiding interest of Leroi-Gourhan, and attention to movement was the distinguishing feature of their exploration.

Pierre Bourdieu is not a direct disciple of Mauss, but he is undoubtedly one of a generation of scientists who were greatly influenced by him.<sup>432</sup> Bourdieu considered himself a

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<sup>430</sup> Although chronologically Bourdieu lived later than Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the philosopher who influenced him, and whose approach to movement I will analyse in the next chapter, I have chosen to include Bourdieu in the section on Mauss’s disciples, showing Mauss’s influence on Bourdieu, which is less well known.

<sup>431</sup> Marcel Jousse, *L’anthropologie du Geste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).

<sup>432</sup> Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 6.

Maussianist, referred to Mauss in his work, and considered his predecessor as coming “the closest to a theory of practice.”<sup>433</sup> The greatest influence of Mauss can be seen in the adoption of his revived notion of habitus, which Bourdieu used extensively as one of his “thinking tools.”<sup>434</sup> Therefore, the third part of the chapter (2.3.) will examine the influence of Mauss on Bourdieu’s thinking and examine the similarities and differences between their concepts of habitus. The transformative aspect of movement will be the second question addressed by looking at Bourdieu’s scientific legacy.

In the last part of the chapter (2.4.), I will summarize the thoughts of all three authors about movement. I will also comment on how they relate to each other, noting complementarity and contradictions. I will then focus on a discussion of how each of the authors sees the transformative potential manifested in movement.

### **2.1. Marcel Jousse and the Anthropology of Gesture**

Marcel Jousse (1886–1961), Mauss’s student, contributed to the further development of research on movement, in particular the anthropology of the gesture.

Jousse believed that there is no other way to understand human beings than through life. And gesture is the “living tool” that brings one closer to life itself. It is very important to stress from the outset, that these two words – life and the gesture – do not act as a metaphor for Jousse.<sup>435</sup> He is interested in a concrete reality brought to human consciousness.<sup>436</sup> Movement plays an inexpressibly important role in the reality of life and in human interaction with it. Movement is the basis of Jousse’s cosmology and anthropology.

In explaining how his research apparatus developed, Jousse identifies three phases or three privileged laboratories where he could research and verify the specific mechanisms of human beings in their complex and living unity:

1. First of all, it is the observation of little *anthropos*, which allowed him to see how the first human mechanisms arise spontaneously in the universe of children.
2. Then comes the laboratory of ethnic variants of anthropological laws, which showed how these living mechanisms invigorate and amplify themselves in different ethnic backgrounds.

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<sup>433</sup> Marcel Fournier, “Durkheim, Mauss et Bourdieu: une filiation?,” *Revue du Mauss* 2 (2010): 480.

<sup>434</sup> Michael Grenfell, “Forward,” in *Pierre Bourdieu and Physical Culture*, ed. Lisa Hunter, Wayne Smith, Elke Emerald (London: Routledge, 2015), xi.

<sup>435</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 50.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12. Only in this way, according to Jousse, does the supreme metaphysics begin.

3. Finally, the laboratory of psychiatric clinics revealed how these mechanisms are disassembled.<sup>437</sup>

Jousse's research is based on observation, which leads to knowledge. However, the entire experimental laboratory of the anthropology of gesture is based on the human being's awareness of the human being, which begins with self-knowledge:

But to know yourself well, you have to observe yourself well. The real laboratory is an observatory. "It is an observatory of oneself," involving a kind of getting out of oneself that is only possible because of mimicry – "everything is in us which is replayed by us."<sup>438</sup>

In emphasizing observation and knowledge, Jousse is referring to observation focused on gesture. Jousse speaks about the Gesture as the living energy that propels this global whole that is the human being.<sup>439</sup> On the anthropological level he speaks about gesture as the replay of macroscopic or microscopic gestures which have been previously fixed/set in all the diversified fibers of the human organism.

Jousse liked to present the phases or laboratories of his research on gestural anthropology in relation to his development as a researcher. In other words, he was consistent in his approach to observation, which stressed the importance of self-observation. "The story of my life is the story of my work and the story of my work is the story of my life,"<sup>440</sup> the anthropologist used to say. In order to understand Jousse's ideas, it is thus important to get to know at least a little about his life.

### *2.1.1. The story of Jousse's life*

Marcel Jousse was born in 1886 in the Sarthe region, west of Paris. In primary school Jousse was introduced to French school culture, and throughout his life he maintained respect for his native language alongside the culture of the peasantry of Sarthe, which is characterized by verbosity, gestures, spontaneity, formality, and rhythm.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Jousse, *L'anthropologie*, 12, 51.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. Therefore, according to Jousse, all science is awareness and all objectivity is subjectivity.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>440</sup> "L'histoire de ma vie est l'histoire de mon œuvre et l'histoire de mon œuvre est l'histoire de ma vie." Gabriel Luis Bourdin, "Marcel Jousse y la antropología del gesto," *Pelicano* 2 (2016): 70.

<http://www.marceljousse.com/article-bourdin-revista-pelicano-2016> [accessed 10 February 2022].

<sup>441</sup> As soon as Marcel was born, cantilenas were sung over his cradle: "My mother had an extraordinary memory. She was brought up by her totally illiterate grandmother (my mother was an orphan) who taught her orally all the ancient cantilenas of the Sarthe region that she knew. My mother, who went to school for three winters only, obviously never saw these cantilenas in any written version. I came to consciousness amid the rocking motions of these cantilenas, and when I let myself go, it is those first rocking movements that I experience in myself. It is rather strange to discover how those first experiences of rhythm could influence an entire life. If I am so hyper sensitive to the whole question of rhythm I owe it, certainly, to this training even before the awakening of

Starting pre-school at the age of four to five,<sup>442</sup> Jousse could not yet read or write, but already knew by heart many of the things he learned through melody and song.<sup>443</sup> Reflecting on his childhood experience, Jousse stresses the importance of the experience of action in a concrete environment, in relation to its nature, people, culture, and objects: “Why do children play at everything they have received from their environment with such astonishing success? I saw this only: children trying to escape from all our constraints in order to play at everything.”<sup>444</sup> Movement is crucial for learning the “science of concrete things.” He therefore warns his listeners<sup>445</sup> not to be surprised when they hear him say, “In the beginning there was a rhythm-mimical gesture,” because in the beginning that is all he saw.<sup>446</sup>

Another highlight that Jousse remembers from his childhood was a visit to the Museum of the Préfective of Le Mans, where he was able to see an embalmed Egyptian mummy. The sight had a profound effect on him and stimulated his thinking:

An idea came into my mind that subsequently haunted me, and continues to haunt me: all these little drawings painted all around, had they once been alive, like that little priestess lying there all embalmed? Were not all those frozen “characters” once alive, like our children’s games? Was there not, going on all around this stiff embalmed figure, a complex game involving people who gestured as children do?

This image haunted me: what we had here were signs that were dead, but had once been alive, just as that little priestess was dead, but had once lived. I have been truly haunted by that.<sup>447</sup>

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consciousness. Those songs that rocked me inevitably informed the whole infinitely extensive system constituted by our receptive fibres. [...] We are essentially balancing, undulating, beings.” Marcel Jousse, *The Oral Style (RLE Folklore)* (London: Routledge, 2015), xix-xx. Jousse’s acquaintance with written culture and academic learning, without the traumatic requirement to abandon the linguistic and cultural roots of his native region, helped him to retain the weight and taste of the peasant world. Bourdin, “Marcel Jousse,” 70.

<sup>442</sup> Marcel Jousse’s primary education took place between 1891 and 1897. Gabrielle Baron, *Mémoire vivante: Vie et œuvre de Marcel Jousse* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1981). This book provides a chronology of Marcel Jousse’s life (p. 305) and a more detailed biography.

<sup>443</sup> When Jousse was five or six years old, his mother took him to a gathering of more or less illiterate peasants on a farm near Beaumont-sur-Sarthe. These evening meetings of peasants usually took place in winter. They would gather to eat chestnuts with cider, and then the peasants would get more and more involved in the swirl of songs, standing up and striking up a song. Based on his mother’s songs, Jousse felt the deep rhythmicity of the peasants. Jousse was struck by the demand of precision in the tradition, but also by the amazing number of things the peasants had learnt, which required a phenomenal memory! Jousse, *The Oral Style*, xx.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., xxii.

<sup>445</sup> Jousse’s major works were drawn from the anthropologist’s courses in the 1950s at the Sorbonne, at the École pratique des Hautes Études, at the École d’Anthropologie de Paris, and in his Laboratoire de Rythmo-pédagogie.

<sup>446</sup> Jousse, *The Oral Style*, xxii. The comparison between his early learning and that of the school becomes a springboard for Jousse’s later critique of the pedagogical system: it is not natural for children to learn at school in stillness, in silence, without speaking. After all, when they leave the classroom, they do the opposite – they rhythmically memorize their lessons and sway so they can continue reciting. “Our educationists are going to have to take this whole matter up again. After all, why force the child to learn his lesson in a whisper when you are going to require him to repeat it out loud? That, in my view, shows an ignorance of basic psychology. It is as if you were to try to learn to play the piano on an instrument that produced no sound. It struck me very forcibly that the children instinctively memorised things by chanting them.” Ibid., xxii.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., xxiv.



This event later was linked with Jousse's experience of learning Greek. He began to learn Greek and Latin at the age of twelve, following the root method inspired by the linguist Maunoury.<sup>448</sup> The event with mummy and the learning Greek "through the roots"<sup>449</sup> led to the reasoning that "language is first and foremost mimicry. When it is at the stage of living gesture it is mimodrama; projected and inscribed on a surface it is mimogram; written down and pronounced it is phonogram."<sup>450</sup> When he began to study algebra, Jousse saw it as a kind of function for formulation, lacking the concreteness of the language (for example, Greek). Later, Jousse identified the problem as a shift from mimic gestures to algebra.<sup>451</sup> Since that time, according to Jousse, he had only one idea in mind: mimicry and its algebraization.

Between the ages of fifteen and twenty, Jousse gradually distinguished between three stages of human expression: corporeal-manual style, oral style, and written style followed by algebra.<sup>452</sup> These three stages of human expression were the starting points for Jousse's further research. He was interested in the laws of Mimisme,<sup>453</sup> which he observed in both children and adults, and in psychology, which he saw as the intellectual equivalent of Mimisme. For this reason, Jousse later chose to study normal and pathological psychology and ethnology.

Jousse conducted his research with the great masters of the time, of whom he was a student: the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, the psychologist Pierre Janet, the medical doctor and psychologist Georges Dumas, the creator of experimental phonetics Jean-Pierre Roussetot. "The ethnography of Marcel Mauss taught me what I needed to know about the various mechanisms of the different stages of gestural and oral expression," says Jousse of his teacher.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> At the age of 13, Jousse also became interested in Hebrew and Aramaic because he wanted to learn the language Jesus spoke.

<sup>449</sup> The method emphasized the gestural and mimetic significance of roots. Bourdin, "Marcel Jousse," 70.

<sup>450</sup> Jousse, *The Oral Style*, xxiv. In my own later translations, I prefer to leave Jousse's word *Mimisme* to avoid confusion with mimicry – spontaneous expression of emotion, which includes rictus, facial constriction or dilation under the influence of emotion. For other concepts of Jousse, although he tends to capitalize them, I choose to write them without an initial capital letter, except where they do not have a direct translation, such as Mimisme, and those that refer to the divine, such as the Gesture, understood as the primary source of life. However, I capitalise terms in quotations according to the author.

<sup>451</sup> Jousse, *The Oral Style*, xxvi.

<sup>452</sup> "Under corporeal-manual style I included children's games, the mimic 'characters' associated with that little mummy of mine, as well as mimodrama and mimograms (which I did not yet call by those names, since my terminology developed only gradually). To the oral style belonged to parables which my mother sang, rocking to and fro (se balangant), all the songs sung by my old grandmother and the Sarthois peasants, the recitations of Homer etc. [...] Under written style I classified the literary works of our great writers, according to periods. What followed was algebra, and everything to do with the mechanics I subsequently had to learn as an artillery-officer; at which time the study of astronomy attracted me, for mathematics has also exercised an ascendancy over me." *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>453</sup> For my choice to stick with Jousse's original concept of Mimisme, see footnote 450.

<sup>454</sup> Jousse, *The Oral Style*, xxviii.

The languages Jousse learned early on helped him to study philosophy (in Collège de l'Immaculée Conception de Séez<sup>455</sup>), and semiology and theology (in Grand séminaire de Séez). In 1907–1909 he studied mathematics to become an astronomer, but later he left these studies and turned to the humanities.<sup>456</sup> In 1912 Jousse was ordained as a priest and in 1913 he entered the Jesuit novitiate.

Jousse served in the French artillery during the First World War. In 1917 he was sent as an instructor to the United States and spent time in the Indian reserves, studying their gestural expressions. Back in Paris in 1922, he undertook his studies with his famous teachers, who recognized in him an exceptionally gifted researcher. Jousse has always remain very grateful to them: “All the masters of this Alma Mater<sup>457</sup>[...] from whom I received an anthropological teaching which helped me to become more aware deeply from all that I received from my Sarthoise mother...”<sup>458</sup> According Gabrielle Baron, Mauss understood this rare delicacy of Jousse,<sup>459</sup> who soon became a specialist in the study of oral style, rhythm and gesture, the initiator of a new science, the anthropology of gesture.<sup>460</sup>

Jousse devoted thirty years to his second, academic identity. He became a professor who was teaching at various universities in Paris.<sup>461</sup> In 1932 he created the Institut de Rythmo-pédagogie with a group of anthropologists, pedagogues, and psychiatrists.<sup>462</sup> Professor Jousse died on August 14, 1961 after a long illness, in Fresnay-sur-Sarthe where he is buried. All his life Marcel Jousse was a researcher and a practitioner.

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<sup>455</sup> Later, from 1919 to 1922, he studied philosophy at the Faculté de philosophie de Jersey.

<sup>456</sup> “Une courte biographie.” <http://www.marceljousse.com/qui-est-marcel-jousse/une-courte-biographie> [accessed 07 January 2023].

<sup>457</sup> Jousse did research in experimental phonetics and rhythmic in the laboratory of the Collège de France, with Abbé Rousselot. He also studied pathological psychology at the Collège de France and at Sainte-Anne with doctors Pierre Janet and Georges Dumas. He studied ethnology at the École des Hautes Etudes de la Sorbonne (religious sciences section) with Professor Marcel Mauss.

<sup>458</sup> Baron, *Mémoire vivante*, 63.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>460</sup> “Basically, I have always been an anthropologist of global gesture and living rhythm. If I have a disconcerting memory, it is because, in my youth, I always gave rhythm to what I was learning,” says Jousse. “Une courte biographie.”

<sup>461</sup> In 1931, Professor Henri Delacroix, Dean of the Sorbonne, asked Marcel Jousse to give free lectures at the Turgot amphitheater of the Sorbonne. He taught there until 1957. Jousse worked as a chair of the Department of Linguistic Anthropology at the École d'Anthropologie from 1933 to 1950. During this period, he published numerous essays on human expression, always based on the anthropological laws of mimicry. In 1933, Professor Maurice Goguel, Dean of the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Paris, invited Jousse to speak as a guest lecturer in his course on the origins of Christianity at the École pratique des Hautes Études. Jousse taught there until 1945. Also, in January 1927 Jousse was invited to give a series of lectures at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. In 1930 he was also invited to give lectures at the University of Louvain in Belgium.

<sup>462</sup> The aim of the Institute was to develop, experiment, and continuously improve a living pedagogy based on the psychophysiology of gesture, language, and rhythm. The aim was also to create the necessary link between researcher and practitioner, between laboratory and school. From 1933 to 1940, Jousse held conferences in the Institute. In addition, two directors of kindergarten schools asked him to intervene as a child psychologist, within the framework of the Laboratory of Rhythm-Pedagogy. “Une courte biographie.”

### 2.1.2. Anthropology of gesture

I have discussed the story of Jousse's life because it explains the direction and ambition of his consistent research. Jousse saw himself as the discoverer of the anthropology of gesture, which emphasizes the mimetic origin of gesture. This is how Jousse describes the intention and achievement of his work:

I began my publications with the Oral Style in 1925, since at that time scientific research was orientated towards the question of language. So much so that I am now considered the discoverer of the oral style. But to be exact, what I discovered was the Anthropology of Gesture which is, more precisely, the Anthropology of Mimicry, which must be regarded as the common denomination of my work as a whole. The oral style, with its mnemotechnic devices, only comes into play once the individual has been entirely informed by a reality which he receives and replays through his mimic being as a whole.<sup>463</sup>

What does Jousse mean by gestures? He explains that he calls “gestures all the movements executed in the human compound, visible or invisible, macroscopic or microscopic, elaborate or in mere outline, conscious or unconscious, voluntary or involuntary. Some gestures may move imperceptibly from absolute unconsciousness to full consciousness, from purely automatic reflex action to totally voluntary activity.”<sup>464</sup>

For Jousse, however, the origin of gestures is not something that stems from “knowing how to use bodies” in a particular socio-cultural environment, as it was for Mauss. It is certainly an important part of the expression of human movement, which is why it is explored in Jousse's second phase of research, in the laboratory of ethnic laws, but is not its origin. Human gesticulation is the way in which people react to overwhelming reality. The way one reacts is part of that reality, which is constant movement. As it is explained in the foreword of *L'anthropologie du Geste*, “in the Universe, everything is action and these actions act on other actions. These innumerable interactions are recorded, in the human compound which receives

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<sup>463</sup> Jousse, *The Oral Style*, vii. The work Jousse talks about in the quotation is “Le Style oral rythmique et mnemotechnique chez les verbo-moteurs,” originally published in 1924 in *Archives de philosophie* (cahier IV, 1-240) and reprinted a year later by Gabriel Beauchesne in Paris. It remains Jousse's major work and the basis of his entire scientific career. However, this book is only a very small part of his synthesis called *L'anthropologie du Geste* (The Anthropology of Gesture), as Gabrielle Baron notes in “Introduction to the 1981 edition,” in Jousse, *The Oral Style*, xxiii. The first volume of the book (which will be the main focus of my attention) was drawn from the anthropologist's courses during the 1950s at the Sorbonne, at the École pratique des Hautes Études, at the École d'Anthropologie de Paris and in his Laboratoire de Rythmo-pédagogie. Two more volumes were published later, always with the same editor: *La Manducation de la parole* in 1975 and *Le Parlant, la parole et le souffle* in 1978. Joël Candau, Charles Gaucher, and Arnaud Halloy, “Présentation: Gestes et cultures, un état des lieux,” *Anthropologie et sociétés* 36.3 (2012): 9.

<sup>464</sup> Edgar Sienaert, “Introduction,” in *Memory, Memorization, and Memorizers: The Galilean Oral-style Tradition and Its Traditionists*, by Marcel Jousse (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 3.

them, in the form of elementary three-phase gestures which constitute an unbreakable unity.”<sup>465</sup>  
Let us take a closer look at Jousse’s action-based cosmology.

### 2.1.2.1. Jousse’s action-based cosmology

What is the cosmos, as given over to our relentless exploration, asks Jousse. His answer is that we do not know. The real in its essence, is inaccessible to us. “Outside of us, there are only vibrations which are received *ad modum recipientis*.”<sup>466</sup> “Indeed, this All, objective and exterior, is essentially energy. This energy is not diffuse and static, but primarily and dynamically crystallized in universal and cosmological interactions.”<sup>467</sup> The essential element of the cosmos, according Jousse, is an action which acts on another action. This is what he has called triphasism – the three-phase interaction of cosmological energy:

This bundle of energy, which we call the Agent, acts in some way upon another bundle of energy, which we call the Acted. What is this Agent? This is what will perpetually propel such characteristic Action. But this being-action does not only have this essential gesture, it acts on other being-actions according to its potentiality. We can express this Triphasism: Agent, acting, Acted. This multiplied in myriads and myriads of instances and for millennia could have happened before there were Anthropoids to receive and register this Interaction in its global complexus.<sup>468</sup>

According to Jousse, to know is to “intussuscept” in order to become conscious, and it is this consciousness that is science.<sup>469</sup> Science, however, can only capture these multiple interactions, but never exhaust them.<sup>470</sup> All knowledge is only the awareness of one or another of these intussusceptible gestures of interaction. “This multiplied in myriads and myriads of instances and for millennia could have happened before there were Anthropoids to receive and register this Interaction in its global complexus.”<sup>471</sup> But yet countless cosmic interactions remain unconscious.

So, again, in comparison with Mauss, Jousse understands movement, the gesture, not only as the way a human being becomes part of his or her social-cultural milieu, but as the way a human being connects with the energy of cosmos in the first place. For Jousse, the efficacy of human action in the socio-cultural tradition, strongly emphasized by Mauss, is a secondary variation of the fundamental energetic interaction in which the human being engages when

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<sup>465</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 16.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>470</sup> The indefinite complex of interactions is not disorder, but the order of the cosmos, according Jousse. Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 49.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

they become a living creature. Jousse notes that, often, the ethnic aspect overshadows the anthropological, objective reflection of the cosmological.<sup>472</sup>

Gesture is a quality, a way of participating in the cosmos, which is an action, an energy, a constant flow. Humans are beings in constant flow.<sup>473</sup> Gesture is a modality of the active nature of the cosmos. “Therefore, it is by the anthropological that we can approach the cosmological because it is in the *Anthropos* alone that the *Cosmos* reverberates,”<sup>474</sup> states Jousse.

#### 2.1.2.2. *Anthropos who is a gesture*

The cosmos thus appears to the rhythmically imitating *anthropos* as a spectacular interweaving of interacting, unconscious, and rhythmically triphasic gestures which the *anthropos* will be able to receive, replicate, and consistently follow in a conscious manner.<sup>475</sup> So, even before the gesture gets any ethnic imprint, before a gesture is invoked to make tools, extensions of human gestures,<sup>476</sup> the *anthropos* models their gesture in relation to cosmic changes and rhythms. This is because “the Gesture is the Human being.”<sup>477</sup>

Everything that a person “extracts” from their body – cognition, cognitive and working tools, language, science, and so forth – is the result of the direction of the replayed gesture. According to Jousse, “we only know things insofar as they are played out, are ‘gesturized’ in us.”<sup>478</sup> “We are not saying that human being is only made of gestures,” explains Jousse, “but he has, as underlying mechanisms, only gestures. Even his inner life is underpinned by motor complexes.” “The Gesture is living energy that propels this global ensemble that is *Anthropos*.”<sup>479</sup> There is no other way than gesture for a concrete reality to be taken into consciousness.

As already mentioned above, to delve deeper into this strange human mechanics of intelligent laws and living flexibility, it was important for Jousse to first discover an unfamiliar universe where he could see the spontaneous emergence of the first human mechanisms. This is the universe of children. He then needed to explore as many different ethnic environments

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>473</sup> “We cannot stop. It is the most tragic thing ever. You are never still. Around you, on you, in you, everything flows. Your heart continues to beat and your blood flows, your breathing works, your gestures which we called ‘images’ continue to flow. Everything flows within you, in spite of you. You cannot stop your thought for a second.” Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 205.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 210-211.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 50.

as possible in order to observe how the various living mechanisms become specialized, animated, and reinforced. After studying these assemblages in the spontaneous play of children and in the ethnic environments of gesture civilizations, he had to be surprised by the process of the dismantling of these mechanisms in psychiatric clinics. In this way he arrived at certain laws based on the anthropology of Mimisme, that is the anthropology of gesture, such as intuition, which takes over cosmological interactions and reflects them in anthropological interactions.<sup>480</sup> “Hence why we have established the Anthropology of the Gesture, a living synthesis of the objective observations.”<sup>481</sup>

### 2.1.2.3. *Gesture and Mimisme*

“The fundamental Anthropology is [...] the Anthropology of Mimisme, the Mimismological Anthropology,”<sup>482</sup> explains Jousse. When did the Mimisme appear in the Universe, Jousse asks, and answers, “We know nothing.”<sup>483</sup> However, he points out the obvious: as soon as one stands in front of the footprints of prehistoric people, one has stunning cave “mimograms” and “mimoplasms,” which imply a sense of observation, and therefore of preservation.<sup>484</sup>

Jousse understands *anthropos* as the apparatus of reception, but at the same time, a limited one. Human beings do not record vibrations below a certain number or above a certain number. Therefore, besides being the condensers of gestures, they are selectors. The most important of the selected waves are the so-called light waves, which help one to see objects. These objects are reflected in humans by the mechanism of the eye and spread out in a global mechanism, which reproduces them microscopically or macroscopically, with more or less clear perception. Others, sound vibrations, are transmitted through the air. They affect the human ear apparatus, which replicates them microphonically, with a tendency to radiate them megaphonically in the larynx. There are also caloric oscillations, which one receives through other receptor mechanisms. The list could go on, but suffice to say that, basically, human beings are receiving apparatuses which merely replay what they have received.

One only knows what one receives and what one makes sense of with the help of gesture. Later, one can construct what one calls the invisible world in an analogous way. But let one never forget, Jousse warns, that it is constructed, and can only be constructed, from

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 54. Jousse’s terms “mimogram” and “mimoplasm” refers to artefacts, but at the same time underline their gestural (based on Mimisme) origins.

received things, whose ethno-verbal expression is necessarily more or less “algebraic.” In the face of the many interactions of the cosmos, human beings behave somewhat like “those with apraxia” unbalanced in relation to all that they could take in.<sup>485</sup>

Jousse’s talk of human being as a limited reception apparatus must be explained. The modes of reception and replay of gestures characteristic of *anthropos* refers to a source of life that is not the human being itself, as well as to the playful manner of the interaction with this source. Jousse’s remark about the limitations of what human beings can accept (receive, “record”) has to be understood in the context of an infinite number of cosmic interactions. Like his expressions “apparatus” or “mechanics,” they are used to study gestural interaction, not to describe its nature. Jousse’s anthropology of gesture has nothing to do with a mechanistic or reductionist approach to movement.

Thus, once again, the concepts of imitation and play, already familiar from Chapter 1, takes on a new, one might say spiritual, dimension in the context of Jousse’s ideas. However, like all the concepts that Jousse chose with great care, the notion of the “spiritual” must be understood in terms of Jousse’s resolute fidelity to concrete reality:

From our point of view, which is rigorously anthropological and in no way metaphysical, we therefore only have the right to speak of the human compound. We handle a complex which is completely spiritualized if I may say so, and almost completely materialized, in the sense that it will only be able to express itself, to itself and to others, through the intermediary of gestural mimemes.<sup>486</sup>

It also should be noted that Jousse’s anthropology is neither esoteric nor dualistic. Gestural Mimisme is a living tool that helps the *anthropos* to become themselves – a part of the cosmos – and it is a living tool that helps them to become aware of this becoming. Instead of opposing things, Jousse speaks about different levels of gestural expression, the “micro” and “macro” human gesture, and a gesture of things (“mimemes”<sup>487</sup>), which always must be seen in relation:

The stroke of genius for man was to become clearly aware of the Mimeme spontaneously springing up in his modeled muscles. This “Mimeme” is, in fact, only the reverberation of the characteristic or transitory gesture of the object in the human compound, in this living and mysterious synthesis that we can see playing globally, but from which we cannot dissociate the element which would be pure spirit and the element which would be pure body.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 54.

From the moment *anthropos* played the gesture of interaction, *anthropos* could call themselves a microcosm echoing the macrocosm.<sup>489</sup> The interacting gesture<sup>490</sup> of the actor – an extremely flexible and versatile tool – is played and repeated. Rhythmism will necessarily distribute and vitally succeed Mimisme.<sup>491</sup> This flexible instrument of mimetic gesture will follow the entire fluidity of reality and will be able to recreate the whole world. *Anthropos* is a complex of mimemes who replicate objects:

We are full of interactions received from ambient reality and therefore full of interactional gestures inflicted by reality. The great constraining movement of Mimisme, we have it as soon as we awaken to life and stretch out our receptive gestures.<sup>492</sup>

The last thing to say about mimetic gesture is that Jousse points out the difference between Mimisme and imitation. Imitation is the wilful assumption of control over spontaneous mimicry mechanisms. There is always a voluntary element in imitation,<sup>493</sup> even if it belongs to the “micro” level, imitation remains linked to the “macro” mimetic gesture.

#### 2.1.2.4. *The inability to live in constant spontaneity*

“Under the constant pressure of reality, the Anthropos expands like a fluid wax that should never harden,”<sup>494</sup> Jousse comments. The normal *anthropos*, according to Jousse, is the one who tends to become aware of their spontaneous mechanisms in order to be able to orient and direct them. This is what one used to call the will. The great strength of the human being is knowing how to play with their inbuilt mechanisms and how to make them pass, either gently or brutally, from absolute unconsciousness to full consciousness and use. This process of becoming aware requires gesticulation.<sup>495</sup> But gestures are far from all being conscious. In human expression, everything is a replay of intussusceptions whether conscious or not. The more a person plays with all their energy, the more that energy recovers and strengthens.<sup>496</sup> This is why play and living science are therefore innate in human beings as a response to reality, which imposes itself through gestures.

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<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>490</sup> “It is always a vibration that acts another vibration. In the Universe, everything interacts with everything. It has been said, quite rightly, that to consider a phenomenon as separate is to falsify it. Whether we like it or not, we are in the universal cosmological Interaction.” Ibid., 57.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 58-59.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid.



However, any interaction rising in one can become automatic by the multiplicity of replays. Constant repetition leads to eupraxia – it happens that one’s gestures work even better when they work on their own. Millennia of ethnic traditions also contribute to this process. Through the transmission within them, the elements of automatism are forced. That is why, according to Jousse, it is normal for a person to remain strong enough not to be overwhelmed by ethnicity.<sup>497</sup>

Hence, *anthropos* is a camera that not only captures, but also records gestures.<sup>498</sup> Jousse distinguishes between memory, which is the “conscious replay of Mimemes” and habit, which is the “letting go” of mechanisms framed by deep intelligence and which allows this intelligence to delve even deeper. A human being is more human when they have more habits which they throw back into the unconscious in order to unleash an intellect that tends towards a certain point.<sup>499</sup> In other words, the more human is the one who has better mastered this human mechanics. Similar ideas about habit are found in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy (3.5.5.).

Being a semiological animal par excellence, whose primordial language is meaningful gesticulation, *anthropos* is the maker of signs to communicate an intelligent attitude.<sup>500</sup> The triumph of this is the invention of analogy and symbol – the basis of all religions.<sup>501</sup> Practices are, respectively, the logical implications of gestures.

The creative potential of the human being is huge. The countless interactive intussusceptions that may may never surface, all these unconscious treasures are within human being, curiously and informatively present. But at the same time, humans are the laziest of all animals. You never know what drives the *anthropos*. Too often, it is laziness or impotence, which makes the human being “a kind of robot left to his Mimemes,”<sup>502</sup> regrets Jousse, and explains,

Let us repeat it, the human being is the laziest of all animals because he is the only intelligent one. All of human discoveries, even the most modest, will always tend to find a way to minimize his effort. Inventors are the solicitors of human laziness. It seems that the question of work obsesses the human being [...] How to reduce it, if not eliminate it? And while the discoverer strives, sometimes even at the risk of his life, to find, the social environment is concerned only with using and spreading the discoveries to arrive at the inoperative mechanism, inattentive to the slightest effort. This slightest effort will inevitably roll into algebraosis (*l’algèbrose*). I am not saying algebra (*algèbre*). Because algebra is an awareness of these possible simplifications that we

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<sup>497</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., 62.

will use to go deeper and reach what the hand or the eye could not grasp. Algebra is a research-simplifying tool. Algebraosis [...] is a disease of expression.<sup>503</sup>

Algebraosis, a disease of human expression manifested by symptoms of gestural degradation, was something Jousse was fighting against in his writings and in his practice. He was a committed advocate of spontaneity and creativity in movement, especially when it came to children:

To deprive a human being of the spontaneous play of Mimisme is to deprive him of what essentially differentiates him from animals. The inhibition of Mimisme is, in education, a catastrophe.<sup>504</sup>

Jousse boldly argues that the whole science of anthropology should be revised according to life and to the cultural traditions that are still faithful to gesture.<sup>505</sup> He investigated, opened up, and criticized everything that, according to him, “lets life pass through its meshes and no longer allows us to understand living expression that replays according to reality,”<sup>506</sup> which encompassed vocabulary, concepts, attitudes towards other peoples, pedagogy and other repressions of human expression. Much of his research could be described as ‘positive’ criticism, since it consisted of the study of traditions that he identifies as oral culture traditions and which he saw as the alternative to gesture degradation tendencies in Western societies. As for ‘negative’ criticism, since Jousse’s research focused on the relationship between gestures and the mechanisms of knowledge, memory, and expression, he was able to show how the degradation of the gesture led to the degradation of related subjects.

#### *2.1.2.5. The mechanics of human gesture*

The anthropology of gesture is the understanding of the mechanics of human gesture. This understanding in turn contributes to the understanding of the oral style tradition, a very important field of Jousse’s research, which I leave somewhat aside in order to focus on the anthropology of gesture that underpins it. The most important factors in the mechanics are what Jousse calls ‘rhythmism’, bilateralism, and formalism.

#### *Rhythmicity*

As it was already mentioned, rhythmicity vitally stimulates Mimisme:

[...] cosmological Triphasism become anthropological Triphasism by reverberating mimismologically from the Cosmos into the Anthropos. This anthropological

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 81.

Triphasicism is mimismo-kinetic or mimismo-phonetic according to the specification of the gestural organs that Mimisme makes play and replay. But whether cosmological or anthropological, this Triphasicism does not cease to be dynamically energetic Triphasicism or, in other words, Rhythmo-energetic.<sup>507</sup>

Aspects of rhythm-energetic triphasicism, activated by cosmic energy, enable the actor's actions in concrete space and time, which is characterized by an immanent action that triggers other actions.<sup>508</sup> This creates a perception of duration and density. In the rhythmic interaction of gestures, the human being, as a microcosmos which receives and transmits with its whole being the actions and rhythms of an innumerable and simultaneous macrocosm, is guided by consciousness and logic.

When transferred to the human mouth, the rhythmicity of the gesture acquires a melodic aspect. Jousse states that "Mimismo-phonetics enriched and doubled, before replacing it, Mimismo-kinetics with two new elements: timbre and pitch."<sup>509</sup> The two new rhythms, intertwined with the original rhythms of density and duration, constituted the vitality of the oral style tradition, which Jousse identifies with rhythm-melodism, the subtle, emotional human expression.

### *Bilateralism*

Since *anthropos* expresses themselves not only with their mouth but with their whole body,<sup>510</sup> another very important aspect of the mechanics of human gestures is bilateralism. This phenomenon speaks of how the whole body of *anthropos*, facing the cosmos, accepts reality and balances it:

Indeed, whether he likes it or not, man is a being with two wings, and when he expresses himself globally, he balances his expression according to the conformity of his body. The Law of Mimisme can only flow in accordance with the human structure. Just as he walks swinging alternately, so the human being expresses himself swinging alternately. If the human being expresses himself by swinging, it is because he has two sides which are symmetrical. We can never escape from this living law of the human organism. Why this sort of universality of swings? Because these swings facilitate gestural expression. They will play themselves out with alternative tensions and relaxations: the energetic explosion will be facilitated. It is rather curious that the role of this Bilateralism, in human expression, has been so little noticed. It is that we had not

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>510</sup> "Even when we express ourselves only with the laryngo-buccal mechanism, we cannot prevent the whole body from working. We cannot cut out the mechanical laryngo wedge from the bodily-manual cogs." Jousse, *L'anthropologie*, 287. Also, Jousse notes, that the mouth follows the mechanisms of the body and hands. There is no global meaning on one side and verbal meaning on the other. Ibid., 228.

studied Mimisme and that Mimisme is, one might say, consubstantial with Bilateralism. “The human being is an interactionally and bilaterally mimetic animal.”<sup>511</sup>

Bilateral rhythm saves human energy – it is a spontaneous law of balance, of equilibrium. It is also the law that determines all human expression, in terms of the sense of position in space, language, and thinking. Jousse reminds that there is no up or down, right or left, forward or backward in our universe. The universe is a frightening complex of energies where everything interacts in ways that are completely unknown to us. The triple (because it is in the universe) bilateralism (because body has two arms, two legs, etc.) of the human body plays and creates, anthropologically and ethnically, top and bottom, right and left, front and back.<sup>512</sup> The body is informed through gestures. On the basis of this idea, one finds in Jousse’s reflections an excellent description of the intellect:

Intelligence is life that comes into consciousness. Intelligence is gestural. It plays in bilateralism, and will play in the bilateralism of the front and the back which is the whole great notion of time and which is also the notion of priority.<sup>513</sup>

Moreover, Jousse warns that it is impossible to find at a certain moment “prelogic” and then “logic” in human beings. The problem of knowledge for Jousse is the problem of the cognition of gestures, and it is neither possible to make a cut in this cognition nor in the person themselves.<sup>514</sup> Logic, for Jousse, is the gestures of the cosmos playing in the gestures of a balanced, which means bilateral, *anthropos*.

To continue on the theme of logic, the ‘objectivity’ of things has a gestural basis. Right and left objects, as mentioned, do not exist in themselves, but *anthropos* makes them right and left.<sup>515</sup> From then on, the world appears to the human being as part of their bilateral being. In different civilizations, all objects are differentiated – everywhere one finds these constant antitheses between good and bad things, between permissible and forbidden things, between pure and impure things. To carry the grand systems of explications of *anthropos*, even balanced ones, the reinforcement of tradition was needed:

In the different ethnic backgrounds, when these balances were set in place, when the right responded to the left, when the sky responded to the earth, when all these balanced mechanisms were organized, then a Tradition was established. And this is where we fall into this constant law: next to enduring physiology, there is another element of

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<sup>511</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>515</sup> It should be noted that the topic of the embodied nature of consciousness – a development of consciousness in distinguishing right from left, past from present, perceiving resemblances, separation the one from the many, and grouping things – was first highlighted by the team of the *Année Sociologique*. Needham, “Introduction,” xx-xxii.

enduring: Tradition. But always, in the traditions, we will see the ethnic laws supported by the great anthropological laws.<sup>516</sup>

### *Formulism*

In order to save human energy, formulism is employed. Formulism facilitates human expression. It consists of conscious or unconscious human gestures, gestures that are prone to stereotyping. It is a means of crystallizing human expression. These crystallizations of gestures are the basis of the traditions of all ethnic groups. The formulas of expression are the essential gestures that have been traditionally preserved and transmitted.<sup>517</sup>

The human being, the bearer of immeasurable reality, facilitates their carrying by dividing the burden into the bilateralities appropriate to their body and crystallizing the loads accordingly. Jousse uses the French words *portage* (to carry) and *partage* (to share or, in this context, to divide into parts).<sup>518</sup> Although these two words do not have a direct common etymology in English, their common gestural origin becomes clear thanks to the movement-sensitive insights of Jousse.<sup>519</sup> Gesture is the basis of all human expression, and the mechanics of human gestures is the modus of macrocosm becoming microcosm. There is no other way to the knowledge of the metaphysical than through this modus. This message of Jousse is extremely important for contemporary theology.

Memory, according to Jousse, is the product of a cosmological sharing balanced by human bilateralism. It is the same Mimisme – an “anthropological portage” in its living and intelligent bilateral mechanism. The act of memory is an act of replay. A human being is an animal who plays and who replays. All things are a matter of play for a human being, and this is memorization. A human being replays these things, and this is remembering. In the face of spontaneous global repetition, *anthropos* is confronted with enormous energy expenditure. When the need to save energy arises, repetition is concentrated in the mouth. Later this oral replay has shrunk and necrotized into a graphic replay.<sup>520</sup> However, one finds remnants of the anthropological gesture even in the most economical forms of expression.

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<sup>516</sup> Jousse, *L'anthropologie*, 225-226.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>519</sup> “Whatever we do, we are, to the core, rhythm-mimers, beings who oscillate while carrying the world. Like this giant of the fable, we are crushed by the weight of what we have received, but like magnificent looters, we go through life carrying the remains of the real with all the body.” Jousse, *L'anthropologie*, 226.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, 228-229.

### 2.1.2.6. Creativity

Thus, since life in permanent spontaneity is not entirely possible, human beings create a life that can be lived by the means of the received gesture. How is this life created and where is the danger of gestural dysfunction? At this point, one needs to come back to the creative potential of *anthropos*. Here, it can be noted straight away that Jousse provided a very original interpretation of the creative activity of human beings, especially in terms of its aims, and, one could say, inverted the whole concept of art. He not only criticized the notion of “art for art’s sake,”<sup>521</sup> as Mauss did, but he also presented a theological-cosmological clarification of the creative activity and of the existential importance of this activity for the preservation of the person’s vitality and the accumulation of agency.

In Mimisme, the possibility of having the whole universe within oneself opens up. *Anthropos* is a microcosm that has a macrocosm and replicates it. The realization that the microcosm replicates the macrocosm provides a unique experience. In Mimisme everything is alive, writes Jousse. In this universal constant invasion of life, the *anthropos* will want to extra-reject, remove, take off the Mimemes of which they are full, so that they can create living Mimemes. According to Jousse, the most striking of what reaches one in the self-imposed reality of the environment is its form. That is why *anthropos* will resort to soft and stable clay. The possibility of projecting, as a kind of creative outline, the immanent Mimema into the receiving system is a great discovery.<sup>522</sup>

Until then, the projections of *anthropos* were of mimodramatic character. In mimodramas, human beings no longer give the heavy weight of the real, they only express it in their evanescent gestures.<sup>523</sup> In other words, mimodramas were projected into the void and immediately disappeared. With mimoplasms, it becomes possible to reduce the great life forces to a clay image, or later, to a sheet of paper,<sup>524</sup> and to retain the Mimemes in some way, perhaps even forever, explains Jousse. However, the first mimoplasms, like mimodramas, had the property of living beings<sup>525</sup> rather than preservation.

In addition to the above interpretation of creation as a rejection of Mimemes in favour of a living relationship with reality, the other important point in Jousse’s interpretation of creative activity concerns human confusion about who is the source of creativity. This

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<sup>521</sup> “Art for art’s sake! Terrific anthropological misinterpretation! It is the great creative intoxication that haunts the Anthropos.” Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 102. The same can be said of science. According to Jousse, science for science’s sake is the denial of discovery. *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 104. Both mimoplasms and mimograms are extra-rejections of Mimemes. *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

confusion stems from a natural orientation towards play, driven by experience, that as humans we “know things insofar as they are played out, ‘gestualized’ in us.”<sup>526</sup> Which, I suggest, is kinesthetic feedback, if I can use a term related to Mauss’s work.

To explain further. Based on the binding law of Mimisme, one accepts mimemes, the movements of things that are built into one’s reception mechanisms.<sup>527</sup> This creates a unique experience of creating the meaning of existence. In this invasion of life through Mimisme, the human being sometimes seeks to prolong the mimeme that is replayed within them, instead of simply removing them. In other words, the person can focus on the kinesthetic feedback or on the mimeme itself. The reason for this may not be just pleasure seeking. The turning not to the macrocosm but to the microcosm as the sole producer of the experience of life holds some validity – one would not experience the energies of life if they were not moved within. But the kind of person who seeks an extension of the life-energy (because it is, in short, pleasurable) within themselves is doomed to the loss of vitality.

However, the main reason for the degradation of human expression can be understood from Jousse’s theological-cosmological explanations of the gesture. For this one must go back to Jousse’s three-phase interactive gesture of the agent, of the action and of the acted. Talking about animism, the anthropologist explains that it is necessary to grasp this complex mechanism to understand that these spontaneous peoples, in front of a moving thing, tried to see the action, and under the action, to refer to the agent. What does the human being do when they see the acted? They push further and grasp the action, and from there they try to find the agent. “I do not see anything there that is not perfectly anthropological,” assures Jousse.<sup>528</sup> What is called animism is simply the normal gesture of the human being who, seeing something acted, performs the action and seeks the agent. This force which causes action is seen by nobody. It is incorporated into the visible world, as the breath is incorporated into us. Everything participates in this invisible breath. And this Agent, according Jousse, who is invisible, except in his/her actions, is all-powerful and therefore nothing is impossible for him/her, while the power of human beings is limited. Thus, it is not healthy for the human being to close themselves in the expressiveness of the only immediately visible world.<sup>529</sup>

The fact that all religions are made up of similes and analogies points to a mechanism of human reality that is not characterized by a degree of absolute certainty, and the mechanism

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid., 85-86.

of bilateralism only deeper explains this human characteristic. That is why the human being sublimates the meaning of every mimismological gesture they make. This necessarily requires a concrete expression, but one that refers to the invisible world imitated by visible objects.<sup>530</sup> (On the other hand, intellectual abstraction for Jousse is not opposed to the concreteness of things. It means the gesture of extraction. Algebraosis occurs when a person loses the ‘gluedness’ to things, and primarily it is a disease of concretism.<sup>531</sup>) According to Jousse, humanity is always looking for an explanation of the Unseen, but human beings will never have a real one; it will always be a case of explorers “trying one way or another” or thinking about it “as if.”<sup>532</sup> Creative work must also be considered as a type of such a search.

On the negative side of this phenomenon, Jousse warns that the creator can become a producer of dead mimoplasms: “The human being needs to play the great creative game, and not having the Creator in himself acting, he will make himself a creator. It is a great creative intoxication that tries to deceive by rejecting the Mimemes that play in it.”<sup>533</sup> From Jousse’s point of view, it is important to acknowledge that human beings will never be creators in the sense of creating *ex nihilo*. A human being can only be a replayer, a discoverer or a combiner.<sup>534</sup> When it comes to the description of creation, Jousse points out that what is most powerful and eternal in the ephemeral human being is often what comes to them without them seeking it themselves.<sup>535</sup> So, to take up Jousse’s idea, instead of remaining under the illusion of oneself as a creator in the full sense of the word, one should become aware of one’s own limitations, which leads to an opening to one’s true creative potential.

Creativity is fidelity to the reality of life, not slavery to a style. Because “the style is the human being. It is not the round-of-leather and the papyrovore. It is the whole being expressing oneself by expressing the world.”<sup>536</sup> Jousse’s childhood memories of the peasants were imbued with the experience of their fidelity to the reality of life in all its concreteness. For Jousse, accordingly, peasants became a kind of symbol of the corporeal relationship with the earth, with the world. The peasant is a child of the Earth who creates order through their human mechanics, true to the flow of life:

We are thus made, we peasants, that we want to find in front of us a balance to our own balance. [...] Hence the peasant’s horror for the so-called “objects of art” where

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<sup>530</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., 109-111.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid., 86. All the Latin gods, according Jousse, were deifications of gestures of human life. Meanwhile, in Palestine it was constantly repeated that the Invisible has never been seen. Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 99.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 216.



everything is twisted, imbalanced, where everything is split. The mimograms of the cave of Lascaux are still fresh out of our millennial muscles and “mimismologically” balanced. We need things that balance out our own balance. [...] Order is only the balancing of objects. This is why great scholars are great organizers. I was going to say genius is order.<sup>537</sup>

Jousse’s intention in talking about order is not merely to criticize a certain unbalanced artistic expression. In the light of his anthropology of gesture, one can see a more ambitious picture of creative activity. Human creative potential must not be limited to the pursuit of self-expression. Through Mimisme, the human being discovers the whole universe within themselves. As a microcosm that has a macrocosm and replicates the macrocosm, perceiving it through this replay, *anthropos* participates in cosmic triphasic interactions through its anthropological gestural mechanisms. *Anthropos* responds with creativity to the body of countless interactions that one calls reality and makes it habitable; in other words, balances it according to oneself, orders it. Order, for Jousse, like the expression of the *anthropos* that creates it, is therefore not an aesthetic category in any narrow sense. These categories have existential weight. The human gesture transcends biological as well as aesthetic measures. It is because humans are what they have been given. For example, Jousse reminds, that rhythm was brought to human beings not by art but by the flow of life.<sup>538</sup>

Accordingly, all human activity – artistic, religious, cultural, social – should strive to be faithful to the reality experienced in a human way. Indeed, the understanding of the anthropological mechanisms of this mimismological experience, thanks to Jousse, “brings complete renewal to human thinking,”<sup>539</sup> and thinking about the role of art and religion within the anthropology of gesture is no exception.

Returning to the questions raised at the beginning of the subsection on creation and gestural dysfunction, human creativity in the context of Jousse’s ideas must be understood as not being about making things simply more aesthetically beautiful, but about making the world in its totality more habitable, more comfortable to live in. The dysfunction of gestures, resulting from the misunderstanding and disregard of anthropological mechanisms, leads to a loss of globality, and this, accordingly, to the loss of human creative potential.

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<sup>537</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>539</sup> Ibid., 287.

### *Summary*

Jousse, a student of Mauss, anthropologically analyzed gesture as the core of the human being's aliveness in the world. He very productively developed Mauss's idea<sup>540</sup> of the gesture of the human body as a primary human tool. However, Jousse's approach to movement is more global than Mauss's, in the sense that Jousse does not confine himself to prescribing the meaning of human movement within the socio-cultural world, but sees it primarily as a response of the *anthropos* to the cosmic laws. Gesture is the only way in which human beings perceive the reality of life, both in terms of the fullness of that perception and its limitations. For Jousse, therefore, the anthropology of gesture is universal before it is ethnically diverse. By bringing a universal understanding of gesture into his science of anthropology, Jousse opened the door to a harmony between theology and anthropology that is impossible without an emphasis on the fundamental importance of the human body and bodily action.

Following his predecessor, Jousse criticized the notion of 'art for art's sake', but also offered a theological-cosmological explanation of the creative activity. According to him, creative activity has an existential significance for the preservation of human vitality and the accumulation of agency. Apart from warnings of human confusion about the source of creativity resulting from a misunderstanding and neglect of anthropological mechanisms, creative activity is interpreted by Jousse as the abandonment of mimemes in favor of a vital relationship with reality.

Jousse's ideas contribute to the study of the transformative aspect of movement. Returning to the theme of kinesthetic feedback,<sup>541</sup> the equivalent of mimeme, Jousse's ideas regarding creative action as a process of removing and stripping away mimemes offer a view of kinesthetic feedback as a phenomenon that needs to be actively 'stripped away' in order to maintain person's vitality and closeness to life. In other words, kinesthetic feedback's purpose should be limited to helping people to orient themselves, rather than becoming a thing to be immersed in. The question is whether a strong emphasis on kinesthetic feedback (which has various interpretations, such as soul, self, I, etc.) can be seen as a separating and thus and anti-creative force. I will return to this in the last part of this chapter (in 2.4.1.).

Jousse's instructions on the relocation of gesture within the mechanisms of *anthropos*, as well as his analysis of the mechanisms themselves, such as bilateralism, was very

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<sup>540</sup> "The body is man's first and most natural instrument. Or more accurately, not to speak of instruments, man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body." Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 83.

<sup>541</sup> Kinesthetic feedback was discussed in 1.5.1.

pioneering. Similar ideas are reflected in the writings of André Leroi-Gourhan, which are the subject of the next section (2.2). An important idea that will echo and dominate Leroi-Gourhan's writings aligns with Jousse's view of the role of the human brain. A quotation on this topic will serve to conclude the discussion of Jousse's anthropology of gesture, which deserves much more attention than can be given here.

The primacy had been wrongly given to the brain. [...] We have dethroned the brain and put it in its rightful place which is a place of a "switch" of awareness. From then on, it is no longer to the rhythm of the brain that our thought will beat, which is awareness, and which will revive our memory which is replay of consciousness. It is to the rhythm of our whole body. Rhythm that will be multiple and always intertwined: rhythm of our heart, rhythm of our breathing, rhythm of our swinging hands, of our step, of our action, depending on whether we are going to use this or that part of our body to express the Cosmos intus received, intelligent and globally replayed.<sup>542</sup>

## 2.2. The Role of Movement for Human Evolution: André Leroi-Gourhan

André Leroi-Gourhan (1911–1986) is French anthropologist, archeologist, ethnologist, and paleontologist,<sup>543</sup> who proposed a movement-based approach to human evolution and aesthetics. The three strands of ethnology, human paleontology, and prehistory have always been constantly layered in Leroi-Gourhan's research.<sup>544</sup> *Gesture and Speech* (Le Geste et la Parole), the book that forms the focus of this chapter, is a masterly synthesis that brings together three fields of science.<sup>545</sup>

Born in Paris, Leroi-Gourhan got an opportunity from an early age to get to know rocks and natural history collections.<sup>546</sup> He started to work at fourteen to help sustain his family<sup>547</sup> while taking classes at the École d'Anthropologie. Later, after graduating from the École municipale des bibliothécaires de Paris (Municipal School of Librarians in Paris) in 1932, and thanks to his meeting in 1928 with Paul Boyer, administrator of the École des langues orientales

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<sup>542</sup> Jousse, *L'anthropologie*, 142.

<sup>543</sup> Leroi-Gourhan's original ideas influenced many French philosophers, such as Gilbert Simondon, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida or, more recently, Bernard Stiegler.

<sup>544</sup> Marc Groenen, *Leroi-Gourhan: essence et contingence dans la destinée humaine* (Paris: De Boeck Université, 1996), 13.

<sup>545</sup> Leroi-Gourhan understood prehistory as something that balances quite harmoniously between ethnology and natural sciences. André Leroi-Gourhan, *Les Racines du monde: Entretiens avec Claude-Henri Rocquet* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1982), 12.

<sup>546</sup> Leroi-Gourhan's father died during the 1914–1918 war, and he was raised by his maternal grandparents. One of his grandparents was an amateur naturalist in the Fontainebleau region, and he would often take his grandson for walks in search of mushrooms and insects. Leroi-Gourhan recalls, "My first passions were very eclectic, and they have remained so." Leroi-Gourhan, *Les Racines*, 11. At the age of about 14 or 15, he was already interested in prehistory and even made some excavations. Perhaps the frequent visits to the museum with his grandmother also benefited the discovery of the themes he worked on throughout his scientific career.

<sup>547</sup> Philippe Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan. Une vie (1911-1986)* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), 24.

vivantes, he found himself secretary and then assistant librarian in the latter school, which allowed him to study Russian philology and literature and then Chinese studies.<sup>548</sup> Inspired by the thinking of Marcel Granet, whose courses he had taken at the *École des Hautes Etudes*, he decided to do a doctoral thesis under Granet's supervision. Unfortunately, Granet died and Leroi-Gourhan opted for another thesis subject, "The Archeology of the North Pacific,"<sup>549</sup> which he would work on under the supervision of Marcel Mauss, whose courses at the *École* and the Institute of Ethnology were a major influence on him.<sup>550</sup> Later, as an independent and highly original scholar, he constantly emphasized his gratitude to his teacher, not only by dedicating works to him or drawing attention to his teacher's legacy,<sup>551</sup> but also by fruitfully developing Mauss's research.

Like Mauss, Leroi-Gourhan read very widely.<sup>552</sup> But his most original insights were connected with his practical work. Throughout his life, Leroi-Gourhan was both a theoretician and a practitioner, working in excavations and museums.

Paleolithic art (connected with prehistoric religion)<sup>553</sup> was a very important area of Leroi-Gourhan's research, which crystallized over time. After the death of Marcel Griaule, professor of ethnology at the Sorbonne in 1956, Leroi-Gourhan succeeded him. From then on, he took up prehistoric art, a subject that he continued to explore until the end of his life.<sup>554</sup> He excavated at Arcy-sur-Cure from 1946 onwards.<sup>555</sup> In 1964, Pincevent was discovered – a prehistoric site that Leroi-Gourhan would spend the rest of his life<sup>556</sup> studying, and whose research on which would completely change the way people thought about prehistoric human beings.<sup>557</sup>

Towards the end of his career, at the Collège de France,<sup>558</sup> Leroi-Gourhan developed his ideas about paleolithic art giving them new directions. As a result of two volumes of *Le Geste et Parole* together with *Les Religions de la Préhistoire*, published in 1965, and the first monograph on the famous Magdalenian site of Pincevent "Préhistoire de l'Art occidental,"

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 80. Leroi-Gourhan, *Les Racines*, 30-31.

<sup>550</sup> Groenen, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 14.

<sup>551</sup> Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 40, 78, 161-162.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>553</sup> Groenen, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 15.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>555</sup> On the basis of his experience, Leroi-Gourhan published the book *Les fouilles préhistoriques, techniques et méthodes* (Prehistoric Excavations, Techniques and Methods) in 1950. Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> Leroi-Gourhan died of a heart attack on February 19, 1986.

<sup>557</sup> Groenen, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 15.

<sup>558</sup> In 1969, Leroi-Gourhan was elected to the Collège de France where he taught until 1982.

published in 1966, Leroi-Gourhan was recognized a major social anthropologist as well as a major prehistorian, and specialist in art.<sup>559</sup>

Given the considerable attention that has been paid to Leroi-Gourhan's life and work in the last decade,<sup>560</sup> I will focus in this chapter on two main questions: first, how do Leroi-Gourhan's ideas relate to Mauss's ideas; and second, how can Leroi-Gourhan's research help to shed light on the transformative aspect of movement. The three following subsections are organized according to a discussion of the terms used by Leroi-Gourhan, which relate to movement. The presentation of these concepts will illustrate Leroi-Gourhan's productive development of ideas about movement in the study of civilizations. After that the role of movement in human evolution as well as in aesthetics and religion is examined.

### 2.2.1. Technology

The most significant development of Mauss's ideas in Leroi-Gourhan's research concerns the subject of technology. In 1936, obliged by Paul Rivet to write two separate chapters for the *Encyclopédie française*, one of which was on the classification of techniques,<sup>561</sup> Leroi-Gourhan was able to make an original contribution by attempting to expand Mauss's concept of technique. According to Philippe Soulier, the chapter on the relationship between human beings and nature, which deals with "Elementary forms of human activity," is the first project to codify what will become the core of Leroi-Gourhan's work. The scientist defines the study of technology as "the study of the means by which a human being reacts to his environment," or, more particularly, as "the study of the processes which allows him to use the materials placed at his disposal by the physical environment."<sup>562</sup>

The mobilization of the environment, according Leroi-Gourhan, involves a series of stages: "it starts from the unit which is the tool, represented in its simplest expression by a stone or a branch – to end up in complexes whose most elaborate expression can be rendered

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<sup>559</sup> Françoise Audouze, "Leroi-Gourhan, a Philosopher of Technique and Evolution," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 10.4 (2002): 7.

<sup>560</sup> Philippe Soulier's biography of André Leroi-Gourhan was published in 2018. Philippe Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan. Une vie (1911-1986)* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018). A short biography can be found in Leroi-Gourhan, *Les Racines*, 279-280. This book also contains one of the first bibliographies of Leroi-Gourhan (281-296). Brigitte and Gilles Delluc, with the collaboration of Arlette Leroi-Gourhan, compiled a bibliography which appeared in *Simbolos, artes y creencias de la prehistoria*. A summary of this research can be found in Lucien Bernot, *André Leroi-Gourhan ou les voies de l'homme* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1988), 231-255. For a short biography, see pages 227-229.

<sup>561</sup> The other chapter was on the description of populations. Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 45. According to Nathan Schlanger, Leroi-Gourhan owes as much to Rivet and his museum (the Musée de l'Homme) for his technological orientations as he does to Mauss and his teaching. Schlanger, "L'insaisissable technologie," 107.

<sup>562</sup> Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 46.

by a fair, a parliament or a religious procession.”<sup>563</sup> From then on, Leroi-Gourhan attempts to systematize the main categories of the technological approach, from the most elementary to the most complex and combinatorial. Philippe Soulier explains the logic of Leroi-Gourhan’s reasoning as based on the universality of mechanical and physical effects, independently of chronological cultural considerations of use or ethnicity. Accordingly, it becomes possible for him to deal separately with two related areas: the material and the gesture. More precisely, this allows one to consider successively matter, then action, and from these two orders of considerations the instrument emerges.<sup>564</sup>

From this first attempt to classify technologies, Leroi-Gourhan finds a respectful distance from Mauss.<sup>565</sup> Although the basic categorizations remain similar to Mauss’s, their internal development is already different. In other words, it sometimes deviates from the classifications that have become classical since Mauss.<sup>566</sup>

Also, Leroi-Gourhan insists on the difference between technique, linked to an object, and technology, referring to a system. For him, “the testimony of the material object is secondary: this witness on which any study of human activity is based is only an inanimate support on which the traces are marked of the conflict between human being and matter.”<sup>567</sup> According to Leroi-Gourhan, technology must be developed as a discipline in its own right, that is with its own methodologies, in the interface between human sciences and natural sciences. Only then, when technological and sociological approaches collide, it will be possible to identify and define ethnic groups in their historical and social dynamics. By linking zoology and ethnology, Leroi-Gourhan highlights a common characteristic of both fields, arguing that technical determinism is as pronounced as that of zoology.<sup>568</sup>

### 2.2.2. *Environment, Tendency, Symbiosis*

In this subsection, I will present the concepts that Leroi-Gourhan uses in his study that are related to movement. What sets this scholar apart is a gaze that wants to encompass the movements of human civilizations. In this way Leroi-Gourhan applies and in a way expands

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> Leroi-Gourhan’s expressed doubt as to whether Mauss’s writings, such as *Manuel d’ethnography*, based on the notes from his lectures, really reflect what his teacher had in mind also can be seen as a kind of respect for his teacher. Ibid., 47. Information on the Mauss-Leroi-Gourhan relationship can be found in Schlanger, “L’insaisissable technologie,” 105-106.

<sup>566</sup> Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 109, 47.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid., 108. Leroi-Gourhan wrote about technology and about of merits of Mauss in research of technology in *L’Années sociologique* (1940-1948). Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 168.

Mauss's idea about the importance of focusing on behavior when studying specific human societies.

Leroi-Gourhan's work has a strong emphasis on the environment. The notion of environment is in turn defined into two parts: external environment, specific to the context of life and activity, and internal environment, specific to the ethnic group.<sup>569</sup> Leroi-Gourhan stresses the unequivocally dynamic influence of the tendency on actions in the internal environment, that is the individual and the group, stating that without tendency, the inner environment would remain indefinitely stable. He notes, that "Insofar as it is permeable, the trend expresses itself materially in stonework, in borrowings or in inventions, by going beyond traditions, in contact with the external environment."<sup>570</sup>

Technical determinism is expressed in tendencies<sup>571</sup> that run through the internal milieu of the ethnic group. After all, "the axe and the knife are everywhere in the world." But their equivalent forms differ – one can find ethical shapes and styles, because "the decisive trend runs through a seamless interior environment whose arrangement of countless elements is necessarily unique."<sup>572</sup> In other words, the traditional reactions of the internal environment orient the tendency at its intersection with the external environment. Enrichment takes place through the confrontation of determining environments.

Following his research on the contacts between populations, influenced by the relationship between internal and external environments, which leads to borrowing and the convergence of certain groups of people, Leroi-Gourhan came up with the concept of symbiosis. The convergence of certain groups of people must lead to what he calls a technocultural symbiosis, which describes two distinct cultural groups where one or more vital parts of the economy are based on regular exchanges. This situation is not limited to simple borrowing, whether mutual or not, involving a few specific aspects of one or other group. These are economically vital areas for both groups. Leroi-Gourhan argues that this symbiosis of exchange between two culturally distinct groups, one of which is likely to disappear or be assimilated by the other, is one of the key drivers of civilizational expansion. It is therefore a fundamental phenomenon of ethnic evolution.<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>571</sup> Schlanger argues that there is a clear influence of Henri Bergson on Leroi-Gourhan's thinking about technology. His intuitive critique of contemporary sociology, from which he was trying to separate his technology at the time, is not without Bergsonian ideas on *homo faber* and tendency, but they developed in a direction that goes beyond Bergson. Schlanger, "L'insaisissable technologie," 111.

<sup>572</sup> Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 160.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 163-164. About forms of symbiosis, see André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 154-157.

### 2.2.3. Operational chain

In the study of technology, Leroi-Gourhan considered two related areas: material on the one hand, and gesture on the other. This led him to consider successively matter, then action, and from these two orders of considerations, the instrument emerged spontaneously.<sup>574</sup> Leroi-Gourhan showed how important it is to look at instruments by thinking about the people who used them and by wanting to get to know those people. In his opinion, this is the only way to explore objects and tools. The emergence of the concept of operational chain is thus a natural consequence of careful analysis. It brings together the majority of the themes that were important to the author. The concept of the *chaîne opératoire* (operational chain/ operational sequence) serves as an analytical framework that allows the bringing together of materials, tools, actors and their actions within the technical time.<sup>575</sup>

In terms of what Leroi-Gourhan perceives the concept of an operational chain to be, he explains that since technology is traditionally based on the study of the tool, which exists only in a cycle of action, it follows that it has value only as a tool in this cycle, inseparable from the gesture that makes it effective.<sup>576</sup> Leroi-Gourhan defines technical behavior as the totality of psychosomatic attitudes (the relationship between the body and the central nervous system) that result in material effects on the external environment. This behavior can be detected and analyzed throughout the animal world and is expressed as a technical operation by a chain of gestures or an operational chain.

Leroi-Gourhan divided human technical operations into three levels. The lower level is primitive automatic memory. The second level is that of mechanical memory. This memory results from the fact that, through prolonged repetition, a certain pre-organization of future operations is established through education. The things learnt become so well imprinted on the cerebral cortex that the person can reproduce the gestures with less and less voluntary consciousness. The third level is the level of consciousness, which regulates or innovates in technical circuits on the basis of socialized memory. This stage is essential to move from

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<sup>574</sup> Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 46.

<sup>575</sup> Christophe Delage, "Once Upon a Time... the (hi) Story of the Concept of the Chaîne Opératoire in French Prehistory," *World Archaeology* 49.2 (2017): 158. However, in 1956, taking assessment of his earlier work (of the phase of his life up to the 1930s, where he stressed the importance of Mauss's teaching), Leroi-Gourhan claimed that he had enriched his approach by broadening the time scale and exploring prehistory. At the same time, he expanded his considerations on a paleoanthropological scale, which became no longer purely theoretical, as they had previously been, but based on his experience in the field at Furtins and later at Arcy. Furthermore, there was his second doctoral thesis defended in the natural sciences, which was undoubtedly directly related to his theoretical maturation process. Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 170.

<sup>576</sup> When talking about techniques, one should think about a series of gestures, even if they are mechanized (as in the case of tool-gesture) or integrated into machinery (as in the case of machines-tool). Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 171.



technical analysis to real technology, because it is in this way that social factors reappear, and this is one of the things that gives ethnology its greatest value: the human being, according to Leroi-Gourhan, is unimaginable if one eliminates sociological factors. As Soulier observes, Leroi-Gourhan points out that humans use language (in addition to demonstration by mimetism) to collectively communicate technical instructions, which leads to the conclusion that in human species, it is society that has the operative memory, and that one can therefore only make sense of human behavior historically and socially. This capacity of the human species means that, from the earliest stages of its internalization, the individual has the ability to encounter the data of social memory, to relate them in new ways, to make inventions and choices.<sup>577</sup>

Leroi-Gourhan's insights about the levels of human technical operations further explain the mechanics of habit, which were discussed above in terms of their role in individual creativity in relation to the ideas of Jousse (2.1.2.4.). Leroi-Gourhan has shown that habit not only develops individual creativity, but above all unleashes human communication, which is a prerequisite for individual creativity.<sup>578</sup>

According Christophe Delage, the dynamic and systematic vision of human behavior similar to *chaîne opératoire* with a full theoretical and methodological range of descriptive and analytical tools was already present in the world of science at that time.<sup>579</sup> Leroi-Gourhan himself does not claim to make a discovery and points that others have articulated similar ideas before him. For example, he mentions Etienne Rabaud who spoke of chains of reflexes.<sup>580</sup> However, Leroi-Gourhan's greatest merit is that he was able to demonstrate the fusion of biological and socio-cultural life, as well as technical and mental activity in the context of human evolution. And, very importantly for this research, in doing this, he has not left aside the importance of movement.

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>578</sup> Leroi-Gourhan's insights can help to shed light on the phenomenon of the collective "spirit," which Mauss linked to the behavioral habits of a particular group. The "spirit" determines certain ways of feeling, thinking, and behaving that individuals would not have if they lived in other human groups (even if their individual behavior differs from the group). Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 5-6. Leroi-Gourhan's insights into the third level of technical operations, that functions on the basis of socialized memory, makes the link between the behavior of particular group and the "spirit" as identified by Mauss legitimate. In addition, they have the potential to contribute to the study of the mechanics of collective practices driven by social memory.

<sup>579</sup> Delage, "Once Upon a Time," 168.

<sup>580</sup> Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 172.

#### 2.2.4. *The role of mobility in human evolution*

The effect of André Leroi-Gourhan's investigation of human evolution is aptly captured in the words of Christopher Johnson:

This reverses the order of priority articulated in traditional humanisms — religious, atheist, or scientific — where the biological human emerges fully formed from the mind of God or the matrix of nature, as the agent and originator of culture rather than the evolved product of culture.<sup>581</sup>

This subsection focuses on *Gesture and Speech*, Leroi-Gourhan's seminal work, a spectacular synthesis of more than thirty years of research in ethnology, archaeology, palaeontology, technology, and prehistoric art. In this work Leroi-Gourhan continues to apply the concept of the *chaîne opératoire* as a means of exploring the foundations of the “the human phenomena in its totality.”<sup>582</sup>

Leroi-Gourhan sees mobility as an important feature of human evolution. He considers the ‘cerebral’ view of evolution to be a fallacy and argues that there is ample evidence to show that the brain was the beneficiary, not the cause, in the evolution of locomotor adaptation. This is why he considers movement to be a determining factor in biological evolution, just as it is considered to be a determining factor in modern social evolution.<sup>583</sup> “Between the evolution of the brain and that of the body there has been a dialogue from which both sides have benefited.”<sup>584</sup>

The dialogue that Leroi-Gourhan refers to is inspired by movement. Changes in mobility have continuously led to new adaptations, new movements, and therefore changes in anatomical structure. Leroi-Gourhan presents human evolution as a sequential liberation from the constraints of the environment, starting with the liberation of the body from water, followed by the liberation of the frontal part of the body – face and hands – from the tasks of locomotion. A freed hand is capable of grasping and manipulating, and a freed face can express itself through facial expressions and language. In addition, the straightened posture, that is standing upright and walking on two legs, has affected the architecture of the skull itself. With less force, the brain can develop differently, which Leroi-Gourhan considers is the source of the new

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<sup>581</sup> Christopher Johnson, “Leroi-Gourhan and the Limits of the Human,” *French studies* 65.4 (2011): 476.

<sup>582</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 141.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

configurations needed to allocate tasks between the hands and face.<sup>585</sup> Tool and memory are the keywords of human evolution.

Thus, Leroi-Gourhan argues that it was bipedalism that led to evolutionary changes in the size and organization of the brain, with evolutionary consequences for language and cognition. His investigation of human evolution leads to understanding that all human activity in three main directions – technics, language, and aesthetics<sup>586</sup> – is of biological origin. All techniques, including language, use the same sequences of operation. However, the sequence needs memory to be stored and implemented again:

Techniques involve both gestures and tools, sequentially organized by means of a “syntax” that imparts both fixity and flexibility to the series of operations involved. This operating syntax is suggested by the memory and comes into being as a product of the brain and the physical environment. If we pursue the parallel with language, we find a similar process taking place.<sup>587</sup>

The “syntax” of the different techniques, inspired by experience, had to be preserved in memory. This is where the mutual benefits of body and brain<sup>588</sup> evolution come from. Using the concept of *chaîne opératoire*, Leroi-Gourhan demonstrates the gradual development of the possibilities of articulation of the liberated parts of the body, in parallel with the appearance of purposeful, predictive thinking in early humans. Movement is given a primary role here. Evolution, according to Leroi-Gourhan, could be said to be the growth of human consciousness through the development of the multiplicity and multifacetedness of gesture.

According to Leroi-Gourhan, the traditional oppositions of nature to culture, zoological versus sociological, and so forth, were determined by the earlier opposition between the material and the mental.<sup>589</sup> Apart from the fact that he interprets human behavior through a biological prism (the brain for him is the physical seat of thought<sup>590</sup>) Leroi-Gourhan distinguishes it very clearly from that of animals. Although the “society of both animals and humans would be seen as maintained within a body of ‘traditions’ whose basis is neither instinctive nor intellectual but, to varying degrees, zoological and sociological at one and the

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<sup>585</sup> Bénédicte De Villers, “Leroi-Gourhan, l’art, la pensée et la main,” Philosophy workshop at the Marni Theatre: “Nous avons l’art pour ne pas mourir de la vérité” (17 April 2013), 3. [https://orbi.uliege.be/bitstream/2268/162826/1/\(Leroi-Gourhan,%20l'art,%20la%20pensée%20et%20la%20main%20BdeVillers\).pdf](https://orbi.uliege.be/bitstream/2268/162826/1/(Leroi-Gourhan,%20l'art,%20la%20pensée%20et%20la%20main%20BdeVillers).pdf) [accessed 17 March 2022].

<sup>586</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 275.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>588</sup> “Since the brain is ultimately the physical seat of thought, and since it is in this area of evolution that the human being has been most successful, there are formal grounds for believing that the increasing size and complexity of the cerebral apparatus exactly reflect the steady progress made by living matter in its striving for conscious contact.” Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 59.

<sup>589</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

same time,”<sup>591</sup> he argues that the difference between the two is profound. Like intelligence, instinct cannot be regarded as a cause but only as an effect. The difference between animals and humans lies in neurophysiological differences. This means, that animals do not have a brain capable of making comparisons, nor do they have the predictive thinking to pursue future goals. This seems to be a fundamental feature of humanity.

Human brain development was connected with action, with operational sequences stored in memory. Even if one knows little about it, animal memory, according to Leroi-Gourhan, is formed through experience within narrow genetic channels pre-specialized by the species. Human memory is constituted through experience based on language. Here one faces a paradox: “the individual’s possibilities for comparison and liberation rest upon a potential memory whose entire contents belong to society.”<sup>592</sup> The whole of our evolution, Leroi-Gourhan reveals, has been oriented toward placing outside ourselves, what in the rest of the animal world is achieved inside by species adaptation.<sup>593</sup>

This is a very important remark for the last section of this chapter on the transformative aspect of movement. Human development is not possible without the fostering of collective memory. “The characteristic capacity of human societies to accumulate and preserve technical innovations is connected with the collective memory. Our role is to organize our operational sequences consciously toward the creation of new processes,” states Leroi-Gourhan.<sup>594</sup> This means that the preservation, so to speak, takes place outside the human body. Leroi-Gourhan speaks of the social body as an extension of the anatomical body. “[The] Human is both a zoological individual and the creator of social memory” and it is “uniquely human two-way traffic between the innovative individual and the social community that makes for progress.”<sup>595</sup> Dynamic societal change is driven by this unique characteristic of humanity.

In contrast to Jousse, who sees ethnicity as a secondary version of a universal anthropological gesture, Leroi-Gourhan argues that it is precisely because of ethnic traditions that society can never be imprisoned in behaviors. Humans are exposed to ethnic traditions at birth, which is biologically necessary, like genetic conditioning for other species. This is a prerequisite for individual freedom, because “ethnic survival relies on routine, the dialogue taking place produces a balance between routine and progress, routine symbolizing the capital

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 235. “Like tools, human memory is a product of exteriorization, and it is stored within the ethnic group. This is what distinguishes it from animal memory, of which we know little except that it is stored within the species.” Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 258.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid., 228.

required for the group's survival and progress the input of individual innovations toward a better survival."<sup>596</sup>

In line with Mauss, Leroi-Gourhan sees no possibility of the existence of pure gesture outside the ethnic conditioning:

Everything humans make – tools, gestures, and products alike – is impregnated by group aesthetics and has an ethnic personality which even the most superficial visit to an ethnographical museum will reveal. Individuals introduce their personal variations into the traditional framework and, safe in the knowledge of belonging to the group, draw some of their sense of existing as individuals from the margin of freedom allowed them.<sup>597</sup>

In Leroi-Gourhan's work, the role of human mobility is not only central to the past of human evolution. The present and the future also depend on human physical activity, to be understood broadly as creative adventure in the world. The reduction of the human physical activity causes a decrease in creativity and even a disability in solving problems. Leroi-Gourhan explains:

Whether animal or human active individuals have their being within a network of movements that originate inside or outside their body mechanism and whose form is interpreted by their senses. [...] With human beings the situation clearly remains the same, with the difference, however, that it can be reflected in a network of symbols and held up for comparison with itself. Over the period of human evolution, rhythms and values thus reflected have tended to create a time and a space proper to humankind, to imprison behavior within a checkerwork of scales and measures, to assume concrete form in "aesthetics" in the narrower sense. Yet the biological infrastructure – our body – still uses the same means and has none other to put at the disposal of the artistic superstructure.<sup>598</sup>

The specifically human way of being in the world is strongly marked by rhythmic mediation. This can be noticed from the first use of percussion instruments to the visual rhythms of paintings in gallery halls. Rhythm, according to Leroi-Gourhan, is not just an individual bodily sensation, but it corresponds to the general state of the body, which affects and stimulates the human being to act, and determines the nature of their embodiment in a situation.<sup>599</sup>

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<sup>596</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid., 282 - 283.

<sup>599</sup> De Villers, "Leroi-Gourhan," 4. Also, Leroi-Gourhan writes, "In the human the treading motion that constitutes the rhythmic framework of walking is accompanied by rhythmic movements of the arm; whereas the former governs spatiotemporal integration and is the source of animation in the social sphere, the latter has to do with the individual's integration in what is not a time-and space-creating but a form-creating system. The rhythmicity of walking led eventually to the kilometer and the hour, while manual rhythmicity led to the capture and immobilization of volumes, a purely human construct. The distance between musical rhythm, which is

Accordingly, Leroi-Gourhan thus sees aesthetics not as a special human activity, but as a natural human behavior inspired by the biological nature. Understanding the place of movement in aesthetics is the aim of the next subsection.

### 2.2.5. *Aesthetics*

Leroi-Gourhan distanced himself from the notion of an ‘art for art’s sake’ aesthetic thesis<sup>600</sup> in exactly the same way as the authors previously discussed. His definition of aesthetic behavior is inextricably linked to the evolution of the nervous system of vertebrates and of human beings. For this reason, it is indeed closely linked to perception. Aesthetic behavior has a physiological basis and derives from tactile, gustatory, auditory, and visual sensitivity, and from the perception of posture and position in space. It consists of unconscious visceral perceptions and alimentary or reproductive stimuli.<sup>601</sup> It is not surprising, then, that Leroi-Gourhan does not attribute aesthetic behavior solely to humans. The animal world, he argues, offers many aesthetic examples that are part of their common behavior. Leroi-Gourhan lists the songs and dances of birds and insects, the rhythmic gesticulation of some monkeys, the geometric arrangement of bee cells, the web of a spider, amongst others. All these musical or plastic creations are analogous to human creations.

However, the nervous system of animals not only provides them with a variety of senses, but also commands attitudes appropriate to the environment in which and from which they live. As one moves up the zoological scale, Leroi-Gourhan points out, behaviors become more varied and precise, and the relationship between the senses and the actions that respond to them become richer and more effective. The increasing complexity of the nervous system is also expanding the possibilities of linking the different senses. In the process of evolution, the greatest activity is transferred to the anterior part of the nervous system, the brain, which originally played the role of a simple combination of the organs of locomotion and the organs of the mouth.<sup>602</sup>

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wholly a matter of time and measure, and the rhythm of the hammer or the hoe, which is a matter of immediate or deferred procreation of forms, is considerable. Musical rhythm generates behavior that symbolically marks the frontier between the natural world and humanized space, while technical rhythm materially transforms untamed nature into instruments of humanization. The two are strictly complementary...” Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 310.

<sup>600</sup> De Villers, “Leroi-Gourhan,” 5.

<sup>601</sup> André Leroi-Gourhan, “La vie esthétique et les domaines de l’esthétique,” *La part de l’œil-Revue de pensée des arts plastiques* (Dossier André Leroi-Gourhan et l’esthétique: art et anthropologie) 35-36 (2021-2022): 28-29.

<sup>602</sup> “The main focus of sensations is already in the Worms located in the anterior part of the body and the confluence is already existing in the nervous system. The general pattern established, the evolution continues

Human aesthetics, deeply intellectualized in high forms, is no more different from animal aesthetics, according to Leroi-Gourhan, than the physiology of the human body is fundamentally different from the physiology of other mammals. However, a fundamental difference does emerge. An animal's behavior, especially that of lower animals, is written into the characteristics of its species and is governed by a kind of hereditary memory. The human being is not entirely free of this process either. But the human being is subject to physiological impulses directed towards forms which have been gradually fixed by social memory, by the tradition of their group. In other words, from the same physical foundations, but with a very high intellectualization of the senses, the human being derives from their culture a scheme of behavior. The human being gets to experience it, and in a certain way recreate it.<sup>603</sup>

According to Leroi-Gourhan, aesthetic perception is the intellectual culmination of the perception of the position, movement, and form of the objects around, a perception which is the basis of the life. This perception is not limited to art, but encompasses all of life through forms and rhythms; it is as much expressed in the way a painting is painted or the position of a bed in the middle of a room as in poetry or the stacking of dirty dishes, as well as in dance,<sup>604</sup> and it is never the same twice in human history: every epoch, every region, even every family has its own aesthetic traditions, which, like all other traditions (with the exception of those of the book), have the tendency to change a little or a great deal with every generation.

Aesthetic perception is not fully conscious. In Leroi-Gourhan's opinion, it is intellectualized only in those areas where art tends to become a specialty, while most aesthetic activity is omitted unconsciously. To grasp its importance, one must suddenly find oneself transplanted into a culture very different from one's own. It is only then that one will notice that, from the purest manifestations of art to the simplest gestures, everything is bathed in the same aesthetic atmosphere. Moreover, if one is attentive, one will very soon feel that this

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forward, as if, to the primary nervous system, perfect in its functioning for a given stage, there were added in front of the cerebral confluence a device which increases the possibilities of relation between sensation and movement, then another device and still others which lead to the brain of higher mammals and of man. The movements themselves are not modified, it is the sensations and the relationships between them that are gradually intellectualized." Leroi-Gourhan, "La vie esthétique et les domaines de l'esthétique," 29.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>604</sup> However, Leroi-Gourhan identifies two poles of aesthetic expression. One expression is more related to material life and corresponds to beauty through effectiveness. This plane, which for aesthetes is only secondary, is functional aesthetics, a fundamental concept of technology. The other level is termed visual aesthetics, because it detaches itself from the technical function in order to express itself in signs that are intrinsic to the human being, a system of references equivalent to that of language and writing. Leroi-Gourhan, "La vie esthétique et les domaines de l'esthétique," 33.

impression fades and the observer is drawn into a rhythm whose accents become more and more one's own.<sup>605</sup>

Leroi-Gourhan associates the aesthetics of the highest degree of intellectualization with the visual symbol.<sup>606</sup> However, according to Leroi-Gourhan, the visual impression is also created by smells and tastes and tactile impressions, while auditory impressions have real autonomy. Rhythmically organized sounds, according to Leroi-Gourhan, derive from another key area of our relationship to life – movement. Between the aesthetic domains, which are determined by the predominance of certain senses, there are inevitably links between the senses involved. Leroi-Gourhan gives the example of dance, where all the senses are experienced by the participants.<sup>607</sup>

Dance also occupies an important place in Leroi-Gourhan's interpretation of another important aesthetic framework; namely, in revealing the relationship between gesture and material. In the aesthetic field, the relationship between gestures, tools, and materials has a different meaning, as gesture and matter predominate, or, as Leroi-Gourhan points out, gesture and tool are integrated into the visual expression in favor of material.<sup>608</sup> The proportions of integration can also vary. Against the background of these considerations, Leroi-Gourhan singles out dance. Dance is the aesthetic expression of the gesture, the purest, fullest gain, because the body integrates gesture, tool, material, and product into one reality.<sup>609</sup>

To summarize Leroi-Gourhan's thoughts on aesthetics (which cannot be exhaustive within the constraints of a single section), it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the aesthetic sphere for the domestication and cosmic integration of time and space.<sup>610</sup> Both of these needs are related to the encounter between the human being and matter. According to Leroi-Gourhan, the creative dialogue between matter and the actor characterizes all "doings." Bernard Stiegler's criticism that Leroi-Gourhan leaves very little room for the significance of human creativity in the evolution of humanity is therefore not entirely correct.<sup>611</sup> The links

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>606</sup> "These are therefore two normally separate domains, the figurative symbolism resting on the superior, exclusively human intellectual faculties, the corresponding functional aesthetic being, on the contrary, although human in its expression, in continuity with the general organizational frameworks of nature." Leroi-Gourhan, "La vie esthétique et les domaines de l'esthétique," 34.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>608</sup> In modelling, the relationship between gesture and product is immediate, for example, in sculpture where the material and the product are inseparable, while in instrumental music the value of the gesture disappears behind the value of the tool, just as in manufacturing. Leroi-Gourhan, "La vie esthétique et les domaines de l'esthétique," 38.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>610</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 342.

<sup>611</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: The Fault of Epimetheus* Vol. 1. (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1998), 157.



between material and biological progress revealed by Leroi-Gourhan in the early period of human evolution certainly imply creativity. “The making of anything is a dialogue between the maker and the material employed.”<sup>612</sup>

Finally, Leroi-Gourhan sees aesthetics as the field where individual expression, or, individual liberation, can best manifest itself. However, Leroi-Gourhan does not believe in the uniqueness of individual genius. Each genius is the heir of a particular ethnic group, of a particular aesthetic tradition. Favorable collective environmental conditions are important for the development of human beings, especially artists.<sup>613</sup> After all, it was cultural diversity that was central to the evolution of homo sapiens. In his study of Palaeolithic art, Leroi-Gourhan asserted that this art indisputably shows that different regional groups lived side by side, bathed in the same material culture but with many different details of group personality.

Bénédicte de Villers calls Leroi-Gourhan’s ideas about aesthetics the “aesthetics of movement,”<sup>614</sup> understood as the intellectualization of senses that are inseparable from movement. Ethnic pluralism is an important factor in this process. Collective norms and attitudes affect the individual, but in a creatively stimulating rather than restrictive negative way. This raises an important question for the interpretation of feelings that individuals experience in relation to society. Reflecting on Leroi-Gourhan’s thoughts on aesthetics encourages the acceptance of kinesthetic feedback with an aesthetic vision – as a sign of the human ability to intellectualize the sensations of movement in one’s environment, which is a guarantor of individual human creativity.

#### 2.2.6. Religion

I start this section with Bernard Stiegler’s reflection on the origin of the spiritual:

At the end of the process of mobilization, which is also that of ‘liberation,’ and with liberation becoming ‘exteriorization,’<sup>615</sup> a particular type of cortical organization of the brain appears on the scene by which evolution takes on ‘an extra-organic sense.’ Is the sense ‘spirit’?<sup>616</sup>

Stiegler asks the following question, recalling that for Leroi-Gourhan, the notion of spirituality means a second origin.<sup>617</sup> Religiosity, like aesthetic feelings, is a consequence of

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<sup>612</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 306.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, 225, 283.

<sup>614</sup> De Villers, “Leroi-Gourhan,” 13.

<sup>615</sup> “Exteriorization *qua* the act that is the horizon of anticipation, *qua* the gesture, is also an *Erinnerung*, the very moment of reflexivity, of the affection of self as a return to self.” Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, 153 (emphasis original).

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

human evolution. “[The] evolution of figurative aesthetics follows the parallel evolution of operational behavior in the religious field; it reflects the progressive intellectualization of metaphysics which no longer immediately conditions the course of the seasons to the execution of figurative rituals.”<sup>618</sup> And more generally Leroi-Gourhan talks about religion mainly in terms of its relationship and similarity to art. He states,

The basic link between art and religion is emotional, yet not in a vague sense. It has to do with mastering a mode of expression that restores humans to their true place in a cosmos whose center they occupy without trying to pierce it by an intellectual process.<sup>619</sup>

Human evolution Leroi-Gourhan sees to be coherent in terms of its two fundamental characteristics of manual and verbal technicity. In a sense it can be seen dissociated into two levels: “that of phyletic evolution – as a result of which present-day peoples are a collection of individuals with physical properties hardly different from those possessed thirty thousand years ago – and that of ethnic evolution, which has turned humankind into an exteriorized body whose properties are globally in a state of accelerated change.”<sup>620</sup> Religion, like art, occupies an important place in this exteriorized body. Leroi-Gourhan shows its importance for individuals: here individuals find the dependence on a system of symbols that is so necessary for a sense of uniqueness and meaning, on which the continuity and renewal of society depends. Leroi-Gourhan sees religion and art as complementary, highly adjacent fields, with slightly different proportions of individual freedom and community belonging.<sup>621</sup>

The line of Leroi-Gourhan’s thought here is that religion can play an important role in the spatial and social integration of people, which is one of the two basic requirements of human well-being.<sup>622</sup> But integration must be understood as a refuge for human freedom, not a prison. Leroi-Gourhan draws attention to the difference between the humanization or socialization of time and space, inherent in traditions through movement and rhythmic patterns,

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<sup>618</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, “La vie esthétique et les domaines de l’esthétique,” 52.

<sup>619</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 200.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>621</sup> The relationship between religion and science, on the other hand, is a competitive one, since both seek to explain the world and provide tools for balancing human existence. Leroi-Gourhan writes, “It is not by chance that systems of explaining the world belong simultaneously to religion and science. The reason why these two have been seen as rivals since ancient days is that they express, at two different levels, the same fundamental attitude of dynamic balance between safety and freedom. Each holds out a twofold promise, that of material or metaphysical assurance and that of convincing exploration.” Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 338.

<sup>622</sup> Our practical life, according to Leroi-Gourhan, is woven out of the material conquest of geographical and eventually cosmic space, and the compression of time achieved through the development of speed and medical research. Our philosophical and scientific dreams are based on speculations about astronomy and light, metrology, and atomic physics. What are our spiritual dreams based on? Again, they feed on the conquest of eternity and the heavenly realms. Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 288.

and technical rationalization, which is emptied of symbolism, in which individuals could find resources for both belonging to the group and freedom. Leroi-Gourhan sees the separation between art and religion as a very favorable situation for the process of technical rationalization to take root:

Interruptions of natural rhythms – prolonged waking, turning night into day, fasting, sexual abstinence – tend to evoke the religious rather than the aesthetic sphere because in modern culture these two spheres have become divorced from each other. That, however, is only a recent consequence of the evolution of the social organism, the outcome of a process of rationalization of which we are the promoters. At the social level an interruption of the normal cycle is equivalent to a decline in technical performance. Isolating the religious from the aesthetic spheres prevents the disruption of vital rhythms and puts the individual in a situation favorable to the smooth running of the sociotechnical mechanism.<sup>623</sup>

To better understand these dynamics, one needs to remember that Leroi-Gourhan identified two areas of human evolution influenced by bilateralism: one associated with the liberated mouth, which allowed the development of language, and the other associated with the liberated hand, which led to the development of technology. Thus,

music, dance, theater, lived and mimed social situations, belong to the imagination, to the projection upon reality of a light that humanizes the zoological processes of human situations. They are the clothing in which we dress our social and interpersonal behavior obeying the most general biological rules; they are the intimate property of language as opposed to manual technicity.<sup>624</sup>

It is quite different with the technical rhythm, which has no imagination and humanizes the raw material but not human behavior. It is important to note that, although both areas (associated with the liberated mouth and with the liberated hand) are linked and inseparable from movement (and therefore both are accompanied by kinesthetic feedback), the first is a guarantee of social continuity, linked to the symbolic, like language, rather than material resources. Religion belongs to this sphere. The separation of religion and art has adversely affected both spheres, or in other words, contributed to the impoverishment of the symbolic sphere. This tendency, which Leroi-Gourhan explains, focusing on the decline of mythological thinking, can be applied to relations of art and religion as well. He writes,

The gradual erosion of mythological thought [...] has set societies upon the course of “art for art’s sake” which disguises the crisis in figurative representation. Individuals today are imbued with and conditioned by a rhythmicity that has reached a stage of almost total mechanicity (as opposed to humanization). The crisis of figuralism is the corollary of the dominance of machinism.<sup>625</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid., 310.

Leroi-Gourhan has shown that human memory, like tools, is a product of exteriorization and is stored within an ethnic group. Religious and artistic practices are very important ways of participating in this exteriorization. Accordingly, the kinesthetic feedback, to return to the ideas of Chapter 1, of this participation can be linked to spiritual feelings. The autonomy of the spheres of art and religion, which is a consequence of rationalization, has a negative side: the erosion of symbolic life, which leads to the inability to resist the mechanization of human behavior.

### *Summary*

Leroi-Gourhan, the student of Mauss, continued his teacher's research into technology, with the aim of making technology a separate field, open to both human and natural sciences. He combined his experience of working in a museum, excavating, and systematizing observations with historical and even philosophical reflections.<sup>626</sup>

Another of his immensely valuable contributions is in revealing the importance of movement in the study of civilizations. Leroi-Gourhan developed Mauss's ideas in an original way, extending the teacher's insights with a historical and biological dimension. His concepts of environment, tendency, and symbiosis contribute to a better understanding of civilizational change.

Although the concept of the operational chain emerges in the context of technology, it is ultimately involved in revealing the role of movement in human evolution. The liberation of the face from the functions of searching and processing food, and the forelimbs from the functions of travelling, led to the structural specialization of language and the production of tools. Thus, Leroi-Gourhan states that evolution "did not begin with the brain but with the feet."<sup>627</sup>

Leroi-Gourhan talks about the aspects of movement that were important to Jousse – bilaterism and rhythmicity. However, in Leroi-Gourhan's writings they are connected with archeological research, which gives these ideas more scientific validity. Also, Leroi-Gourhan's insights into the three levels of human technical operations shed light on the mechanics of habit and the role of habit in the liberation of human consciousness, both at the individual and the collective level.

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<sup>626</sup> It was not for nothing that Mauss gave his metal cabinet to him as an inheritance. Schlanger, "L'insaisissable technologie," 110.

<sup>627</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 229.

Leroi-Gourhan sees as dangerous the mechanization of human gesture, when it comes to the replacement of collective movement practices,<sup>628</sup> which contained the necessary creative resources for the individuals and thus for the survival of the human species,<sup>629</sup> The transference of gestures in the evolutionary process has shaped humanity, forming the individual body in parallel with its external extension – the social body. In other words, the development of the body and the brain, is inseparable from the formation of the external memory within the ethnic group. It would follow that the inventions of mankind, which lead individuals to exclusion and lead to the disappearance of ethnic groups through the disappearance of ethnic rhythms, can lead to a process of distancing the human being from what makes them human.<sup>630</sup>

If, according to Leroi-Gourhan, aesthetics is the intellectualization of the sensations that arise through movement, it can be inferred that it is the feedback derived from bodily techniques that is at the heart of aesthetics and is the source of the freedom of individual expression, which Leroi-Gourhan associates with the aesthetic sphere. Leroi-Gourhan's emphasis on the importance of ethnic diversity for the creative powers of the individual, highlights another aspect of kinesthetic feedback, namely a comparative aspect. The individual liberation depends on possibilities of comparison that are impossible, or at least very limited, in a homogenous cultural environment created by the technical mechanization of the social. The erosion of a symbolically organized culture, in which art and religion played an important role, means the degradation of the freedom of individuals and groups.

### **2.3. The Development of Habitus: Pierre Bourdieu**

French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1920–2002), the author of hundreds of articles and three dozen books, considered himself a Maussianist and drew on Mauss in his work, considering his predecessor as his closest partner in the development of a theory of practice.<sup>631</sup> In this part of the chapter, I will focus on Bourdieu's adoption and revitalisation of Mauss's notion of habitus, one of Bourdieu's most important "thinking

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<sup>628</sup> It should be borne in mind that Leroi-Gourhan does not see customs, habits, rules as predefined and formed powers, as if contained in the structure of the human body, but as new creations, innovations that have emerged in the face of the biological challenge posed by the lack of this structural predefinition. De Villers, "Leroi-Gourhan," 4.

<sup>629</sup> If one applies Jousse's terminology, one could call the situation algebraization without the possibility of being gesticulated anew.

<sup>630</sup> "We therefore might well ask ourselves what continuing means of escape the zoological flux will have at its disposal – for complete dehumanization would eventually become prejudicial to the efficacy of the social machine, and it must therefore be kept in a sufficiently 'sapient' state. In other words, we may wonder whether yet another process of exteriorization – this time the exteriorization of social symbolism – might not be taking place." Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 358.

<sup>631</sup> Fournier, "Durkheim, Mauss et Bourdieu," 480.

tools.”<sup>632</sup> By examining Bourdieu’s scientific legacy, which dealt with human movement in a particular way, I will try to grasp the transformative aspect of movement.

Unlike Jousse and Leroi-Gourhan, who loved to talk about their lives, especially their childhood, Bourdieu avoided talking about his private life for most of his life. Moreover, Bourdieu was opposed to biography, not only with regard to the details of his personal life, but about biographical studies in general. However, as with the life events for his predecessors, Bourdieu’s skepticism was linked to research, in Bourdieu’s case to the theory of practice, and thus is important to raise.<sup>633</sup> He opposed neat chronologies, that is to say, the interpretation of lives that are pre-ordained and predictable and lived accordingly. Life is neither pre-ordered nor pre-determined, although it is constrained by social factors. Bourdieu’s point will remain central in the current discussion.<sup>634</sup>

Bourdieu’s distrust of the genre of biography, or, in other words, his distrust of narrating life from the perspective of a life already lived or from the perspective of an actor-soloist, is reminiscent of his view of social life as highly complex and indescribable, a life that the actors themselves are constantly and in many directions, and at various levels, influenced and affected by. Such view is very evident in his approach to the study of practice, which begins with a resistance of “knowledge for knowledge’s sake,” which for Bourdieu was as vacuous as “art for art’s sake,”<sup>635</sup> and which is positively expressed with the purpose to “shine fresh light upon society and thereby empower citizens to make more informed decisions concerning their fate.”<sup>636</sup> However, practice (like the actors) is not simple or predictable:

Practice has a logic which is not that of the logician. This has to be acknowledged in order to avoid asking of it more logic than it can give, thereby condemning oneself either to wring incoherences out of it or to thrust a forced coherence upon it.<sup>637</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> Michael Grenfell, “Forward,” in *Pierre Bourdieu and Physical Culture*, ed. Lisa Hunter, Wayne Smith, Elke Emerald (London: Routledge, 2015), xi.

<sup>633</sup> According to Michael Grenfell, Bourdieu was skeptical of biographical “lives” because of the consistency they construct, which he saw in the very language used by biographers: “already,” “from that moment,” “from the youngest age,” “always.” Michael James Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2014), 11.

<sup>634</sup> Eventually Bourdieu had to transcend his skepticism and publicly appreciate the social forces that shaped the trajectory of his own life. His own reflexive approach, based on the need of sociologist to “objectify” the process of objectivity, demanded it. *Ibid.*, 11. This approach required the application of the same epistemological concepts to both the object of inquiry and to its cognitive subject. He undertook such ‘objectification’ at his last lecture at the College de France in February 2001. His last posthumously published book *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Sketch for a Self-Analysis) presents such socio-analysis, although the remark that “this is not an autobiography” retains Bourdieu’s paradoxical skepticism. In this respect, Bourdieu remained faithful to his scientific ambitions and methods. Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Paris: Éditions Raison D’Agir, 2004).

<sup>635</sup> Grenfell, “Forward,” xii.

<sup>636</sup> Nick Crossley, “Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002),” *Social Movement Studies* 1.2 (2002): 188.

<sup>637</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford university press, 1992), 86.

[...] practical logic sometimes refers back the things of the world to the plurality of aspects which they present [...] <sup>638</sup>

In the research of practice, Bourdieu becomes a kind of advocate for the actors, wanting first and foremost to inform, but also to represent their rights, to present their case properly, choosing arguments that are at the same time empathetic and fair to the defendants' situation as well as meaningful for the legal system. <sup>639</sup> A knowledge of the logic of the actors, especially the workers (whose limited choices Bourdieu tried to show in the bigger picture, in relation to those of other classes) is inseparable from Bourdieu's experience. Bourdieu comments on his intellectual reorientation – from philosophy to ethnology and sociology, and from the latter to rural sociology, which was at a lower level in the hierarchy of social specialties – as a kind of “return to the origins,” and his research was accompanied by a constant reflection on the people of his original environment, the village. <sup>640</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu was born in 1930 and grew up in a remote mountain village of Denguin of the Béarn region in the Pyrenees Mountains in south-western France in a family of a postman. Bourdieu's father taught him “without words, and by his whole attitude, to respect the ‘little ones’, among whom he counted himself, and also, although he had never spoken like that, their fights.” <sup>641</sup> Bourdieu moved to Paris in the early 1950s to study at the *École normale supérieure*. Like most intellectuals of the time, he studied philosophy. Although he graduated with an *agrégé de philosophie*, he refused to write his dissertation in response to the authoritarian nature of the education offered. <sup>642</sup> Bourdieu soon abandoned the study of the affective life, which combined philosophy, medicine, and biology, in favor of social sciences. <sup>643</sup>

It was the experience of two years in the army, when Bourdieu was called up in 1956 to serve in the French army in Algeria, that marked the beginning of his path from philosophy

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<sup>638</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>639</sup> Even the purpose of writing of *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* is connected with a dream to provide readers with “the means of doing and living a little bit better what they live and what they do.” Bourdieu, *Esquisse*, 142.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid., 82-83. This Bourdieu orientation (or re-orientation) can be also described as elective renunciation, which “would no doubt not have been so easy if it had not been accompanied by the confused dream of reintegration into the native world.” Bourdieu, *Esquisse*, 79. Is it not a love for people that seeks expression through a profession which allows him to be interested in them, Bourdieu asks rhetorically. Ibid., 88.

<sup>641</sup> Bourdieu, *Esquisse*, 111.

<sup>642</sup> Bourdieu, in his autobiography, describes the philosophical school of the time as a world apart from the vicissitudes of the real world, characterised by a scholastic closure. Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>643</sup> Loïc Wacquant, “Pierre Bourdieu,” in *Key Sociological Thinkers*, ed. Rob Stones (London: Macmillan Press 1998): 261. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.120.148&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [accessed 27 March 2022]. For a more detailed biography, see: Michael James Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Agent Provocateur* (London: Continuum, 2004), 7-25; Michael Grenfell and Cheryl Hardy, *Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 10-35; Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Routledge, 2006), 3-8.

to social sciences.<sup>644</sup> After returning to Paris, he worked as an *assistant* in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris as well as being Raymond Aron's personal assistant. He also attended Lévi-Strauss's seminars at the Collège de France and ethnological lectures at the Musée de l'Homme. Bourdieu taught for three years at the University of Lille before returning to Paris in 1964 to become Director of Studies at l'École pratique des Hautes Etudes. From this point onwards, according to Richard Jenkins, an increasing momentum in research and publication is seen.<sup>645</sup> Eventually, in 1981, Bourdieu became a Professor of Sociology, holding the same chair at the Collège de France that Marcel Mauss had occupied before him.<sup>646</sup>

From dissatisfaction with science that was out of touch with life,<sup>647</sup> to an empirically grounded and theoretically informed, actor-friendly scientific approach to practice; from a small town to Paris; from fieldwork in Algeria to the Collège de France; these moves hardly fit into the framework of a coherent life, but they are perfectly suited to the end of Bourdieu's biography, reminding of his skepticism towards them.

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<sup>644</sup> Bourdieu, *Esquisse*, 78. Bourdieu writes of his experience thus: "After two arduous years during which there was no possibility of doing research, I could do some work again. I began to write a book with the intention of highlighting the plight of the Algerian people and, also, that of the French settlers whose situation was no less dramatic [...] I was appalled by the gap between the views of French intellectuals about this war and how it should be brought to an end, and my own experiences [...] Maybe I wanted to be useful in order to overcome my guilty conscience about merely being a participant observer in this appalling war." Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, 4. Described by Bourdieu as "a poor attempt by an outsider," *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (Sociology of Algeria) was first published in 1958, after which Bourdieu stayed in Algeria for two more years, lecturing at the University of Algiers and carrying out additional field research.

<sup>645</sup> For a bibliography of Pierre Bourdieu's works, see: Yvette Delsaut and Marie-Christine Rivière. *Bibliographie des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu* (Pantin: Le temps des cerises, 2002). Writings of Pierre Bourdieu in English are listed here: Craig Calhoun, "Pierre Bourdieu," in *The Blackwell Companion to Major Contemporary Social Theorists*, ed. George Ritzer (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2003): 306-307. Pierre Bourdieu published an estimated 40 books and 200 articles during his lifetime.

<sup>646</sup> Calhoun, "Pierre Bourdieu," 274.

<sup>647</sup> Bourdieu's transition from philosophy to sociology and ethnology, and finally to the discovery of his original sociological approach, to be discussed in the following sections, can be expressed in his own words:

"I thus understood retrospectively that I had entered sociology and ethnology, in part, through a profound refusal of the scholastic point of view, the principle of a height, of a social distance, in which I never been able to feel at ease, and to which the relationship to the world associated with certain social origins no doubt predisposes. This posture displeased me, and for a long time, and the refusal of the vision of the world associated with the university philosophy of philosophy had undoubtedly contributed a great deal to bringing me to the social sciences and especially to a certain way of practicing them. But I had to discover very quickly that ethnology, or at least the particular way of conceiving it embodied by Lévi-Strauss and condensed by his metaphor of the 'distant gaze', also makes it possible, in a rather paradoxical way, to hold on to distances the social world, even to 'deny' it, in Freud's sense, and thereby to aestheticize it." Bourdieu, *Esquisse*, 59. Bourdieu himself was a keen sportsman, with a particular love of rugby and a fascination with combat sports. Wayne William Smith and Elke Emerald (eds.), *Pierre Bourdieu and Physical Culture* (Milton Park, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2015), iix.



### 2.3.1. *Between philosophy and anthropology*

As almost all Bourdieu scholars have noted, that despite Bourdieu's convergence with sociology, he remained "something of a philosopher."<sup>648</sup> In developing his thought, apart from his obvious links with sociologists Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Norbert Elias, and Marcel Mauss, Bourdieu also borrows from and moves into other fields.<sup>649</sup> The importance of Marx, Wittgenstein, Pascal, and less influentially, Nietzsche for Bourdieu's work is also widely acknowledged. However, alongside Durkheim, Weber, and Mauss, who were clearly Bourdieu's greatest influences, philosophers Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are the most visible.<sup>650</sup>

Webb, Schirato, and Danaher write that Bourdieu, originally a philosopher, influenced by the work of Heidegger and the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, abandoned philosophy and turned to anthropology, which was at the time very much influenced by structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss. However, he was dissatisfied with structuralist anthropology's failure to take into account and make sense of the practical aspects of everyday life, which led him to write two of the most famous books of anthropological criticism: *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *The Logic of Practice*.<sup>651</sup>

Loïc Wacquant describes in more detail Bourdieu's dissatisfaction with the prevailing currents of thought in the Parisian intellectual scene at the time, and the search for an alternative that it inspired, which led to research important for the study of movement. The first dissatisfaction was with the most important trend and political position in Parisian thought at the time of Bourdieu's studies – Sartre's existentialist phenomenology. Commenting on Sartre's arguments on the transformative power of revolutionary consciousness in *Being and Nothingness*, Bourdieu wrote the following:

If the world of action is nothing other than this universe of interchangeable possibles, entirely dependent on the decrees of the consciousness which creates it and hence totally devoid of *objectivity*, if it is moving because the subject chooses to be moved, revolting because he chooses to be revolted, then emotions, passions and actions are

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<sup>648</sup> Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, 5.

<sup>649</sup> For example, as Jen Webb, Tony Schirato, and Geoff Danaher list the following: "[...] anthropology (Clifford Geertz, Claude Lévi- Strauss), art history (Erwin Panofsky), history of science (Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem), linguistics (J. Austin, Emile Benveniste), phenomenology (Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty), philosophy (Martin Heidegger, Immanuel Kant), political economy (M. Polanyi), psychology (Sigmund Freud), and social anthropology (Harold Garfinkel, Irving Goffman)." Jen Webb, Tony Schirato, and Geoff Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 6.

<sup>650</sup> Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu*, 6. Loïc Wacquant comments that the influential authors for Bourdieu theoretically stand at the confluence of intellectual streams that academic traditions have typically construed as incompatible: "Marx and Mauss, Durkheim and Weber, but also the diverse philosophies of Cassirer, Bachelard, and Wittgenstein, the phenomenologies of Merleau-Ponty and Schutz, and the theories of language of Saussure, Chomsky, and Austin." Wacquant, "Pierre Bourdieu," 4.

<sup>651</sup> Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu*, 2.

merely games of bad faith, sad farces in which one is both bad actor and good audience.<sup>652</sup>

Bourdieu was deeply convinced, that social life is much more than the subjective consciousness of the actors who move within it and create it. There is an objective social reality beyond the realm of direct interaction and individual self-awareness.

On the other side, Wacquant writes, the nature of this ‘objective’ reality, which in Anglo-Saxon sociology is called social structure, also seemed problematic to him. Bourdieu’s encounter with the other great edifice of post-war French thought, structuralism, in the person of Lévi-Strauss, marks another reactive side of Bourdieu’s theoretical dialectic. Having experienced the work of a structuralist himself, Bourdieu eventually began to realize how little (if any) explanatory or predictive power this system had. He criticized the objective assumptions of the structuralist approach, such as the privileged position of the observer vis-à-vis the indigenous inhabitants, who are supposedly trapped in the unconscious. “My intention, was to bring real-life actors back in who had vanished at the hands of Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists, especially Althusser, through being considered as epiphenomena of structures. I do mean ‘actors’ not ‘subjects’. An action is not the mere carrying out of a rule.”<sup>653</sup>

In navigating between these intellectual currents, Bourdieu sought “to get away from objectivism without falling into subjectivism.”<sup>654</sup> According to Wacquant, Bourdieu’s reaction to Sartre and existentialism on the one hand, and Lévi-Strauss and structuralism on the other, is at the root of Bourdieu’s attempt to overcome what he considered as the absurd opposition between the individual and society, between subjectivism and objectivism. This opposition, according to Bourdieu, was the main and final dualistic category structuring and organizing social science and the cause of the shortcomings of social science.<sup>655</sup> Notions such as habitus, field, and strategy, applied to the analysis of practice are tied to efforts to overcome these problems.

### 2.3.2. Bourdieu’s habitus

Bourdieu formulated the notion of ‘habitus’ to overcome the determinacy of practice governed by rules. As he explains, “rules have a particularly small part to play in the determination of practices, which is largely entrusted to the automatism of the *habitus*.”<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Wacquant, “Pierre Bourdieu,” 166.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>654</sup> Pierre Lamaison and Pierre Bourdieu, “From Rules to Strategies: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu,” *Cultural anthropology* 1.1 (1986): 111-112.

<sup>655</sup> Wacquant, “Pierre Bourdieu,” 167.

<sup>656</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 145.

Habitus is presented not as operating solely within the framework of objective rules, but as a strategy for the activity of concrete people:

The movement that leads from rule to strategy is the same that leads from ‘prelogical’ thought or the ‘savage mind’ to the body as geometer, a ‘conductive body’ run through, from head to foot, by the necessity of the social world. It is the movement that leads one to situate oneself at the point of generation of practice in order to grasp it, as Marx says, ‘as concrete human activity, as practice, in a subjective way’.<sup>657</sup>

Bourdieu’s shift from rules to strategies, which represents the functioning of habitus, is an emphasis on the limited capacity of structuralist models to explain practice.<sup>658</sup> According to Crossley, Bourdieu opposes the “death of the subject” and the “dissolving of man” celebrated by Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists, which was the painful consequence of rules and structures. A strong notion of agency was necessary not only for sociological reasons, but also for political ones,<sup>659</sup> and the concept of habitus was designed to achieve this. In Crossley’s words,

Habitus are the forms of competence, the schemata of practical understanding and the preferences that make agency possible and meaningful. They reflect the social location of the actor (society, era, generation, gender, class, etc.), situating her within the evolving socio-historical world, but not dissolving her into her position as structuralism sought to do.<sup>660</sup>

But how can an action follow normal statistical patterns and at the same time not be the result of rules, norms, or conscious intent? Despite Bourdieu’s distancing from structuralism, he stressed the importance of structure in his theory of practice because, according to Bourdieu, it is structure that allows for the interplay between the subjective and the objective. This interaction can be imagined as a kind of thickening of experience, in which the initial act-cognition or the individual’s engagement with their social-material and ideational environment (in the initial stage of which the reaction of social subjects is empirical and naive) becomes increasingly conditioned by what has been experienced before.<sup>661</sup> The habitus of the agent is a

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>658</sup> David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 278.

<sup>659</sup> Bourdieu describes himself as a leftist by conviction, not by the winds of fashion. Bourdieu, *Esquisse*, p. 135. According to Susen and Turner, Bourdieu’s works are politically committed, and this is one of the five aspects of his work. The others are the multi-thematic nature of studies, multidisciplinary, intellectual eclecticism, empirically grounded and theoretically informed research. Simon Susen and Bryan S. Turner, “Introduction: Preliminary reflections on the legacy of Pierre Bourdieu,” in *The Legacy of Pierre Bourdieu. Critical Essay*, ed. Simon Susen and Bryan S. Turner (New York: Anthem Press, 2011), xix-xxii.

<sup>660</sup> Nick Crossley, “Pierre Bourdieu’s Habitus,” in *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu*, ed. Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013): 273.

<sup>661</sup> Michael Grenfell, “Working with Habitus and Field: The logic of Bourdieu’s Practice,” in *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu’s Legacy*, ed. Alan Warde and Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva (London: Routledge, 2010), 19.

system of tendencies the agent has acquired through the internalization of deterministic socio-economic conditions.

The internalization, or the structure of habitus, according to Bourdieu, is both mental (cognitive) and corporeal, embedded in the being of social agents. Grenfell shows that Bourdieu sought to interrupt this primary empirical state by revealing the meanings behind the social action. In order to maintain a dialectic between the social and the cognitive, Bourdieu relied on Marx and Durkheim on the one hand (the objective side) and the phenomenology of Schütz and Merleau-Ponty on the other (the subjective side). Social and cognitive structures are always both structuring and structured.<sup>662</sup> Let us take a closer look at the concept of habitus at the center of these structures.

Bourdieu uses two key concepts – habitus and field – in his search for a scientific language that would correctly resolve the conceptual dilemmas related to the regulation of action.<sup>663</sup> Wacquant explains, “Just as habitus informs practice from within, a field structures action and representation from without: it offers the individual a gamut of possible stances and moves that she can adopt, each with its associated profits, costs, and subsequent potentialities.” What is essential here is the interdependence of these concepts, in other words, the “relation between,” since neither habitus nor field (with professional, personal and political territories<sup>664</sup>) can unilaterally determine social action:

It takes the meeting of disposition and position, the correspondence (or disjuncture) between mental structures and social structures, to generate practice. This means that, to explain any social event or pattern, one must inseparably dissect both the social constitution of the agent and the makeup of the particular social universe within which she operates as well as the particular conditions under which they come to encounter and impinge upon each other.<sup>665</sup>

The concept of habitus should also be seen not only in relation to the concept of the field, but also in the triad with the concepts of capital and the field, since each of these concepts reaches its full analytical potential only in combination with the others. First of all, Bourdieu seeks to show the individual and society as two beings in the same dimension of social reality. For him, society should be understood as a structured space and multidimensional in terms of

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<sup>662</sup> Ibid.

<sup>663</sup> Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 95. Maton quotes Bourdieu saying: “All of my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?” Karl Maton, “Habitus,” in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. Michael Grenfell (London: Routledge, 2014), 49.

<sup>664</sup> Michael James Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Agent Provocateur* (London: Continuum, 2004), 27. Claudio E. Benzecry, “Habitus and Beyond: Standing on the Shoulders of a Giant Looking at the Seams,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*, ed. Thomas Medvetz and Jeffrey J. Sallaz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 538.

<sup>665</sup> Wacquant, “Pierre Bourdieu,” 168.

its objective and ideational structures, represented by social and cognitive things. The concept of capital, economic, social, and cultural, helps to navigate the social space and to identify the symbolic forms and principles of the value system,<sup>666</sup> which are certainly reflected in the actor's strategies of action and, ultimately, in habitus.

Also, Bourdieu uses the analytical potential of concepts of habitus, field, and capital to sociologize the concept of *doxa* developed by Edmund Husserl. According to Wacquant, the triad helped Bourdieu to show that, contrary to what the phenomenologists claim, the naturalness of the attitudes of everyday life that makes one take the world for granted are not an existential given, but depend on a close correspondence between the categories of subjective habitus and the objective structures of the social environment in which people act. Bourdieu also points out that each relatively autonomous universe produces its own set of doxa in the form of shared opinions and unquestioned beliefs that bind the participants together.<sup>667</sup>

This triad of concepts allows for an explanation not only of instances of social reproduction, but also instances of transformation, to which I will return at the end of the chapter.

"[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice"<sup>668</sup> – this short formula highlights the interconnectedness of Bourdieu's three main concepts. Karl Maton explains this equation as follows: "one's practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field)."<sup>669</sup> Habitus is a property of an actor, but it is collective in structure. In Bourdieu's words, "the habitus is this kind of practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation."<sup>670</sup> Maton gives an explanation that the field, which is a part of the ongoing contexts in which people live, structures the habitus, while at the same time the habitus becomes the basis for actors' understanding of their lives, including the field.<sup>671</sup>

Each field of social practice can be likened to the field of game, in which through participating and acting the players discover its meaning, as well as acquire their skills and develop their own play style and strategies. Bourdieu understands strategies (conscious and unconscious) as the behavior of actors to pursue their interests, which are linked to the

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<sup>666</sup> Grenfell, "Working with Habitus," 22.

<sup>667</sup> Wacquant, "Pierre Bourdieu," 169.

<sup>668</sup> Maton, "Habitus," 50.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid.

<sup>670</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 25.

<sup>671</sup> Maton, "Habitus," 51.

maximization of material and symbolic profit.<sup>672</sup> However, this is not a purposeful and calculated pursuit of goals, but rather an improvisation during the game. The actor is not a calculator, just as they are not an enforcer of the rules, but rather a test-taker, a practical strategist who strategizes within the structures of social life. Actors act on their own, freely, with creativity and ingenuity. The concept of habitus reveals many aspects of an actor's actions in relation to their social environment, but space does not permit a full discussion within this subsection.

It could be argued that it is the relationship with the concepts of field and capital and the different contexts<sup>673</sup> in which the term habitus is used that has led to the fact that, according to scholars, there is no single definition of habitus, and the term itself wears "too many hats."<sup>674</sup> Maton introduces habitus as perhaps Bourdieu's most widely cited concept, used to explore the bewildering variety of practices and contexts that have become part of the lexicon of a wide range of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, educational studies, cultural studies, and literary criticism. At the same time, the concept is "both revelatory and mystifying, instantly recognizable and difficult to define, straightforward and slippery."<sup>675</sup> Yet, the vagueness of the semantic field of the concept of habitus forms part of its popularity: despite its criticisms,<sup>676</sup> sociologists have appropriated the concept and produced a plethora of scholarly works both by analyzing Bourdieu's theoretical tools and applying them.

Bourdieu himself gives a very confusing definition of habitus, which once again reminds ones of the relative nature of the concept: "The habitus is a metaphor of the world of objects, which is itself an endless circle of metaphors that mirror each other ad infinitum."<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 67. Bourdieu comments, "Politics is the arena par excellence of officialization strategies." Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 109.

<sup>673</sup> Contexts of use of the concept of habitus: reproduction in education, society, and culture; social differences in taste and consumption; the construction of philosophical and literary texts; and the practical logic of everyday forms of activity (Kabyle society). According to Crossley, Bourdieu uses the concept in each of these contexts, and although its use has a strong common thread, in each case he adapts the concept to meet the different intellectual demands. Crossley, "Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus," 269-270.

<sup>674</sup> Benzecry, "Habitus and Beyond," 541. The contexts in which the concept of habitus has been applied have contributed to the development of this theoretical tool. Michael Grenfell writes, "The notion of *habitus* was used in Bourdieu's early work on the Béarn farmers to describe their habits and physical action. It was then applied as 'habitat' in *Les Héritiers* to refer to the cultural conditions of life, which gave individuals the necessary prerequisites for an academic career. In *La Reproduction* it is used to express durable expositions of individuals which guide social practice. Over years, these terms evolved and became more integrated with the whole theory." Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Agent Provocateur*, 26.

<sup>675</sup> Maton, "Habitus," 48.

<sup>676</sup> On Bourdieu's critique and critics' critiques, see Grenfell, "Working with habitus," 17-18. On Bourdieu's critique, including the fact that he does not try to reflect Mauss's influence in formal quotations: Calhoun, "Pierre Bourdieu," 303. For a critical analysis, see Alain Caillé, "L'habitus en clair-obscur," in *Don, intérêt et désintéressement: Bourdieu, Mauss, Platon et quelques autres*, by Alain Caillé (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1994), 138-164.

<sup>677</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 77.

However, Bourdieu's quote below emphasizes the consistency of the habitus and thus its resistance to change:

The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms.<sup>678</sup>

The question will soon move on to what is involved in possible changes in habitus. First, however, let one consider how Bourdieu's habitus differs from Mauss's habitus.

### 2.3.3. Bourdieu's habitus in relation with Mauss's

The concept of habitus had been used by diverse writers and philosophers such as Aristotle, Hegel, Weber, Aquinas, Durkheim and Mauss.<sup>679</sup> However, Bourdieu must have discovered from Mauss that the physical actions of the body reflect their motoric connection with the social space (or, in Mauss's terms, with social total fact), and that it is through the functioning of the body's physiology, through the co-ordination of articulatory movements, that the social meaning is embodied and communicated. It was Mauss who revived this philosophical concept in this sense, and Bourdieu developed it very fruitfully, referring to the hitherto intangible structuring social attitudes embodied in human action.

Bourdieu's habitus is not identical with practice, just as Mauss's habitus is not identical with techniques of the body. Rather, it encompasses the attitude or ethos that determines their appropriation and stylization. According to Crossley, although Bourdieu never acknowledges the Aristotelian root of the habitus, he often uses Aristotelian language in his work, which suggests that his habitus, again reflecting Mauss, has an Aristotelian root. Crossley points out that, in addition to the Latin *habitus*, Bourdieu sometimes uses the Greek term *hexis*, from which it derives and which Aristotle elaborates in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>680</sup>

Mauss introduced the notion in "Techniques of the Body," arguing that in their corporeal and technical habitus, individuals are total human beings (*l'homme total*) with biological, psychological, and sociological dimensions of being:

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 translates infinitely better than '*habitude*' (habit or custom), the 'exis', the 'acquired

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>679</sup> Michael Grenfell and Cheryl Hardy, *Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 28. For more on Bourdieu's move from philosophy to anthropology and to sociology (in search of the structural matrix), see Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Agent Provocateur*, 15-16.

<sup>680</sup> Crossley, "Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus," 272.

ability' and 'faculty' of Aristotle (who was a psychologist). It does not designate those metaphysical *habitudes*, that mysterious 'memory', the subjects of volumes or short and famous theses. These 'habits' do not just vary with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestige. 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.<sup>681</sup>

Here the first common feature of Mauss and Bourdieu's interpretation of habitus appears: both scholars oppose a concept of habitus corresponding to habit as a preconceived program. For Bourdieu, habitus refers to a skillfulness of actor, a form of competence or mastery that gives social actors the ability to act and react to certain situations. Mauss contrasts habitus with habit, which for him means strictly repetitive behavior. Both thinkers therefore reject habit as an overly mechanical concept and accept habitus as an alternative.<sup>682</sup>

Another similarity lies in the way both thinkers see the relationship between psychological factors and social factors, since both sets of factors are involved in habitus.

As already mentioned, Bourdieu considers that habitus includes both physical stance and sensation. As David Swartz points out, the bodily and cognitive dimensions of habitus Bourdieu considers separate but correlated. In other words, both mental and physical dispositions are integrally related.<sup>683</sup> This is reminiscent of Mauss's thinking about the psychological aspects of techniques of the body as biologico-sociological phenomena. Mauss saw psychological facts as connecting tissue:

Since these are movements of the body, this all presupposes an enormous biological and physiological apparatus. What is the breadth of the linking psychological cogwheel? I deliberately say cogwheel. A Comtean would say that there is no gap between the social and the biological. What I can tell you is that here I see psychological facts as connecting cogs and not as causes, except in moments of creation or reform. Cases of invention, of laying down principles, are rare. Cases of adaptation are an individual psychological matter. But in general they are governed circumstances of life in common, of contact.<sup>684</sup>

Mauss indicates that "we are everywhere faced with physiopsychosociological assemblages of series of actions." And from the end of the passage quoted above, one can grasp another similarity between his and Bourdieu's understandings of habitus, namely the tendency of habitus to adapt. Mauss attributes this tendency to the mimetic nature of the bodily techniques, which must be understood in depth, as discussed in Chapter 1. The adaptive

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<sup>681</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 80.

<sup>682</sup> For more on this topic, see Crossley, "Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus," 291-307. The reasons for Bourdieu and Mauss's choices are described on pages 142-143.

<sup>683</sup> Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 108.

<sup>684</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 92.



tendencies of Bourdieu's habitus derive from a rather closed, complex, self-reproducing structure. Bourdieu's habitus represents a deep-structuring cultural matrix that generates self-fulfilling prophecies according to different class opportunities, reminds Swartz.<sup>685</sup>

The interpretation of action cannot be limited to habitus, as both Mauss and Bourdieu make clear by referring to their relative nature. As a property of actor, the subjective part of an interactive system of subjective and objective, habitus is revealed (but not fully exposed) in the physical actions of actors. Mauss speaks about techniques of the body, while Bourdieu about strategies. Techniques of the body must be viewed in relation to tradition and other social facts, and strategies in relation to field and capital. Thus, the relative nature of habitus is obvious in both cases.

The last very important similarity between Mauss and Bourdieu's understandings of habitus is its functioning below the level of consciousness. This 'naturalness' of the habitus is linked to early education, which, in the case of body techniques, was discussed in Chapter 1. Similar but more developed ideas can be found in Bourdieu. Primary socialization, according Swartz, is in Bourdieu's view more formative of internal dispositions than subsequent socialization experiences. This is why habitus is fairly resistant to change:

The ongoing adaptation process as habitus encounters new situations, but this process tends to be slow, unconscious, and tends to elaborate rather than alter fundamentally the primary dispositions.<sup>686</sup>

#### *2.3.4. The differences between the conceptions of habitus*

Despite the fact that Mauss mentions the habitus and, in his analysis of the actions of the actors in "Techniques of the Body," alludes to many of the things developed in Bourdieu's studies, it cannot be denied that Bourdieu took a much deeper look at the structure and functioning of the habitus.

Mauss mentions habitus when describing his journey towards the discovery of the concept of body technique. Immediately after the presentation of the habitus, Mauss discusses "the constant relations between the biological and the sociological," and "the psychological mediator." Techniques of the body then appears as activity of the total man.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 104.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>687</sup> "And I concluded that it was not possible to have a clear idea of all these facts about running, swimming, etc., unless one introduced a triple consideration instead of a single consideration, be it mechanical and physical, like an anatomical and physiological theory of walking, or on the contrary psychological or sociological. It is the triple viewpoint, that of the 'total man', that is needed." Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 80-81.

Meanwhile Bourdieu already presents habitus not as an illustrative or developing concept, but as a self-sufficient one. He makes it clear that the concept refers to the bodily and cognitive aspects of the actor. Although both scholars deliberately maintained the separation between psychology and sociology, and, incidentally, both searched for links between them later in life,<sup>688</sup> they never denied the importance of psychological factors. However, Bourdieu's notion of habitus does not privilege action over psychological facts in the way that Mauss does. It seems that it is the saturation of action with the psychological heaviness resulting from the gradual perception of the objective structures of the deterministic field that ultimately decided the destiny of the habitus "as necessity made virtue."<sup>689</sup>

Underlining the social and collective nature of habitus, Bourdieu uses the concept to denote differences between various national societies, different types of society, genders, generations, and professions. However, the class aspect of the habitus is perhaps the most developed in Bourdieu's research, and is what makes him famous in sociology<sup>690</sup> and what distinguishes him from Mauss.

Things that are attributed to social hierarchies, such as tastes or lifestyles, are naturalized in habitus. Thus, another important difference in Bourdieu's study of actors is that habitus tends to naturalize difference and masks the contingency of its development.<sup>691</sup> In addition, Bourdieu points out that habitus can act as a censor, shaping discourse to suit certain domains and excluding what would be considered inappropriate.<sup>692</sup>

It is worth mentioning another point implicitly related to habitus in Bourdieu's development of Mauss's themes. Bourdieu presents language as a bodily technique. This is an important observation,<sup>693</sup> because Mauss's examples of bodily techniques surprisingly neglect verbal bodily techniques, such as speaking, singing, as well as other techniques of making and performing music. "Language," Bourdieu writes, "is a body technique, and specifically linguistic, especially phonetic, competence is a dimension of bodily hexis in which one's whole

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<sup>688</sup> Grenfell notes that Bourdieu always tried to distinguish between sociology and psychology, and argues that it was only in his later work that he began to explore the psychological possibilities of his approach. Grenfell, "Working with habitus," 25. Mauss's initiation of a dialogue with psychologists was described in Chapter 1.

<sup>689</sup> Caillé, "L'habitus," 155.

<sup>690</sup> Crossley, "Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus," 272.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>692</sup> For example, Bourdieu argues in his critique of the media that journalists learn to anticipate the objections of their editors (who are regulated by their owners) in such a way that they effectively censor themselves, sometimes to the point where they no longer realize what they are doing. The relative autonomy of the journalistic field in relation to the economic field narrows. Journalists who experience a loss of freedom of expression are at the same time adapting to this loss and gradually losing sight of it.

<sup>693</sup> Noticed by Crossley: Crossley, "Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus," 277; Keijo Rahkonen, "Bourdieu and Nietzsche: Taste as a Struggle," in *The Legacy of Pierre Bourdieu. Critical essay*, ed. Simon Susen and Bryan S. Turner (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 135.

relation to the social world, and one's whole socially informed relation to the world, are expressed."<sup>694</sup>

### 2.3.5. *Habitus and religion*

Before I turn to the question of the transformative possibilities of habitus in Bourdieu's theory, of how habitus relates to individual and social change, I shall briefly discuss Bourdieu's approach to religion, as it is related to this topic. In doing this, I will refer to Bourdieu's article "Genesis and structure of the religious field."<sup>695</sup>

Bourdieu, following Durkheim, sees the constitution of a relatively autonomous religious field and the development of a need for the moralization and systematization of religious beliefs and practices as the necessary adaptation to the technological, economic, and social transformations in society. The birth and development of towns, and in particular advances in the division of labor and the appearance of the separation of intellectual and physical labor caused the emancipation of consciousness. Bourdieu cites Marx saying that

division of labor only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on, consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, morality, etc.<sup>696</sup>

Bourdieu discusses the dynamics inherent in religious rationalization, which are guided by economic conditions and linked to the emergence of priestly education. He shows that religion tends to assume an ideological, practical, and political function, or, as Bourdieu understands, a function of absolutizing and legitimizing the relative and arbitrary. By arguing that there is a correspondence between social structures (and more specifically power structures) and psychic structures, and that this correspondence takes place through the structure of symbolic systems, that is language, religion, art, and so on, Bourdieu shows that religion helps to impose hidden principles for structuring the way one perceives and thinks about the world, especially the social world. It does so by imposing a system of practices and

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<sup>694</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 86.

<sup>695</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative social research* 13.1 (1991): 1-44. For a list of Bourdieu's works on religion, see Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy* (London: Routledge, 2014), 60.

<sup>696</sup> Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure," 6. Citing Karl Marx, with Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998).

representations whose structure, “objectively based on the principle of political division, presents itself as a natural and supernatural cosmic structure.”<sup>697</sup>

In other words, I propose imagining that religion acts as a meta-habitus. It mediates and usually naturalizes the dominant order through its practice and discourse. As the meta-agent in the social space, a religious community therefore adds a symbolic reinforcement of its own sanctions to the limits to logical and sociological barriers imposed by the material conditions of existence of a determinate space.<sup>698</sup>

It is religious alchemy that makes “a virtue of necessity” in the practical realm, turning social barriers into logical considerations and class struggles into religious wars.<sup>699</sup> In a society divided into classes, Bourdieu explains, the structure of the systems of religious representations and practices belonging to different groups or classes contributes to the perpetuation and reproduction of the social order, understood as the established structure of relations between groups and classes, contributing to its sanctioning and consecration. The structure of systems of representations and practices can reinforce its mystifying effectiveness by creating a semblance of unity, hiding radically contradictory interpretations of the traditional answers to the central questions of existence under a minimum of dogmas and shared rituals.<sup>700</sup>

Cosmological topologies are always naturalized political topologies, states Bourdieu, and reminds that religious professionals necessarily have to hide the fact that their struggle is about political interests, because the symbolic effectiveness they can use in these struggles depends on it.<sup>701</sup>

However, like the human habitus, the meta-habitus also undergoes fractions that lead to transformations, but that is the subject of the next subsection.

### *2.3.6. Individual and social transformations in Bourdieu’s works*

Habitus as a system of dispositions in Bourdieu’s theory is closely related to notions of practical sense and strategy. As it was stressed at the beginning of this part of the chapter, it

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<sup>697</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>698</sup> Bourdieu writes, “The most specific contribution of the church (and more generally of religion) to the conservation of the symbolic order consists less in the transmutation of mysticism into order than in the transmutation of logic into order. It makes the political order submit to this by the mere fact of the unification of the different orders. The effect of the absolutization of the relative and the legitimation of the arbitrary is produced not only by establishing a correspondence between the cosmological hierarchy and the social or ecclesiastical hierarchy but also and above all by imposing a hierarchical way of thinking that ‘naturalizes’ [...] the relations of order by recognizing the existence of privileged points in cosmic space just as in political space.” Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure,” 32-33.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>701</sup> Ibid., 33, 20.

was Bourdieu's way to get away from objectivism, at the same time avoiding falling into subjectivism. Bourdieu uses the metaphor of game in explaining his attempts:

In order to escape this danger, one needs to bring into the theory the real principle of strategies, that is, a practical sense of things, or, if one prefers, what athletes call a feel for the game (*le sens du jeu*). I refer here to practical mastery of the logic or immanent necessity of a game, which is gained through experience of the game, and which functions this side of consciousness and discourse (like the techniques of the body, for example).<sup>702</sup>

Logic of practice escapes the discourse, because it has its own logic, which might not be the same as logician's.<sup>703</sup> The mismatch can be traced as the possibility of transformation. Where else does Bourdieu see the 'holes' in the closedness of the self-fulfilling and self-reproducing structure of habitus and the field? This question will form the final way of analyzing Bourdieu's ideas about habitus.

In addition to this first observation about the mismatch between the truth of the discourse and the truth of the practitioner, one can also find other discrepancies in the system of dispositions which, according to Bourdieu, can lead to unexpected strategies of action on the part of the agent. (As an additional note, according to Bourdieu, discourse itself is a kind of repression of "full truth of practice,"<sup>704</sup> a way of asserting the power of hierarchically dominant actors within the field.) As Wacquant points out, Bourdieu's triad of habitus, capital, and the field not only makes it possible to clarify instances of reproduction, but also to reveal instances of transformation. The former refers to a situation in which social and mental structures agree and reinforce each other. Transformative opportunities arise when there are discordances between the habitus and the field, leading to innovation, crisis, and structural change.<sup>705</sup> One should therefore bear in mind the dual strategic potential of habitus, or, according to Claudio E. Benzecry, the two sides of the same coin, which show "either how the habitus produces disjuncture between the individual dispositions and the objective structures where agents develop their practices, or how it operates as producing the confluence between the two."<sup>706</sup>

Bourdieu's metaphor of the game also opens up the aspect of temporal incongruity in practice – the actors act in the present, projecting their actions into the future based on past experiences. As Bourdieu notes, "The habitus is this kind of practical sense for what is to be

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<sup>702</sup> Lamaison and Bourdieu, "From Rules to Strategies," 111.

<sup>703</sup> As it was evident from earlier quotation from: Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 86.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>705</sup> Wacquant, "Pierre Bourdieu," 169.

<sup>706</sup> Benzecry, "Habitus and Beyond," 539.

done in a given situation – what is called in sport a ‘feel’ for the game, that is, the art of *anticipating* the future of the gamer which is inscribed in the present state of play.”<sup>707</sup> Although this is not the direct discrepancy between the subjective and objective parts in the frame of action, which most generates potential changes in the system, the inclusion of the time gap in the actor’s projections is important. In a situation conducive to change, this forward-looking quality of the actor, which breaks out of the restrictive frame of objectivity, can serve as an accumulative force to overcome today’s oppression.

On the other hand, habitus dispositions encourage participants to choose forms of behavior that are likely to be successful, given their resources and previous experience. As Bourdieu points out, the practical implication of objective limits leads to the “sense of one’s place,” which means excluding oneself from places (as well as people, goods and etc.) from which one is excluded by other factors. In his view, the division between the accessible and the inaccessible, what is and is not “for us” is fundamentally the same as the division between sacred and profane.<sup>708</sup> This observation is another reminder that religion contributes to the formation of the habitus of the actors, which is necessarily sanctifying, but sometimes can question social distinctions.

Sean McCloud draws attention to the dialectical nature of habitus, arguing that the limit of freedom lies in the dialectic between a person’s position in the social world and their socially habitual inclinations. Agents are neither automatons imprisoned in the iron cage of society, nor autonomous individuals unaffected by material and social circumstances. Although tending towards self-fulfilling comfort, habitus arises in inconsistent situations, when a gap opens up between the inclinations inculcated in habitus by the social environment of the past and the current social situation in which it finds itself. Bourdieu identifies two situations in which the habitus interacts with the social environment in a misfiring way: the individual may find themselves caught between social positions in such a way that their habitus becomes “cleft” or “torn” between two incompatible social worlds, which manifests itself in internal contradictions and divisions causing suffering; or in the experience of a “lag” between the habitus and the changes in the society, known as the “Don Quixote effect.” It is in these fissures and gaps between social positions and dispositions that the change can occur.<sup>709</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 25.

<sup>708</sup> Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 107.

<sup>709</sup> Sean McCloud, “The Possibilities of Change in a World of Constraint: Individual and Social Transformation in the Work of Pierre Bourdieu,” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 41.1 (2012): 4.

In the article “Genesis and structure of the religious field” Bourdieu presents the figure of the prophet as the agent towards change in extraordinary situations.<sup>710</sup> A prophet is precisely the kind of person who finds themselves in a state where their dispositions and social position are in conflict. And the prophet is also the one who appeals to listeners who share the same habitus and can therefore provide prophetic symbols that can lead to social change. Bourdieu sees the prophet as the revealer of the doxic mechanisms of domination. “As one of the dominated,” McCloud states, “the prophet gives voice to the unease of those in similar subordinate positions. Such an act, essentially putting words to something that previously had none, offers the possibility for social transformation.”<sup>711</sup>

In short, habitus, including the habitus of the religious person, can contribute to societal change, just as societal change alters the habitus structure of actors.

### *Summary*

Very similarly to Mauss, Bourdieu treated movement as a key factor in the reality of social relations.<sup>712</sup> Like Mauss, Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus to highlight human physical activity that is both mental (cognitive) and embodied, and which is the being of social agents.

However, the intellectual tendencies of Mauss and Bourdieu’s times were different, so their approaches differ as well. Paradoxically, however, they opened up seemingly the opposite of what they were originally aiming to do. Mauss wanted to show the dependence of the actors on the social environment, but discovered data on the diversity of individual expression. Bourdieu wanted to oppose “agentless action,”<sup>713</sup> but revealed the habitus as a phenomenon that becomes more and more resistant and solidified over the time of gained experience. Of course, this is just an additional effect of their research, showing that scientists have not only met their targets, but exceeded them.

The meaning of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus in relation to Mauss’s has been examined, and the common features of both Mauss and Bourdieu’s interpretations of habitus have been noted:

1. Both scholars oppose the understanding of habitus as a preconceived programme.

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<sup>710</sup> Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure,” 34-37.

<sup>711</sup> McCloud, “The Possibilities of Change,” 5-6.

<sup>712</sup> In Grenfell’s words, “for Bourdieu, ‘the real’ is relational because reality is nothing other than structure, a set of relationships, ‘obscured by the realities of ordinary sense-experience’.” Grenfell, “Working with Habitus,” 17.

<sup>713</sup> Lamaison and Bourdieu, “From Rules to Strategies,” 112.

2. Both thinkers emphasize the relationship between psychological and social factors, since both sets of factors are involved in habitus.
3. Both emphasize the habitus's tendency to adapt.
4. Both authors emphasize the relational character of habitus.
5. Mauss and Bourdieu both understand habitus as operating below the level of consciousness, and both associate this with primary socialisation.

Differences between habitus were also highlighted:

1. Bourdieu does not prioritize actions over psychological facts. It is the saturation of the action with the psychological charge resulting from the gradual perception of the objective structures of the deterministic field that ultimately determines the resistance of the habitus to change.<sup>714</sup>
2. Stressing the social and collective nature of habitus, Bourdieu uses the term to refer to the differences between types of society, genders, generations, and professions. However, the class aspect of habitus is perhaps the most developed aspect of Bourdieu's research, and this is where he differs from Mauss.
3. Bourdieu presents habitus as tending to naturalize differences and mask the contingency of their development. Bourdieu also points out that the habitus can act as a censor, shaping discourse to suit certain domains and rejecting what contradicts it.

Compared to Mauss, who openly did not develop systematic theories,<sup>715</sup> Bourdieu's ideas are more structured and developed. He reveals habitus as a structured structure structuring the world. On the other hand, this structuring he presents as the "'feel' for the game" ("practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation")<sup>716</sup> or, as Craig Calhoun puts it, "the embodied

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<sup>714</sup> Could it be that Bourdieu's over-emphasis on psychological 'gravity' is the reason for his non-optimistic attitude towards change?

<sup>715</sup> Murray and Mauss, "A 1934 Interview," 165. Nevertheless, Mauss's "scattered and unsystematic" theories have influenced Bourdieu. Marcel Fournier writes, that during the opening conference of the colloquium "L'héritage de Mauss" at the Collège de France, Pierre Bourdieu refused to offer a testimony on his relationship with Marcel Mauss, a tried and tested genre where self-celebration is often hidden under an annexationist celebration, and he decides to simply read a certain number of sentences or paragraphs by Mauss, sometimes without commentary, sometimes accompanied by a brief speech. These quotations testified to the influence that Mauss had on him. According Bourdieu, "It is obvious that the sentences that I am going to quote and that I found interesting, not only interesting but eminent, extraordinary, these sentences that stopped me and on which I am going to try to stop your gaze, seemed interesting to me because they were obviously very close to what I believe to be the truth on the question mentioned." Fournier, "Durkheim, Mauss et Bourdieu," 480. The titles of sentences or paragraphs's are listed on the page 478. Read about what Bourdieu did not do in Grenfell, "Working with Habitus," 27.

<sup>716</sup> Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 25.



sensibility that makes possible structured improvisation.”<sup>717</sup> The concept of strategies refers to this mode of action.

The actor’s actions must be analyzed in relation to habitus in relation to the field and capital. Bourdieu mainly derives the transformational possibilities from the rupture of the integrity between habitus and field. His analysis of symbolic systems – religion, art, language – allows one to see religion, like the habitus, as ‘naturalizing’ the ordinary order, namely the order of dominant power. Again, as in the case of habitus, the mismatch of symbolic systems with the field can lead to changes in both the individual and society.

#### **2.4. Mauss’s Students on the Transformative Aspect of Movement**

The intention of this section is to bring together and summarize the ideas of Mauss’s disciples Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan and Bourdieu on the theme of movement, underlining the originality of each of them in developing the ideas of their teacher. After this summary, I will focus on the question of how each of them sees the transformative potential of movement, or how their ideas can help unlock the transformative power of movement.

If one were to take a bird’s-eye view of the ideas of all three of the authors discussed in this chapter – Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, and Bourdieu – on the subject of movement in combination, one would see the following picture:

1. Jousse believes that movement is the human way of participating in and responding to the movements of the cosmos. Human beings know the particle which becomes familiar because of the structure and mechanics of their bodies, the most important factors of which are rhythmicity, bilateralism, and formalism. For this reason, their recognition and nurturing are of the utmost importance. The gesticulated mimism of cosmic vibrations (“gesticulation”) in the human being is the key moment in which the anthropological and the cosmological beginnings converge. The actor, according to Jousse, is part of a continuous cosmic movement. Jousse considered the ethnic form of the movement to be secondary.
2. Leroi-Gourhan shows how human beings became what they are today through movement. In other words, he explores the role of movement in human evolution. The biological element he introduces allows one to see the structures of the human body (bilaterality) as an evolutionary adaptation determined by movement, leading to the emergence of language and technology and to ethnic development.

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<sup>717</sup> Calhoun, “Pierre Bourdieu,” 292.

3. Bourdieu reveals movement as a guarantee of the continuity of human societies, ensuring the reproduction and renewal of social structures.

In a very simplified way, I will likewise describe how all three authors see the possibilities of transformation through movement.

#### 2.4.1. Jousse

Transformation is the most difficult thing to talk about in the case of Jousse, because his anthropology of gesture evokes the extremely dynamic cosmic process in which humans are involved. So human beings are more concerned with the challenge of how to “carry” the gestures that reach them, which gesticulate within and around them, and how to save their energy in the midst of this. Transformation is constant – human beings need order so they do not get exhausted. Another reason for saving energy is that “man is the laziest of all animals because he is the only intelligent one.”<sup>718</sup>

However, the spontaneous play of Mimisme is what essentially differentiates human beings from animals. Therefore, transformative possibilities go in line with human creativity, which is vast, as in the Mimisme the possibility of having the whole universe within oneself opens up. However, there is a boundary between the ordering of life, gesticulating externally and internally, through the mechanics of human gesture – (rhythmicity, bilateralism, and formalism) that facilitate creativity, transmitting the testimony of the human experience of gesture, and their algebraic (apraxic) forms that lead to stagnation. Algebraosis, a disease of human expression is manifested by symptoms of gestural degradation. To prevent this disease a human being must not forget, that they are not the source but “a camera that [...] captures, [and] records gestures.”<sup>719</sup> Human beings are not creators from nothing, but re-creators and re-players. The uniqueness, the creative and, at the same time, the transformative potential of human play has to do with this fundamental assimilation of the humanness, as well as with trusting and leaning on bodily gestural mechanics in the creative work. Jousse invites one to live according the multidimensional rhythm of the body, which is always intertwined within itself and with the universal intelligent cosmos, the interiority of which one gesticulates.

Jousse’s ideas about creative activity as a stripping away of the Mimemes, of which the human being is full, in order to maintain a transparent relationship with life and the life-energy, offer a very fresh approach to creativity. In art and in life, it is the action itself that matters,

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<sup>718</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 106.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

action that seeks order to maintain a life of vital equilibrium that helps other human beings to remain in relationship with the living Gesture.

These latter ideas of Jousse about what creativity is and its purpose add a cosmic dimension to kinesthetic feedback, the phenomenon to which I related the transformative potential of movement in Chapter 1. This might be argued as follows. Gesture is the only source for human awareness, knowledge, and meaningful activity. The misunderstanding and disregard of anthropological mechanisms of gesture leads to the dysfunction of gestures, which causes the loss of human creative potential. Creativity is fidelity to the reality of life in all its concreteness, and it is impossible without awareness of the movement of the body. However, as Jousse showed, the human gesture transcends biological and aesthetic measures. In other words, it stands in opposition to the loss of globality. It is in this light, then, that the creative and transformative potential of kinesthetic feedback must be seen. (Mimeme can serve as its equivalent in Jousse's writings.) Kinesthetic feedback must be used as a source of information, but it must be permeated by the realization that the perceiver is not the sources of the gesticulation one perceives. In a sense, it must be transcended (but not negated) in the direction of the globality of the gesture. Accordingly, the kinesthetic feedback via techniques of the body needs to be channeled and shaped appropriately, by perceiving and maintaining anthropological globality rather than separating from it.

#### *2.4.2. Leroi-Gourhan*

Leroi-Gourhan sees the transformative potential as related to the dialogue between individual creativity and external memory of the social body.

In his view, movement begat movement: bilaterism unleashed the physiology of the human hand and mouth, leading to the development of operational sequences which in turn formed the necessary reservoir of memory, the human brain. Humans are a species capable of creating technical and symbolic chains of operations. Language, alongside mimetic demonstration, is used by people for the collective transmission of technical instructions, and that, according to Leroi-Gourhan, is the where human uniqueness lies – in the operative memory of society, which allows one to understand human behavior historically and socially. This kind of human capability means that the individual has the opportunity from the earliest stages of their internalization to encounter the data of social memory, to relate it in new ways, to turn it into new inventions and to make choices.<sup>720</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 172.

Human development is not possible without the nurture of collective memory. According to Leroi-Gourhan, “human is both a zoological individual and the creator of social memory.”<sup>721</sup> The possibilities of transformation are associated with the unique two-way movement of humans between innovative individual and the social, ethnic community.

The individual’s capacity for comparison, creativity, and liberation is based on a potential memory, the entire content of which, according to Leroi-Gourhan, is outside the individual body; in other words, it belongs to society. For the individual, it becomes accessible through symbol systems, which are indispensable to their sense of uniqueness and meaning. Dependence on these systems, provided by art and religion (inseparable from ethnicity), enables the creative functioning of individuals. Thus, participation in religious and artistic practices is strongly linked to the transformative potential of individual actors.

Leroi-Gourhan associates art and religion with the guarantee of the continuity of social life, linked to symbolic rather than material resources. The autonomy of the spheres of art and religion, which Leroi-Gourhan sees as a consequence of rationalization, has adversely affected both spheres and has led to the erosion of the symbolic life, which leads to an inability to resist the mechanization of human behavior.

Leroi-Gourhan sees aesthetics as the field where individual expression (individual liberation) can best manifest itself. However, “the liberation of a faculty always leads to accelerated improvement, not of the individual as such but of the individual as an element of the social supermechanism.”<sup>722</sup> What does this say about transformation through movement? It provides useful insights into what it means to be innovative, how innovation works and why innovation is needed. Leroi-Gourhan’s approach says that the meaning of human movement is not closed to itself, it comes outside of it, and it lies in what human beings experience when they move with other people. Every movement is improvement. But it is not about improving one’s own body or consciousness. (Such development – changes in the body and the brain – should only be seen as a physiological adaptation of the body caused by one’s movements.) The resources of meaningful movement, innovation, creativity, as well as its purpose, are related to the “exteriorized body,”<sup>723</sup> to societies or ethnic groups, to common artistic and religious practices. Innovation helps to maintain this social body, to keep it alive, which means preserving the human species. As Leroi-Gourhan puts it, “music, dance, theater, lived and mimed social situations, belong to the imagination to the projection upon reality of a light that

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<sup>721</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 228.

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

humanizes the zoological processes of human situations.”<sup>724</sup> In other words, through the practice of humanization, one humanizes oneself in order to contribute innovatively to this humanization and thus preserve its continuity.

### 2.4.3. Bourdieu

Bourdieu turned what sociologists usually translate as the tension between the individual and society into a relationship between the habitus and the field.<sup>725</sup> The movement of the actor leads to the recognition of social structures (the field) and, at the same time, to the awareness of one’s place in it and its bodily naturalization. This naturalization is manifested in practice when people pursue their strategic goals.

The integrity of the relationships of habitus and field underpins the reproduction of the social order, while their incompatibility is associated with possible change. In other words, transformative opportunities arise when there is a discordance between the habitus and the field, which leads to innovation, crisis, and structural change.<sup>726</sup>

Bourdieu’s observations on the discrepancy between the truth of the discourse and the truth of the practitioner, which can lead to unexpected strategies of action by the agent, are very important. And the presentation of discourse itself as a repression of the “full truth of practice”<sup>727</sup> and a way to consolidate the power of hierarchically dominant field agents is an extremely important insight for the study of social transformation. These insights of Bourdieu were later taken up and developed very fruitfully by Michel de Certeau (4.2.).

The temporal aspect of habit is important because it can contribute to the possibility of change. The actors act in the present, projecting their actions into the future, based on past experiences. In a situation conducive to change, this forward-looking quality of the protagonist, which breaks out of the frame of restrictive objectivity, can serve as an accumulative force for overcoming today’s oppression.

Compared to the phenomenon of kinesthetic feedback discussed in Chapter 1, the habitus has a more pronounced, so to speak, ‘public face’. According to Bourdieu, it is both a “feel’ for the game”<sup>728</sup> and a bodily stance. Bourdieu’s description of habitus, through the metaphor of participation in a game, shows that there are moments of spontaneity in the actor’s

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<sup>724</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>725</sup> Caillé, “L’habitus,” 139.

<sup>726</sup> Wacquant, “Pierre Bourdieu,” 169.

<sup>727</sup> Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 107.

<sup>728</sup> Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 25.

choices, and the temporal aspect further emphasizes the possibilities of change.<sup>729</sup> However, the social character of habitus outweighs the spontaneity. According to Bourdieu, habitus tends to naturalize difference and can act as a censor.

Bourdieu, by introducing the class aspects of the social field and the competing strategies associated with them, explains more about how the actors feel in the contemporary world (not just how and why they act, though these are directly related). His remarks on social ageing, the mourning of unrealized aspirations and possibilities,<sup>730</sup> the habitus's constant attempt to deceive oneself about the desirability of one's own destiny, are nothing more than the kinesthetic feedback of an actor in the contemporary world. Regrettably, there are no equivalents of kinesthetic resistance in Bourdieu's analyses of habitus, even though all the conditions for the emergence of such resistance are analyzed and its possibility is confirmed.

I would like to quote Calhoun at this point as a possible guide to the answer as to why this is so:

Bourdieu emphasized that habitus is not just a capacity of individual, but an achievement of the collectivity. It is the result of a "collective enterprise of inculcations." The reason why "strategies" can work without individuals being consciously strategic is that individuals become who they are and social institutions exists only on the strength of this inculcations of orientations to action, evaluation, and understanding. Most fundamental social changes have to appear not only as changes in formal structures but as changes in habitual orientations to action.<sup>731</sup>

It follows that the habitus, as a product of the collective, operates strategically without much consciousness, under inertia. This explains Bourdieu's theoretically defensible but emotionally very weak belief in the habitus inspired human 'destiny' for transformations.

#### *2.4.4. The complementary insights*

Taken together, the three students of Mauss – Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, and Bourdieu – provide complementary insights into the role of movement for individuals and society and into the transformative power of movement. On the other hand, some inconsistencies are striking. For example, Leroi-Gourhan asserts that movement has determined the anthropological mechanisms of gesture, while Jousse identifies gesture with the human capacity to respond to the cosmic gesture. The question arises as to the relation of the cosmic gesture to other earthly beings, or at least to a being who was not yet human. Another discrepancy concerns the exteriorization of memory, which Leroi-Gourhan treated as a distinctive feature of the human

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<sup>729</sup> So to invest in spontaneity, in play, even in the case of Bourdieu's ideas, is to invest in change.

<sup>730</sup> Caillé, "L'habitus," 155-156.

<sup>731</sup> Calhoun, "Pierre Bourdieu," 294.

species. Meanwhile, Jousse speaks of the gesticulating mimicry of cosmic vibrations as an essential feature of the *anthropos*, and treats ethnicity as a secondary form of human expression, arguing that it is normal for a human being to be strong enough not to be overwhelmed by ethnicity. Bourdieu's insights into class inequality bring in even more specific issues. His challenge would be, surely talking about the cosmic gesture is a flight from problems, since "cosmological topologies are always 'naturalized' political topologies."<sup>732</sup> And finally, he poses the question, Is religion a humanizing practice (Leroi-Gourhan) or an organizer of "individual and collective lies to ourselves"?<sup>733</sup>

What instructions can one give to the actors from all this? Whether to move according to their mimetic relation to the cosmos, or according to their ethnic background and origins, or with the aim of understanding the power structure of the social field? My proposed answer is to move towards an awareness of all these factors. Certain contradictions in the ideas of Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, and Bourdieu do not hinder the actors, and the complementarity of their ideas encourages them to believe in their own bodies acting in life that is at once universally human, ethnic, and political.

When thinking about transformation through movement, all these directions of thought are very important. The universal strand (Jousse's contribution) evokes an existential sensibility, a healthy modesty, and a belief in the unlimited creativity of the human being. The ethnic strand (Leroi-Gourhan's contribution) emphasizes the matrix of community and the diversity of resources needed for innovative or transformative action. The power structure line (Bourdieu's contribution) reminds one that there are unequal positions people occupy in society, and that in this sense society should be continuously transformed into a more just one.

Finally, if human beings are free-playing actors<sup>734</sup> – recreating and replaying what they receive – and if they are aware of it (because intelligence and logic, according to Jousse, are the indicators of such perception), then people can decide (within their own limitations, of course) what they want to recreate, and how. In other words, the transformation can be logically anticipated.

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<sup>732</sup> Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure," 33.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>734</sup> Even Bourdieu is not opposed to a mimetic interpretation of actions, at least in the case of childish behavior. He writes, "The child mimics other people's actions rather than 'models'. Body hexis speaks directly to the motor function, in the form of a pattern of postures that is both individual and systematic, being bound up with a whole system of objects, and charged with a host of special meanings and values." Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 74.

## Summary

The second chapter presented three students of Mauss and their ideas on movement. The first part (2.1.) was devoted to Marcel Jousse, who was taught by his teacher “the various mechanisms [...] of gestural and oral expression,”<sup>735</sup> which became the focus of Jousse’s original research, the anthropology of gesture. Jousse also described this anthropology as “the Anthropology of Mimisme, the Mimismological Anthropology,”<sup>736</sup> emphasizing the mimetic nature of human gesture. I have analyzed this work by focusing on the main themes relevant to the study of movement. These themes can be summarized as follows: an action-based cosmology, that reveals the gestural relationship between the cosmos and the human being; and as insights into the mechanics of human gestures identified as rhythmicity, bilateralism, and formalism.

Unlike Mauss, Jousse does not limit himself to identifying the significance of human movement in the socio-cultural world, but sees it first and foremost as a response of the *anthropos* to cosmic laws, thus opening up the possibility of dialogue between anthropology and theology. He also offered a theological-cosmological explanation of creative activity. Creative activity is of existential significance for the preservation of human vitality and the accumulation of agency. Jousse warns against human confusion about the source of creativity, which arises from a misunderstanding and neglect of anthropological mechanisms. Creative activity is interpreted by Jousse as the abandonment of the Mimemes in favor of the maintenance of a vital relationship with cosmic reality (the Gesture).

In the second part of the chapter (2.2.) I have analyzed André Leroi-Gourhan’s contributions to movement study, the most important of which is revealing the role of the movement in human evolution. Leroi-Gourhan’s work adds historical and biological dimension to the insights of his predecessors Mauss and Jousse, as well as supporting them with archaeological evidence. I have discussed Leroi-Gourhan’s ideas into technology, the most significant development of Mauss’s ideas in Leroi-Gourhan’s research, which he defines as “the study of the processes which allows [the human being] to use the materials placed at his disposal by the physical environment.”<sup>737</sup> Leroi-Gourhan’s movement-oriented gaze captures the processes of environmental mobilization, from the simplest expressions,

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<sup>735</sup> Jousse, *The Oral Style*, xxviii.

<sup>736</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 53.

<sup>737</sup> Soulier, *Leroi-Gourhan*, 46.



such as the usage of a branch or a stone, to the most complex such as institutions, social events, or religious practices..

I also discussed the concepts Leroi-Gourhan uses in his research. The concept of environment is a key element and is divided into two parts: the external environment, specific to the context of life and activity, and the internal environment, specific to the ethnic group. For the dynamics of the internal environment (i.e., the individual and the group), the influence of the tendency is important. The relationship between the internal and external environments is explained by Leroi-Gourhan through the concept of symbiosis, which is presented as one of the main factors in the development of civilization. The concept of operational chain served as an analytical framework to connect materials, tools, actors, and their actions within the technical time.

Leroi-Gourhan continued to use the concept of operational chain as a tool for studying the foundations of the human species. This allowed the discovery that it was bipedalism that led to evolutionary changes in brain size and organization, with evolutionary consequences for language and cognition. His study of human evolution showed that all human activity in the three main directions of technology, language, and aesthetics has a biological, movement-based origin.

Leroi-Gourhan has shown that human collective memory, like tools, is a product of exteriorization and is stored within an ethnic group. Religious and artistic practices are very important ways of participating in this exteriorization, which satisfies human need for temporal and spatial domestication and cosmic integration, and is a provider of inspiration for creative agency and resources for innovative behavior for individuals. The autonomy of the artistic and religious spheres, which is a consequence of rationalization, contributes to the erosion of the symbolic life, which leads to poor possibilities to resist the mechanization of human behavior.

The third part of the chapter was dedicated to Pierre Bourdieu, who drew on Mauss in his work and said that his predecessor was “the closest to a theory of practice.”<sup>738</sup> Bourdieu made extensive use of the concept of habitus, revived by Mauss, as one of his main research tools. Bourdieu’s theory of practice sought to bring the actions of actors into the light of inquiry in order to empower them. With this aim in mind, he moved from philosophy to sociology and ethnology, and eventually discovered his original sociological approach.

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<sup>738</sup> Fournier, “Durkheim, Mauss et Bourdieu,” 480.

Bourdieu looked very deeply into the structure and functioning of habitus. The structure of habitus, according to him, is both mental (cognitive) and corporeal, that is embedded in the being of social agents. In his search for a solution to the problem of regulating action, the sociologist also uses the notion of the field: while the habitus informs practice from within, the field structures action and representation from without. However, the concept of habitus is best understood in a triad with the concepts of capital and the field, which makes it possible to explain not only instances of social reproduction but also of transformation.

It is the similarities and differences between Mauss and Bourdieu's habitus that I have concentrated on most, which can be summarized as follows:

Similarities:

1. Habitus is not identical to practice, but rather involves an attitude or ethos that leads to the appropriation and stylization of practice.
2. Conflating the concept of habitus with habit as a pre-conceived program.
3. Emphasizing the psychological and social factors associated with habitus.
4. The relative nature of habitus.
5. Habitus functioning below the level of consciousness.

The differences:

1. Bourdieu's notion of habitus does not privilege action over psychological facts.
2. Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus to refer to the differences between different national societies, different types of society, genders, generations, and professions, and especially classes.
3. Habitus in Bourdieu's study of actors tends to naturalize difference and masks the contingency of its development.

In discussing Bourdieu's reflections on religion, I proposed the picture of religion as a meta-habitus. According to Bourdieu, through its practice and discourse, religion mediates and usually naturalizes the dominant order. However, like the human habitus, the meta-habitus undergoes fractures that lead to transformations.

In the last part of the chapter (2.4.), I looked at the insights into movement of all three of Mauss's students and briefly discussed how they complement each other. I have discussed also the contradictions between the ideas of Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, and Bourdieu, mostly related to different interpretations of the importance of ethnicity and to the class struggles. I contend that the contradictions do not detract actors from the informativeness of the ideas

themselves. The fact that Mauss's disciples examine movement from different perspectives contributes to the call for actors to have confidence in their bodies while acting in a life that is universally human, ethnic, and political at the same time.

The discussion of three authors' thoughts on the transformative power of movement, can be summarized thus:

1. Jousse showed that human transformative possibilities go in line with human creativity, which is immense thanks to the human gesture. The mechanics of human gesture – rhythmicity, bilateralism, and formalism – facilitate creativity, which is understood as fidelity to the reality of life in all its concreteness, but their algebraic forms lead to stagnation. Algebraosis, a disease of human expression, is manifested by symptoms of gestural degradation. To prevent this disease, the human being must not forget, that they are not the sources of creativity, but re-creator and re-player of cosmic gestures. Although human beings “only know things insofar as they are played out, are ‘gesturized’ in us,”<sup>739</sup> it is necessary to constantly transcend this “knowing” in order to remain open to the true source of gestures.
2. Leroi-Gourhan saw the transformative potential as related to the dialogue between individual creativity and the external memory, which belongs to the social body. The external memory becomes accessible to the individual through systems of symbols that give the actor a sense of uniqueness and meaning. Dependence on these systems, provided by art and religion, both inseparable from ethnicity, enables individuals to act creatively. Accordingly, participation in religious and artistic practices is closely linked to the transformative potential of individual actors. The survival of the human species depends on the empowerment of this potential.
3. Bourdieu derives transformative possibilities from the rupture of the integrity between habitus and the field. His analysis of symbolic systems – religion, art, language – shows, that the mismatch between symbolic systems and the field can lead to changes in both the individual and society. Bourdieu attributes the poor possibilities of transformation to the tendency of habitus, as a product of the collective, to act strategically without much consciousness, out of inertia.

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<sup>739</sup> Jousse, *L'anthropologie*, 61.

In order to see how the insights of Mauss and his disciples on movement are reflected in contemporary theology and how they can be applied to the life of communities (including faith communities), it is important to look first at how they were reflected in philosophy. As an important figure in this respect, I selected Merleau-Ponty as a dialogue partner because of his visibility in the field of contemporary research attentive to the body and movement. The extent to which the philosopher himself was influenced by Mauss's ideas will become clear in the next chapter. I also intend to find out what Merleau-Ponty's most original insights into movement are and how they contribute to unlocking the transformative power of movement.

### **Chapter 3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Approach to Movement**

This chapter will examine French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's approach to movement. The structure follows that of the previous chapters in that I will start with presentation of philosopher's life and intellectual journey (3.1.) to better understand the context and formation of his ideas. In the second part of the chapter (3.2.), I will take a deeper look at the intellectual sources that shaped Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Influential authors are grouped according to the way they feature in Merleau-Ponty's arguments: examination is made of the authors who help Merleau-Ponty to clarify his philosophical position in debates (Hegel, Kant, Descartes and Malebranche); then come French philosophers on whom Merleau-Ponty relies (either in terms of criticism or in finding an alternative); followed by notable philosophers of the time whose work had a major influence on the development of Merleau-Ponty's ideas (most notably Husserl and Heidegger). The influence of psychology and art will also be discussed, as well as Merleau-Ponty's ideas on these themes. In the third part of the chapter (3.3.) I will examine Mauss's influence on Merleau-Ponty, acknowledging that the influence is important for recognizing Merleau-Ponty's original contribution to the study of movement. Moreover, understanding Merleau-Ponty's ideas in the light of Mauss's work can help to avoid a misinterpretation of embodiment as a phenomenon closed in on itself. The fourth part (3.4) will be devoted to an analysis of Merleau-Ponty's approach to movement, and the question of what the philosopher has to say about the transformative power of movement will be the subject of the final section (3.5).

### 3.1. About Maurice Merleau-Ponty

#### 3.1.1. Overture

Jean-Jacques Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Marcel Mauss were thirty-six years apart – Mauss was born May 10, 1872 in the town of Épinal, in northeastern France; Merleau-Ponty, March 14, 1908 in Rochefort-sur-Mer, in the far west of France. In the end of their life, both were awarded Chairs at the Collège de France for nine years<sup>740</sup> (Mauss as Chair of Sociology, Merleau-Ponty as Chair of Philosophy). Both thinkers had similar interests, both were involved in political movements of their time, both inherited a certain tradition of thinking they continued to work with, but at the same time transformed it in such a way as to define it into the present day. Yet their careers were different, their styles of life were very different.<sup>741</sup> Merleau-Ponty led a quiet and restrained life, focused and concentrated on his academic work.<sup>742</sup>

#### 3.1.2. The concentrated academic life

Merleau-Ponty's career as well as his research seems to be very consistent. After graduating from the École Normale Supérieure with the agrégation de philosophie in 1930,<sup>743</sup> he was constantly working on his research while teaching students at the lycées.<sup>744</sup> The initial military service, performed by Merleau-Ponty in 1930–1931 and one year's service during the Second World War<sup>745</sup> did not interrupt the philosopher's academic plans. During this period, he wrote his doctoral thesis, which became his first book, *The Structure of Behaviour*, published in 1942 during the German occupation. Merleau-Ponty served briefly as a second lieutenant in the French army in 1939–1940, but after demobilisation he returned to teaching

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<sup>740</sup> Marcel Mauss took office in the Collège de France from 1931 till 1940, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty from 1952 until 1961.

<sup>741</sup> Marcel Fournier in "Marcel Mauss: a Biography" gives a very rich account of Mauss's social life and relations, showing how life's relations were inseparable from Mauss's academic interests, or how Mauss's political engagement is indispensable to understanding his academic production. Marcel Fournier, Marcel Mauss, *l'ethnologie et la politique: le don*, *Anthropologie et sociétés* 19.1-2 (1995): 57-69. While Taylor Carman in the section of his book "Merleau-Ponty" about philosopher's life and works says that the majority of his themes and writings (with the exception of these on history and politics) has nothing much to do with the external circumstances of his life. Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge), 2008, 5-6.

<sup>742</sup> Alden L. Fisher (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World) 5. Meanwhile the academic career of Mauss is marked by the various interests and loyalties.

<sup>743</sup> During the preparation time Merleau-Ponty became friends with Simone de Beauvoir and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

<sup>744</sup> He was teaching at the lycées in Beauvais (from 1931 to 1933) and in Chartres (in 1934–1935), tutoring at the École Normale Supérieure (from 1935 to 1940), teaching at the Lycée Condorcet in Paris (in 1944–1945).

<sup>745</sup> Merleau-Ponty was called up into the 5-ième Régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne in August 1939, just prior to the outbreak of war in September. He was quickly transferred to the General Staff of the 59-ième Division Légère d'Infanterie and remained with that unit until, after the defeat of France in May-June 1940, he was captured and tortured by the Germans and discharged in the September. Stephen Priest, *Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 2002), 4.

and during the last two years of the war Merleau-Ponty wrote his main work *Phenomenology of Perception*, which was published after the liberation in 1945.<sup>746</sup>

After defending his two dissertations<sup>747</sup> (in July 1945), Merleau-Ponty was appointed to the post of Maître de conférences in Psychology at the University of Lyon, where he was promoted to the rank of Professor in the Chair of Psychology in 1948. Merleau-Ponty also taught supplementary courses at the École Normale Supérieure (from 1947 to 1949). Before his election to the most prestigious post for a philosopher in France – to the Chair of Philosophy at the Collège de France – Merleau-Ponty held the position of Professor of Child Psychology and Pedagogy at the University of Paris for three years (from 1949). Maurice Merleau-Ponty taught at the Collège until the day of his death, which occurred suddenly in Paris on May 3, 1961.

### 3.1.3. Merleau-Ponty's engagement in politics

Right after his short participation in the Second World War, in 1941 Merleau-Ponty joined the resistance group Socialisme et Liberté, which disbanded a year or so later. By 1943 Merleau-Ponty had begun talking with Jean-Paul Sartre about founding a literary, philosophical, and political review. In 1944 he became a member of the editorial committee of the newly founded review *Les Temps Modernes*. Merleau-Ponty functioned as political editor until 1953, publishing papers on political and aesthetic themes.<sup>748</sup> Political essays, which Merleau-Ponty published there, were reprinted in 1947 under the title “Humanism and Terror.”

In March 1948, opposition within the Socialist Party brought Merleau-Ponty together with Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, André Breton, David Rousset, and others in the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire, a socialist, experimental, antiwar gathering led by Sartre and Rousset, which survived only one year. From 1950, Merleau-Ponty started to become disillusioned with Sartre's version of Marxism. In the face of growing political (as well as philosophical)<sup>749</sup> disagreements with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty resigned his role as political editor of *Les Temps Modernes* in 1952 and withdrew from the editorial board in 1953.<sup>750</sup>

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<sup>746</sup> Thomas Baldwin, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-2.

<sup>747</sup> In 1938 Merleau-Ponty completed his minor thesis, “Consciousness and Behavior,” (which was later published as *The Structure of Behavior* in 1942). In 1946 he defended his principle or major doctoral thesis “Phenomenology of Perception” (which was published in 1946). His supervisor was Émile Bréhier. Donald A. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 3-4.

<sup>748</sup> Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*, 4-5.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>750</sup> Merleau-Ponty's critique of Sartre's politics became public in 1955 with *Les Aventures de la dialectique*. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Les aventures de la dialectique,” *Chiasmi International* 20 (2018): 223-224.

Merleau-Ponty is not remembered as a pioneering social or political theorist.<sup>751</sup> He was a politically engaged intellectual who attempted to extend phenomenological insights beyond the realm of individual perception into the public sphere, to address the structures of collective action and social life. However, his interventions in public discourse – philosophical insights into history, society, politics – often remained at a high level of abstraction. The reason for this, in Taylor Carman’s opinion, is that his interest flowed more from general fascination with perception, embodiment, action, expression, and knowledge,<sup>752</sup> and, partly, that to approach social and historical phenomena he took the same holistic, unifying (“a kind of reconciling strategy”<sup>753</sup>), that he used in his philosophical considerations.

On the other hand, Barry Cooper writes, Merleau-Ponty was in some way revolutionary even if he has provided synthesizing ideas:

He wished to ‘turn men around,’ as Plato said in a famous passage. But philosophers too are men of the city. They know the importance of tradition, or, what amounts to the same thing, they know that the ‘conversions’ of philosophy are painful, the purgative of questioning is endless, but that the city needs a kind of synthesis to survive. As Merleau-Ponty came to see, moderate speech is the public responsibility of the philosopher. The classical formulas had not lost their truth: moderate speech produced moderate deeds; the philosophical love of wisdom and the good, which are experienced by the philosopher as change less, imply a prudent and temperate public practice, which is reform.<sup>754</sup>

### 3.1.4. Relations with religion

In “Merleau-Ponty Vivant,” the obituary essay, Sartre acknowledges that Merleau-Ponty had been drawn to the Catholic community in his youth but had left the church at the age of twenty. Meanwhile Simone de Beauvoir remembers that he still attended Mass while studying at the École Normale. Also, he refused to be considered an atheist in his last years.<sup>755</sup> Eric Mathews writes that Merleau-Ponty left the church in the late 1930s in disgust at the attitudes of many in the Catholic hierarchy to left-wing activity.<sup>756</sup> Yet he did not attribute

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<sup>751</sup> As Carman writes, “He was a Marxist in the 1940s, but he made no original contribution to Marxian accounts of the technological causes of historical change, the economic foundations of social practices and political institutions, or the ethics of capitalism. By the early 1950s he had abandoned Marxism and become a kind of liberal leftist, but again he added nothing new to the philosophical or political theory of liberalism.” Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, 154-155.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>754</sup> Barry Cooper, *Merleau-Ponty and Marxism* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 177. A detailed analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s political activities and the development of his political views can be found in this book.

<sup>755</sup> Richard Kearney, “Merleau-Ponty and the Sacramentality of the Flesh,” in *Merleau-Ponty at the Limits of Art, Religion, and Perception*, ed. Kascha Semonovitch and Neal DeRoo (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 158.

<sup>756</sup> Eric Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 3.

himself as an existentialist theist (as protestant theologian Kierkegaard and the French Catholic Gabriel Marcel).<sup>757</sup>

“With M. Merleau-Ponty it is atheistic existentialism, the most original and most attractive current of French philosophy since the Liberation that will enter the Collège de France.” This is how Sartre and Camus wrote in Merleau-Ponty’s defense in their paper *Combat*.<sup>758</sup> Thus, even Sartre had acknowledged his friend’s persistent interest in the miracle of existence,<sup>759</sup> which Merleau-Ponty, the estranged Catholic in France, tried to articulate. He saw that to describe the enigma of flesh,<sup>760</sup> the adaptation of the religious language of the Eucharist and communion was very much needed.

### 3.1.5. “*The last philosopher*”

This is how M. C. Dillon sees the importance of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy:

Merleau-Ponty’s ontology marks a point of culmination in the development of Western thought which, in turn, establishes the conditions for its own surpassing. If this claim is valid, the ontology articulated by Merleau-Ponty constitutes a phase through which Western thought must pass if it is to progress. It is a matter of chance [...] whether future historians attribute to Merleau-Ponty or to some currently unknown philosophical clone writing in another idiom the unplugging of the flow of Western thought. The plug is dualism. It has to come out. Merleau-Ponty shows us how.<sup>761</sup>

According to Dillon, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach is radically different from that of its predecessors Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre, and this difference lies in the extent to which he succeeds in overcoming the problems that prevented them from accomplishing the task “to liberate phenomena from their traditional restriction to the sphere of immanence, to restore their transcendence, and thereby to lift the curse of mere appearance and return to human opinion the measure of truth it has earned.”<sup>762</sup> This problematic ‘plug’, manifested in the radical separation of inner and outer reality, which was present in philosophy before Descartes but seldom absent from it after him, began to disappear with Kant (phenomena are given more and more reality) and has been increasingly

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<sup>757</sup> Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*, 5.

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>759</sup> Kearney, “Merleau-Ponty,” 158.

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>761</sup> Martin C Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), x.

<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.



criticized ever since. Merleau-Ponty, responding to the philosophical attitudes that have been determined by the Cartesian heritage (old and new<sup>763</sup>), proposes an alternative.

As a phenomenologist, existentialist, and psychologist, Merleau-Ponty sometimes is called “the last philosopher before the ‘structuralism’ and the ‘human sciences.’” This description of Merleau-Ponty relates to the harmony between his philosophical views and his personal characteristics – he was a man who had the stubborn consistency for search for a coherence (even if that was fragile) between personal choices and the reading of the world, which, in Bernard Sichère’s words, one still calls “philosophy.”<sup>764</sup>

Eric Matthews provides an explanation of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical outlook, arguing that Merleau-Ponty was not a “humanist” in the sense in which the term is often pejoratively used by some of his “posthumanist” successors such as Foucault and Althusser. Although Merleau-Ponty stressed the importance of the subject, he was not an advocate of the Enlightenment conception of human subjectivity, which is independent of the physical, social, and historical position of the person concerned. “Humanism” in this sense is sometimes associated by his critics with phenomenology, and although Merleau-Ponty was a phenomenologist, his “existential” interpretation of the concept was far from being synonymous with the philosophy of a transcendent subject and the description of that subject’s inner consciousness.<sup>765</sup>

Merleau-Ponty maintained his commitment to ontological philosophy and did it according to the new standards, that is by understanding ontology as creative rather than representational, and by respecting differentiation rather than preferring unity. According to Lawrence Haas, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical ontology meets both of these standards, although much of it predates the work of Deleuze, Derrida, and Foucault.<sup>766</sup>

According to James Schmidt, Merleau-Ponty was the last philosopher to know the secret of the balance between philosophy and science, which later generations could neither fully recover nor completely forget. In his system, science, philosophy, and theology could support each other.<sup>767</sup> He deeply understood the harm done by Cartesianism, but was looking for the ways to reconcile science and philosophy.

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<sup>763</sup> Merleau-Ponty criticized not only Descartes, but also the persistence of Cartesianism in modern philosophy, distinguishing between its two dominant strains, empiricism and intellectualism. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, 5.

<sup>764</sup> Bernard Sichère, *Merleau-Ponty ou le corps de la philosophie* (Paris: Editions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1982), 18.

<sup>765</sup> Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, 1.

<sup>766</sup> Lawrence Haas, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 136.

<sup>767</sup> James Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Between Phenomenology and Structuralism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), 14.

In the prospectus of his works, written in late 1952 or early 1953, Merleau-Ponty describes his philosophical endeavors as follows:

The perceiving mind is an incarnated mind. I have tried, first of all, to re-establish the roots of the mind in its body and in its world, going against doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of external things on our body as well as against those which insist on the autonomy of consciousness. These philosophies commonly forget – in favor of a pure exteriority or of a pure interiority – the insertion of the mind in corporeality, the ambiguous relation which we entertain with our body and, correlatively, with perceived things.<sup>768</sup>

Merleau-Ponty started with a “desire for a philosophy rooted in description of the experience of beings who were ‘in the world’ rather than in attempts at general ‘theories’ or ‘systems.’”<sup>769</sup> He thought about the world, about himself, about others, and tried to understand these relationships. By bringing the thinker back into the world, he was able to reconcile thinking and the world. Thinking and the world are not in a problematic relationship for Merleau-Ponty. They are mysterious, but the mystery is what defines them. The mystery does not need to be dispelled by a solution. The world and thinking come before solutions. Authentic philosophy is about learning to see the world in a new way, learning to see and retell the world anew in all its depth: “Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing, truth into being.”<sup>770</sup>

The philosopher is the instigator of the focus of reflection, or what one calls “the world.” Merleau-Ponty has made this world as close as possible to the neighborhood of the body.<sup>771</sup> He showed the world in tension with the urgency of it and its problems.

Merleau-Ponty left three types of texts. The published books, articles, and course summaries were supplemented by two typed manuscripts (“La prose du monde” and “Le visible et l’invisible”), carried out to such a degree of elaboration that Merleau-Ponty’s student Claude Lefort was able to edit them with clear introductory notes. There are also extensive lecture and work notes.<sup>772</sup> These posthumous texts today offer a glimpse into the laboratory of Merleau-Ponty’s thought that varied in its methods while raising the threshold of its demands.<sup>773</sup>

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<sup>768</sup> Baldwin, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 34-35.

<sup>769</sup> Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, 19.

<sup>770</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception* (London: Routledge, 2005), xxii-xxiii.

<sup>771</sup> Sichère, *Merleau-Ponty*, 9.

<sup>772</sup> From 1961 to 2010, Mrs. Merleau-Ponty continued to be involved in the slow publication of Merleau-Ponty’s notes and unpublished manuscripts, and a number of publications explicitly acknowledge her support. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 122.

<sup>773</sup> Claude Imbert states, “If Merleau-Ponty’s university course was exemplary, the writings were disconcerting. Over fifteen years, so many things were said, denied, and taken up in other ways. Each book is secretly worked

Merleau-Ponty's writings reflect his philosophical goals, which were ambitious, but, again, volatile and self-transcending. If in his early works, in opposition to transcendental philosophy, the philosopher stressed reconciling thinking and the world, so in the last works he understands philosophy as the opening of things which have never been thought before. This is because the truth found in the world is not limited to today. Philosophy, open to the world, open to the truth, begins to ask other questions, questions about the unthought. In short, whereas in his first writings Merleau-Ponty was seeking to grasp what has been left unsaid by "yesterday's philosophy," in his last writings he was attempting to describe what did not yet have a name in "today's philosophy."<sup>774</sup>

### 3.1.6. *Incomplete philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, according to Paul Ricoeur, is "a philosophy of incompleteness," which became even more disturbing since the sudden death of the philosopher.<sup>775</sup>

After Merleau-Ponty's death, Thomas Baldwin observes that Merleau-Ponty's reputation in France quickly declined as French philosophers turned from French existential phenomenology to the study of German philosophy, especially Heidegger and the work of the "masters of suspicion," Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Elsewhere, however, especially in the United States, his former students have maintained his reputation, and more recently there has been a growing interest in his work in the analytic tradition, especially in his account of intentionality and the role of the body in perception.<sup>776</sup> Merleau-Ponty's ideas have been fruitfully applied and developed in philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, neuroscience, and cognitive sciences.

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by the ferment of ideas, knowledge and evidence that have no place there yet. If everyone immediately saturates the intelligence capacity of the reader, he is already testifying for something else. Phrases are keyed to suspended alternatives; the incisive notes and remarks deflect like swerves. Hence it is that reading it is never easy. And yet, a sovereign movement carries the work away, heedless of a conclusion that could not be anything other than this movement itself. Led as a challenge, the subject called for a conceptual invention to replace the first benchmarks given by perception or history. The consequent transformation of the normative figures of philosophical activity depends on it. These texts have as much insolence as elegance and knowledge." Claude Imbert, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty* (Paris: Adpf, 2005), 17.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid., 20. See pages 82–85 for the full bibliography of Merleau-Ponty. André Robinet, *Merleau-Ponty, sa vie, son œuvre, avec un exposé de sa philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 67-74. Bernard Sichère describes not only the philosophical questions raised by Merleau-Ponty, but also the scope of philosophical reflections throughout the life of "the last philosopher." Sichère, *Merleau-Ponty*, 27-28.

<sup>775</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Homage to Merleau-Ponty," in *Merleau-Ponty and the Possibilities of Philosophy: Transforming the Tradition*, ed. Flynn, Bernard, Wayne J. Froman, and Robert Vallier (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009), 17.

<sup>776</sup> Baldwin, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 2.

Never satisfied with what he achieved, and not committed to his previous works (indeed, he said the first two his famous books needed to be revised – “take up again, deepen, and rectify”<sup>777</sup>), the philosopher was more concerned with the search for the truth about existence and the language that suited it. He was a courageous thinker who was not afraid to contradict the orthodoxy of the philosophical authorities, or to criticize his contemporaries’ generalizations that contradicted this truth. His concern was to introduce people to the nature “from which they come,”<sup>778</sup> which have led to the deepest levels of existence, to the core or the moment, where one perceives oneself as moving beings in a moving world.

Emphasizing the importance of movement, of expression through movement, Merleau-Ponty also argued that human expression is never fully complete, just as existence cannot be, nor philosophy, which, from the philosopher’s point of view, is an expression of existence, and which is always pointing to somebody, and thus in this case, to the incompleteness of Merleau-Ponty’s expression.

So, my last remarks would be on Merleau-Ponty’s search for authentic philosophical expression. According to Haas, in the last years of his life, Merleau-Ponty was embraced by a new way of thinking in which his philosophy changed enormously. Not only did new concepts emerge to understand and express one’s synergistic relationship with the transcendent world and with other people, but also more detailed explanations of the complex relationship between perceptual experience (“the visible”) and thinking, as well as ideality (“the invisible”). According to Merleau-Ponty, the shortcomings of his earlier work were due to the residues of a “philosophy of consciousness” which prevented him from explaining his ontology properly.<sup>779</sup> Also, in Merleau-Ponty’s early philosophical thinking he believed that sociological and structural informativeness always lead back to “lived experience,” because that is the only way it can gain meaning,<sup>780</sup> but later he abandoned this view, arguing that philosophical thinking could go far beyond that.<sup>781</sup> In his last work, Merleau-Ponty even tried to reformulate the conception of lived experience to emphasize the openness of its dimensions.<sup>782</sup>

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<sup>777</sup> Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*, 124.

<sup>778</sup> Merleau-Ponty citing from “Cézanne’s Doubt.” Leonard Lawlor and Ted Toadvine (eds.), *The Merleau-Ponty Reader* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 73.

<sup>779</sup> Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*, 124.

<sup>780</sup> Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 54.

<sup>781</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 182.

<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

However, in this present study, the following analyses of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy will be based on the scholarly consensus that Merleau-Ponty's fundamental aims did not change over time. As Haas argues, the early texts as the late ones are permeated by the desire to reveal the lived experience of perception, embodied subjectivity, and our reciprocal relationship with other selves. They also continue his practice of critiquing the various traditional ontologies "that obscure our inherence in the world."<sup>783</sup> In other words, if the importance of a purposeful "reformulation of a notion of consciousness"<sup>784</sup> is in the long run relegated to the background, the attention to its expressive nature and the role of movement in this does not diminish in Merleau-Ponty's thought.

### **3.2. The Intellectual Sources for Merleau-Ponty's Approach to Movement**

Ricoeur describes the core of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and the composition of his ideas as follows:

With Merleau-Ponty, the theory of the body is thoroughly a theory of perception: the body becomes the place of the general symbolism of the world. The findings of the human sciences, the method of phenomenology, and the philosophical aim of existentialism are thus found mixed together in a complex ensemble.<sup>785</sup>

In this part of the chapter, I will examine the intellectual influences that were important in the development of Merleau-Ponty's thought (3.2.1.), in other words, I will try to find out how the "complex ensemble" of ideas on the importance of bodily movement was formed. I shall also discuss Merleau-Ponty's interests in psychology and art (3.2.2.) as he was very much involved in the interdisciplinary dialogue, believing that all aspects of human life are influenced by an embodied world-view perspective.

It is necessary to examine the intellectual context to understand Merleau-Ponty's philosophical aims. Without understanding the philosophical problems the thinker is grappling with and the questions he is addressing, the philosopher's approach to movement will not be fully accessible.

#### *3.2.1. The intellectual influences*

In discussing the influential authors for Merleau-Ponty, Baldwin refers to philosophers<sup>786</sup> who can be divided into three groups:

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<sup>783</sup> Haas, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*, 125.

<sup>784</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 169.

<sup>785</sup> Ricoeur, "Homage to Merleau-Ponty," 19.

<sup>786</sup> Baldwin, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 23-30.

1. The authors that Merleau-Ponty cites, but the intellectual distance remains very great, such as Hegel, Kant, Descartes, and Malebranche.
2. French philosophers on whom Merleau-Ponty draws.
3. Notable philosophers of the time whose work greatly influenced the development of Merleau-Ponty's ideas.

Discussing each of these groups separately will help to understand the context of Merleau-Ponty's ideas and intellectual life at the time.

### 3.2.1.1. *Formulating the philosophical position in a debate*

Hegel, Kant, Descartes, and Malebranche<sup>787</sup> are the philosophers with whom Merleau-Ponty debated in order to try to formulate his philosophical position. Eric Matthews points to Hegel as one of the most important influences on Merleau-Ponty's thought, albeit filtered through the young Marx, as well as to a certain reading of the late Husserl.<sup>788</sup>

Merleau-Ponty quotes early Hegel approvingly twice in *The Structure of Behavior* to stress the importance of perception in making sense of one's world. The conclusion that perception cannot be treated as a fact of nature precisely because it plays a fundamental role in the creation of nature, since the forms, structures, or laws one finds in nature are only aspects of the perceived world, is fundamentally idealistic. Moreover, as Baldwin observes, Merleau-Ponty's characterization of the relation between the forms of the three basic orders – physical, vital, and human – as “dialectical” goes along with Hegel's intentions, although such an emphasis on the role of the perceptual would have seemed too subjectivist for Hegel.<sup>789</sup>

Kant's transcendental idealism, rather than Hegel's absolute idealism, is therefore the philosophy that is more in line with Merleau-Ponty's position. On the other hand, again, Merleau-Ponty does not endorse the literal Kantian position. He is looking for fewer abstract categories than Kant's a priori forms of intuition, and for ones that could function as structures of the lived world of ordinary experience (rather than the objective world of natural science). Moreover, Merleau-Ponty argues that the idealist position needs to be developed in such a way that the subject of perception is not completely cut off from the world and thus ends up treating the world and the body as mere objects of consciousness. This is an ‘intellectualist’ position, which is in its own way as unsatisfactory as the realist position<sup>790</sup> Merleau-Ponty's

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<sup>787</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831); Immanuel Kant (1724–1804); René Descartes (1596–1650); Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715).

<sup>788</sup> Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, 3-4.

<sup>789</sup> Baldwin, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 4.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

philosophical analysis, his transcendental idealism leads not to the ideality of consciousness but to the ideality of the body.

Merleau-Ponty refers not only to the work of Kant and Hegel, but also frequently discusses Descartes and Malebranche. Malebranche, whom Merleau-Ponty had studied extensively during the writing of his thesis, was a Catholic priest and French rationalist philosopher. In his writings, Malebranche sought to synthesize the ideas of Saint Augustine and Descartes in order to demonstrate God's active role in every aspect of the world. According to Judith Butler, Malebranche provided a coherent speculative response to Cartesianism, adapting Augustine to his own ends and pursuing an empiricism paradoxically based on theological assumptions. He argued that the feelings of the soul cannot be dismissed as a contamination of the body, but must be reconsidered as created experiences which, according to the assumption of parallelism, by virtue of their movement, point to some divine origin. In other words, according to Butler, Malebranche challenged the Cartesian distinction between body and soul, arguing that the very capacity to feel is not only initiated by an act of 'grace', but that feeling itself is linked to a spiritual order defined by the continuous activity of self-embodiment.<sup>791</sup>

The philosophical contribution attributed to Malebranche is the assertion that all knowledge is sensory and that the sense has its own referential dignity, that it is a mode of knowledge, that it communicates the intelligible. Merleau-Ponty was, of course, influenced by this view. However, Merleau-Ponty does not lose sight of the knowing subject, the epistemological point of reference, the 'I', who is instituted and whose ways of knowing, feeling, touching, and seeing are under consideration. In the lectures on Malebranche, according to Butler, there is a more fundamental philosophical movement, for there the task is not to describe the sensible as the basis of knowledge, but rather to clarify the starting point of the sense itself, and the indeterminacy and priority of its animating condition.<sup>792</sup>

In his essay "Everywhere and Nowhere," Merleau-Ponty presents Malebranche as the forerunner of twentieth-century French philosophy, and draws resources from this tradition, the tradition of sensuous theology. According to Butler, Malebranche is for Merleau-Ponty the

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<sup>791</sup> Judith Butler, "Merleau-Ponty and the Touch of Malebranche," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 183.

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*, 194. Butler writes, "Indeed, Malebranche offers Merleau-Ponty the opportunity to consider how the body in its impressionability presupposes a prior set of impressions that act on the body and form the basis for sentience, feeling, cognition, and the beginnings of agency itself. These impressions are, importantly, tactile, suggesting that it is only on the condition that a body is already exposed to something other than itself, something by which it can be affected, that it becomes possible for a sentient self to emerge." Butler, "Merleau-Ponty and the Touch of Malebranche," 185.

precursor of Husserl's doctrine of intentionality.<sup>793</sup> Merleau-Ponty mentions both authors in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

A world which, as Malebranche puts it, never gets beyond being an 'unfinished work', or which, as Husserl says of the body, is 'never completely constituted', does not require, and even rules out, a constituting subject.<sup>794</sup>

Ideas from Malebranche and Descartes are discussed in Merleau-Ponty's presentation of his own philosophical position, which opposes the abstract rationalist position that the natural and social world has an a priori structure rooted in the activity of pure reason, which is characteristic of an "impartial spectator."<sup>795</sup>

### 3.2.1.2. *The relation with Descartes*

In formulating his philosophical position, Merleau-Ponty criticized not only Descartes but also the rise of Cartesianism in modern philosophy, distinguishing between its two dominant strains, empiricism and intellectualism. Although these two trends are diametrically opposed and each defines itself in opposition to the other, they share a Cartesian heritage and can both be interpreted on the basis of that heritage. In Merleau-Ponty's view, they are both products of Cartesian dualism, since empiricism's attempt to find a basis in a transcendent order has the same basis as intellectualism's attempt to bring all questions into an immanent order: in both cases, the ramification of reality is assumed.<sup>796</sup> Merleau-Ponty's challenge, then, was to deal with this ramification, which has been a central feature of all Cartesian thought, past and present, as a result of the three Cartesian reductions, which I will discuss briefly.

According to Dillon, in his quest for ever greater clarity, Descartes drove an ontological wedge between the realms of immanence and transcendence. In particular, he attempted to describe the realm of the subject as the realm of immanent thought, which can be analyzed separately from the objects to which that thought refers. Descartes classified the objects of the world as a transcendent sphere to which thought cannot enter, and he ultimately decided to ignore such objects altogether. His main idea was to confine cognition to the realm of immanence, because the quest for certainty demanded it. Clarity and distinctness for Descartes are the only criteria for certainty, and these criteria can only be satisfied in the immanent realm.<sup>797</sup>

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<sup>793</sup> Ibid., 191, 200.

<sup>794</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 472.

<sup>795</sup> Thomas Baldwin, "Merleau-Ponty's Cogito," in *Understanding Merleau-Ponty, Understanding Modernism*, ed. Ariane Mildenberg (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 20.

<sup>796</sup> Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 5-6.

<sup>797</sup> Ibid., 19.



At the heart of Descartes's argument is the claim that one knows the external world only insofar as one perceives it clearly and distinctly. But clarity and distinctness are incompatible with externality. Thus, by reducing the world to that which is clearly and distinctly knowable, he denied its externality and transcendence. In other words, Descartes reduced it to an object of consciousness.

In consequence, for Descartes there remain two worlds: the inner (or immanent) and the outer (or transcendent), the elements of one which are identical with those of the other. This identity is necessary to make possible the coincidence of objective and formal existence (in the case of clear and distinct perceptions) on which Descartes bases his certainty. However, in creating these two worlds, according to Dillon, Descartes simultaneously violated them both: he distorted the ideas of the inner world by reifying them, and he distorted the objects of the outer world by making them transparent (i.e., by stripping them of their opacity, which is proportional to their givenness).<sup>798</sup>

What are the reductions of Descartes, resulting from this attempt, that are crucial to Merleau-Ponty's philosophical endeavor? According to Dillon, Descartes' reductions, which have been incorporated into contemporary empiricism and intellectualism and have contributed significantly to the failures of these two positions, can be identified as follows:

1. The elimination of active cognitive faculties (the imagination and the will) by passivity, which becomes the criterion of cognitive certainty.
2. Ideas are modelled as objects – both are considered to be entities existing in a single causal relationship.
3. The world has been reduced to an object of consciousness.<sup>799</sup>

Although Merleau-Ponty's philosophy attempts to correct all these reductions, I intend to focus here on the first one, as it is of particular relevance to my study of Merleau-Ponty's approach to movement.

In both "Rules for the Direction of the Mind" and "Meditations on First Philosophy" the causes of error were attributed by Descartes to the active faculties of the knower. Such faculties are imagination and will. In order to eliminate these causes of error, Dillon writes, the Cartesian method requires the passivity of the knower. If the knower does not exert any causal influence on the perceptual and cognitive processes, no distortions will occur in the

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<sup>798</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid., 17-18. The Cartesian method of achieving certainty results in the transformation of external things, as far as they can be known, into clear and distinct ideas.

reproductive mechanism that is the knower's mind. Thus, passivity becomes the criterion of cognitive certainty.

Merleau-Ponty's main point, which he opposes Descartes on, is that human life is a way of being involved, acting in the world. Stating that "there would be neither thought nor truth but for an act whereby I prevail over the temporal dispersal of the phases of thought, and the mere de facto existence of my mental events,"<sup>800</sup> Merleau-Ponty is able to turn Descartes' situation on its head and show it as a proof of existence, of effective being in the world. The truth Merleau-Ponty reveals about Cogito is that

[...] is not the 'I am' which is pre-eminently contained in the 'I think,' not my existence which is brought down to the consciousness which I have of it, but conversely the 'I think,' which is re-integrated into the transcending process of the 'I am', and consciousness into existence.<sup>801</sup>

The existence is neither "in full possession of itself, nor that it is entirely estranged from itself," because Merleau-Ponty describes it as "action or doing, and [...] action is, by definition, the violent transition from what I have to what I aim to have, from what I am to what I intend to be."<sup>802</sup> This is why movement, the body, and perception<sup>803</sup> will become such important themes in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy – they are used as remedies to cure the Cartesian-influenced thinking of his time, which was in turn influenced by Descartes' reductions.

As it will become evident in following part of the chapter, Merleau-Ponty uses the concept of perception to emphasize the synthesizing character of experience.<sup>804</sup> Merleau-Ponty's treatment of the content of perceptions as qualities of the world that are manifested in the human being, which stood in contrast to the treatment of sensations as subjective properties, will also be discussed later. The aim of this subsection was to show how Merleau-Ponty's

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<sup>800</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 447.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid., 446. "The primary truth is indeed 'I think', but only provided that we understand thereby 'I belong to myself' while belonging to the world. [...] Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself. [...] The ontological world and body which we find at the core of the subject are not the world or body as idea, but on the one hand the world itself contracted into a comprehensive grasp, and on the other the body itself as a knowing-body." Ibid., 474-475.

<sup>802</sup> Ibid., 444.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid., 450-451. According to Carman, he calls perception (with its receptive aspect, as opposed to the spontaneity of the intellect) what Malebranche called "natural judgement" and what Descartes described as the innate inclinations of the mind. Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, 59.

<sup>804</sup> Merleau-Ponty responds to the questions, related to the second and third reduction of Descartes, thus: "[...] if the unity of the world is not based on that of consciousness, and if the world is not the outcome of a constituting effort, how does it come about that appearances accord with each other and group themselves together into things, ideas and truths? And why do our random thoughts, the events of our life and those of collective history, at least at certain times assume common significance and direction, and allow themselves to be subsumed under one idea? Why does my life succeed in drawing itself together in order to project itself in words, intentions and acts?" Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 475.

themes and concepts and the idea of the active body as a knowing body relate to the Cartesian tradition, as developed in dialogue with Descartes.

Barry Cooper writes that at the time of Merleau-Ponty's sudden death, a large volume of Adam and Tannery's edition of Descartes was open on his desk.<sup>805</sup> This indicates that Merleau-Ponty's debating relationship with Descartes continued until the end of his life.

### 3.2.1.3. Merleau-Ponty and French philosophers

Alain, Brunschvicg, and Lachière-Rey<sup>806</sup> are representatives of the French Cartesian tradition, the tradition to which Husserl sought to relate his phenomenology in his lectures in Paris.<sup>807</sup> The significance of idealism and neo-Kantianism in France was of concern to Merleau-Ponty. This was particularly true of the tradition of Brunschvicg and Lachière-Rey.<sup>808</sup> The Kantianism that prevailed at the *École Normale* was what Merleau-Ponty reacted to in a negative sense.<sup>809</sup>

Brunschvicg was Merleau-Ponty's teacher in 1926–1930 at the Sorbonne. Brunschvicg's thought, as Merleau-Ponty later described it, consisted above all in an effort of reflection, a return to oneself, modelled on Kant and Descartes. He was convinced that the existence of objects of knowledge was relative to the act of judgment that produced them.<sup>810</sup> Merleau-Ponty identifies Brunschvicg's philosophy not only as one of the most important sources of his generation's understanding of Kant and Descartes, but also as a general method of intellectualism and reflexive analysis, which sought to return philosophy to the structures of a pure and constitutive reason. Although Merleau-Ponty had a personal respect for Brunschvicg because of his personal qualities, his critique of intellectualism can be understood as a response to Brunschvicg and the transcendental idealism he represented.<sup>811</sup>

Another influential contemporary Kantian scholar in the early period of Merleau-Ponty's work, who, together with Brunschvicg, strongly contributed to the establishment of

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<sup>805</sup> Cooper, "Merleau-Ponty and Marxism," xii.

<sup>806</sup> Alain (pseudonym of Émile-Auguste Chartier) (1868–1951); Léon Brunschvicg (1869–1944); Pierre Lachière-Rey (1885–1957).

<sup>807</sup> These lectures were later published under the title "Cartesian Meditations." Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media, 1960).

<sup>808</sup> Keith Whitmoyer, "The Sense of the Transcendental: Psychê in Heraclitus, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty," *Chiasmi International: Trilingual Studies Concerning the Thought of Merleau-Ponty* 18 (2016): 230. For more about Merleau-Ponty and the Kantianism, see Cooper, "Merleau-Ponty and Marxism," 5-8.

<sup>809</sup> Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, 4.

<sup>810</sup> Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 16.

<sup>811</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 196-197. In 1938, Merleau-Ponty meets Brunschvicg again at a discussion at the French Philosophical Society about the deteriorating results of students' *agrégation*. In his speech, Merleau-Ponty expressed his disapproval of the structure and content of the exams, arguing that the questions did not encourage students to take an interest in specific philosophical problems and personalities, such as Marx, Nietzsche and Husserl. *Ibid.*, 19.

Kant's idealism as a major force in French academic philosophy, is Lachièze-Rey. Merleau-Ponty devotes attention to his philosophy in the chapter "Cogito" of the *Phenomenology of Perception*.<sup>812</sup>

Alain, who also was remembered as a very influential and brilliant teacher, exerted a major influence on many young thinkers of the Merleau-Ponty generation. It is said that Alain's lectures at the adjacent Lycée Henri-IV were secretly attended by Merleau-Ponty when he was finishing high school and preparing for his university entrance exam while studying in the Lycée Louis-le-Grand.<sup>813</sup> Merleau-Ponty's preface of *Adventures of the Dialectic* refers to Alain's forms of political reflection ("reason" [intellectualist] versus "understanding" [empiricist].)<sup>814</sup> Merleau-Ponty strongly criticizes reflexive analysis, a philosophical methodology inspired by Descartes and Kant, and explicitly links this criticism to Alain.<sup>815</sup>

According to James Schmidt, for Merleau-Ponty, the fatal error of philosophers such as Brunschvicg and Alain was their attempt to locate all mental activity in the epistemological subject, and the consequent failure to recognize that subjectivity is always present in and related to the world, and finally the failure to realize that finitude, temporality, and corporeality are not the shortcomings of an absolute subjectivity, but rather the only conditions under which truth is possible.<sup>816</sup>

Among the other French philosophers who were important to Merleau-Ponty's ideas are Henri Bergson and Gabriel Marcel.<sup>817</sup> However, these authors cannot be equated with the French philosophers discussed above, to whom Merleau-Ponty reacted more negatively.

When in 1952 Merleau-Ponty was appointed to the chair of philosophy at the Collège de France,<sup>818</sup> in his inaugural lecture "In Praise of Philosophy," he marked his debt to the work of Bergson.<sup>819</sup> Bergson played an important role in Merleau-Ponty's search for an alternative philosophical current to the one that dominated the Sorbonne. In Bergson's writings he found an approach to philosophy that was much more concrete, much less reflexive than

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<sup>812</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 433.

<sup>813</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 1.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-197.

<sup>816</sup> Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 42.

<sup>817</sup> Henri Bergson (1859–1941); Gabriel Honoré Marcel (1889–1973).

<sup>818</sup> This position was previously occupied by Bergson and later was held by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault.

<sup>819</sup> Merleau-Ponty highlighted Bergson's personal qualities, which are of particular importance for philosophy, with the following words: "Hence the rebellious gentleness, the pensive engagement, the intangible presence which disquiet those who are with him. [...] there is a tension in the relation of the philosopher with other persons or with life, and that this uneasiness is essential to philosophy. We have forgotten this a little." Fisher, *The Essential Writings*, 18-19.

Brunschvicg's.<sup>820</sup> According to Matthews, what Merleau-Ponty took from Bergson was the insistence on starting from direct experience rather than from a theoretical interpretation of it, which for him reinforced the arguments of Husserl's phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty, however, rejected the Bergsonian notion of a deep 'inner self' which is the 'real me'. "My life', my 'total being' are not dubious constructs, like the 'deep-seated self' of Bergson, but phenomena which are indubitably revealed to reflection,"<sup>821</sup> writes Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*.<sup>822</sup> Bergson was an important partner in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of time,<sup>823</sup> to which I will return in the fourth part of this chapter (3.4), in the analysis of Merleau-Ponty's ideas about movement.

Marcel is another influential French philosopher who was a contemporary of Merleau-Ponty. The review of Marcel's "Being and Having" in the Catholic journal *La Vie intellectuelle* was one of Merleau-Ponty's first publications. It is to Marcel that Merleau-Ponty's idea of subjectivity as essentially embodied can be traced. The theme of the lived body (*le corps propre*), introduced by Marcel, is very important in Merleau-Ponty's study of the living experience of "my body," of "this body," which is neither an externally knowable object, nor a subject transparent to itself.<sup>824</sup> According to Matthews, Merleau-Ponty also shared Marcel's Bergsonian conception of philosophy as 'concrete' and the conviction that philosophical argument must seek to express the true contours of life experience in such a way that readers or listeners can recognize the truth in it. Marcel was important to Merleau-Ponty also because of his arguments concerning the nature and amplitude of human experience. Like Marcel, Merleau-Ponty saw systems and dogmas as derivative. However, Merleau-Ponty's insights differ from Marcel's in their analytical character and their links with modern science.<sup>825</sup>

Another very important French philosophical stream significant for Merleau-Ponty's development of thought, is structuralism. After the war, Merleau-Ponty discovered Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics, which he began to teach and integrate into his phenomenological interpretation of perception as the embodied experience of being in the world.<sup>826</sup>

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<sup>820</sup> Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 17.

<sup>821</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 442.

<sup>822</sup> In this quotation there is an echo of Mauss's concept of total human being (*l'homme total*) as an alternative.

<sup>823</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 488.

<sup>824</sup> Ricoeur, "Homage to Merleau-Ponty," 19.

<sup>825</sup> Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, 4. One can read more about Merleau-Ponty and Marcel in Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 52-58, and Cooper, "Merleau-Ponty and Marxism," 8-14.

<sup>826</sup> Taylor Carman and Mark BN Hansen, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

#### 3.2.1.4. Relationship with inherited tradition of thinking

While studying at the École Normale, Merleau-Ponty attended lectures by Georges Gurwitsch on the phenomenology of Husserl, Scheler,<sup>827</sup> and Heidegger, as well as Husserl's own lectures given in Paris in 1929.<sup>828</sup> After learning from a journal article about Husserl's later development, Merleau-Ponty went to the Husserl archive in Louvain, Belgium. His aim was to study Husserl's later works, which had not been published at the time. This reading convinced Merleau-Ponty of the changes in Husserl's conception of philosophy in his later doctrine, especially as regards the "life-world." This later version of Husserl, according to Matthews, was in line with Merleau-Ponty's own conception of phenomenology.<sup>829</sup>

According to Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, Merleau-Ponty saw himself as the developer of Husserl's thought in a way Husserl himself would have continued if Husserl's death had not ceased his work.<sup>830</sup> Notwithstanding, in the opinion of other scholars, this "development," was quite revolutionary – Merleau-Ponty eventually had to refute even the fundamental prerequisites of Husserl. According to Stephen Priest, Merleau-Ponty endorsed phenomenology only through a repudiation of what Husserl would regard as two of its central tenets: the *epoché* and the transcendental ego.<sup>831</sup> He refused to "bracket" the worldly facts human beings live around or with. Even more, he states, "Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism."<sup>832</sup> Similarly, according to Laurie Spurling, Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion that consciousness constitutes the world in the sense of creating it.<sup>833</sup>

The consciousness of the world is not based on self-consciousness: they [the consciousness of the world] are strictly contemporary. There is a world for me because I am not unaware of myself; and I am not concealed from myself because I have a world.<sup>834</sup>

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<sup>827</sup> Max Scheler was also an important thinker who, like Jean Wahl and Marcel, attracted Merleau-Ponty not only because of his emphasis on the concrete, but also because of the emerging hints of a philosophy of expression that formed the basis of a newly conceived philosophical anthropology. Scheler's account of intentionality appeals to Merleau-Ponty because it allows him to describe perception as a nonpassive response to sensory expression. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 48-52.

<sup>828</sup> Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, 3.

<sup>829</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>830</sup> Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2011), 14–15.

<sup>831</sup> Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*, 2.

<sup>832</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 235.

<sup>833</sup> Laurie Spurling, *Phenomenology and the Social World: The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and its Relation to the Social Science* (London: Routledge, 2013), 10.

<sup>834</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 347.

It is interesting that besides noticing Husserl's guilt for turning philosophy into an idealism<sup>835</sup> or an intellectualism,<sup>836</sup> Merleau-Ponty consistently attempted to follow his predecessor's attempts.<sup>837</sup> James Schmidt reveals that Merleau-Ponty used to read Husserl in a special way,<sup>838</sup> at least partly because he learned the trick from Husserl himself, who read Descartes in a similar way:<sup>839</sup> "Husserl was, for Merleau-Ponty, above all else [the] non-Cartesian Husserl."<sup>840</sup> As Schmidt puts it, "this 'existentialist' Husserl was a curious creature, as much a consequence of Merleau-Ponty's way of reading as of anything Husserl actually wrote."<sup>841</sup>

This kind of reading may explain Merleau-Ponty's relationship with Husserl, in that Merleau-Ponty did not try to bypass the problematic parts of Husserl's philosophy, rather, he tried to explain and justify them. For example, Merleau-Ponty explained that solipsism as the isolating method of thinking (a "thought-experiment") "was more intended to reveal than to break the links of the intentional web."<sup>842</sup> Neither solipsism nor abstraction as methods have anything to do with human reality. He shows that even prophetic insights about a reciprocal relation between nature, body and soul, as well as about their simultaneity could be found in Husserl's writings.<sup>843</sup>

But, according to Schmidt, although the Merleau-Ponty was trying to get Husserl on his side, he could not hide the fact that Husserl's attempt to reform the Cartesian cogito was also plagued by a fatalistic intellectualism.<sup>844</sup> Though Merleau-Ponty had always been dissatisfied with the hyper reflective, analytical tendencies of Husserlian phenomenology, at the end of his life that sense of dissatisfaction increased, while leading to the reflections about the task of philosophy. The true task of philosophy, he deliberated, is not just to describe experience, but to extend a kind of ontological insight into something ultimately opaque to reflection.<sup>845</sup> Merleau-Ponty's newly conceived philosophical task diverged from Husserl's project.

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<sup>835</sup> Spurling, *Phenomenology and the Social World*, 10.

<sup>836</sup> Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, 131.

<sup>837</sup> Carman writes: "What is striking in Merleau-Ponty's appropriation of Husserl is that although he frequently writes with some sympathy for both the transcendental and eidetic reductions, he nevertheless evidently regards them as paradoxical and self-defeating, hence strictly speaking impossible." Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, 39.

<sup>838</sup> In a non-Cartesian way.

<sup>839</sup> Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 20.

<sup>840</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>841</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>842</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sign* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 173.

<sup>843</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>844</sup> Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 42.

<sup>845</sup> Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, 132.

Merleau-Ponty was able to reinterpret Husserl's ideas for his own and other generations. However, the ideas that most inspired Merleau-Ponty were not central to Husserl's philosophy. This leads to the question of other significant influences for Merleau-Ponty, to which the next sections turn.

### 3.2.1.5. *Relation to radical philosophy*

Matthews identifies Marx as one of the key influences on Merleau-Ponty:

Hegel, filtered through the young Marx (or, what amounts to the same, a younger Marx seen through Hegelian spectacles), and a certain reading of the later Husserl were two of the most important influences on Merleau-Ponty's own thinking.<sup>846</sup>

Influenced by Alexandre Kojève's interpretation of Hegel and the direct political experience of the Second World War, Merleau-Ponty abandoned the religious and philosophical position he had taken in the 1930s and turned to Marxism.<sup>847</sup>

As Bary Cooper reveals, Merleau-Ponty's political thought, in its origins and development, expressed a subtle dialectic between ongoing political events and the obvious truths of Marx's analysis. In the light of subsequent events – the outbreak of the Cold War, the discovery of Soviet concentration camps, the repression in Eastern Europe, the Algerian crisis and the founding of the Fifth Republic – Merleau-Ponty began to critically evaluate Marx's ideas on the genesis of humanism. The conclusion of his evaluation, according to Cooper, was that Marxism had lost touch with history.<sup>848</sup> From that time, Merleau-Ponty fundamentally changed his approach; he no longer supported the use of violence to end violence, and criticized Sartre's external justification of communist violence. Instead, he argued for a new liberalism, combining parliamentary democracy with an understanding of the social problems of industrial capitalism.<sup>849</sup>

As Claude Lefort observes, if in his early articles Merleau-Ponty wanted to draw attention to the difficulties that Marxism had in explaining current events, then later on, one is confronted with a new need for reflection: no longer does Merleau-Ponty argue as a Marxist,

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<sup>846</sup> Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, 3-4.

<sup>847</sup> Merleau-Ponty was interested in Marxism. He attended Kojève's lectures on Hegel in Paris in the late 1930s. The lectures Kojève presented were effectively a Hegelian, or humanist, Marxism, which had a profound influence on Merleau-Ponty's own thinking on broader questions of the historicity of human existence, and not just on political theories. Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, 3.

<sup>848</sup> Cooper, "Merleau-Ponty and Marxism," 109-110.

<sup>849</sup> On Merleau-Ponty's final political reflections, Cooper, "Merleau-Ponty and Marxism," 161-165. Merleau-Ponty himself stated, "Our questions do not always admit of answers, and to say with Marx that man poses for himself only problems that he can solve is to revive a theological optimism and postulate the consummation of the world." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 463.



but he claims to be inviting to the truth of Marx's work those who, for reasons contrary to Marx, distort its meaning. In short, Lefort comments, Merleau-Ponty asks questions, but in such a way that one cannot know to what extent his questions bring him closer to Marx or take him further away. By disagreeing with the definition of historical objectivism, the philosopher invites one to confront the ambiguities of Marxist philosophy, which are the ambiguities of history.<sup>850</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, history is without an absolute point of view. The philosopher also expressed doubts about the existence of a universal class.

In Ricoeur's opinion, Merleau-Ponty, in continuation of his philosophy of perception, was determined to set out an entire philosophy of praxis, of acting effectively in the world. In this way he intended to continue the young Marx against the old Marx and especially against Engels.<sup>851</sup> However, according to Lefort, it was not so much a critique of Marx in order to create a new political theory or to restore the pre-Marxist conception of history; rather, it was an attempt to correct, to radicalize, in a way, a philosophy that was already calling itself radical.<sup>852</sup>

### 3.2.1.6. Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger

Heidegger,<sup>853</sup> was one of the most important and influential philosophers of the twentieth century, who made significant contributions to phenomenology, hermeneutics, and existentialism. Heidegger's most important text, *Being and Time* (1927), introduces the German term *Dasein* to describe the type of being that is inherent in human beings. It denotes a 'pre-ontological' and non-abstract way of life, a way of being which he calls 'being-in-the-world'. With these integral concepts of *Dasein* and 'being-in-the-world', Heidegger opposed the rationalist philosophy of Descartes and its 'subject-object' view.

Merleau-Ponty picked up some of Heidegger's concepts and arguments in his early works, when he was not yet fully acquainted with Heidegger. For example, as Landes notes, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty adopted Heidegger's notions of being-in-the-world, temporality, *ekstase*, and transcendence. Later, in a lecture course at the Collège de France, Merleau-Ponty delved much more deeply into Heidegger's writings, especially on

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<sup>850</sup> Claude Lefort, "Thinking Politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 359-361. As Donald A. Landes notes, while writing about history and Marxism, Merleau-Ponty stresses the non-linear (adventure) dialectic. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 22.

<sup>851</sup> Ricoeur, "Homage to Merleau-Ponty," 20.

<sup>852</sup> Lefort, "Thinking Politics," 377.

<sup>853</sup> Martin Heidegger (1889–1976).

language, so that the influence of Heidegger is more pronounced in Merleau-Ponty's later essays and *The Visible and the Invisible*.<sup>854</sup>

### 3.2.1.7. *Between Phenomenology and Existentialism*

According to Carman and Hansen, Merleau-Ponty's hermeneutic approach to the texts and thinkers he liked was a natural way of bringing them together. Thus, the striking difference between Husserl and Heidegger merges in Merleau-Ponty's work to produce a hybrid.<sup>855</sup> From Husserl, Merleau-Ponty learned the precise description of the phenomenon (as opposed to the metaphysical speculations and self-illustrations of philosophical systems), and from Heidegger, he took the understanding that the return to "the things themselves" does not involve abstraction from human existence.

Although Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty differed in their treatment of existence itself,<sup>856</sup> they both associated it with simple facticity (whereas existence and its facticity were, according to Husserl, the things to which phenomenology had to remain indifferent<sup>857</sup>). Similarly, Husserl's method was criticized by both philosophers, but in different ways. Heidegger argued that one cannot understand oneself through reflection or introspection; rather, these methods distract one from the world and place one in front of one's own thoughts about the world.<sup>858</sup> Merleau-Ponty, who had already accepted Heidegger's idea that there is no such thing as a given "naked subject without a world," also treats the phenomenological method itself as an embodied action in the world (like the more general Cogito of philosophy,<sup>859</sup> it might be said).

Arguing that "the most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction,"<sup>860</sup> Merleau-Ponty, like Heidegger and Sartre, rejected transcendental and eidetic reductions as logically false abstractions from the concrete conditions of experience in the world. In short, Merleau-Ponty, like his fellow existentialists,

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<sup>854</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 93.

<sup>855</sup> Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty* (2005), 9.

<sup>856</sup> Heidegger's 'Existenz' refers to the human way of being; Merleau-Ponty's 'l'existence' refers to a broader phenomenon involving things in the world. Mark A. Wrathall, "Existential Phenomenology," in *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 31.

<sup>857</sup> Carman and Hansen, "Introduction," 9-10.

<sup>858</sup> Mark A. Wrathall, "Existential Phenomenology," 40.

<sup>859</sup> "The true Cogito does not define the subject's existence in terms of the thought he has of existing, and furthermore does not convert the indubitability of the world into the indubitability of thought about the world, nor finally does it replace the world itself by the world as meaning. On the contrary it recognizes my thought itself as an inalienable fact, and does away with any kind of idealism in revealing me as 'being-in-the-world'." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xiv.

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

was concerned not with what things mean in thought, but with how they manifest in a world encircled by relations and influenced by human action. According to David Morris, phenomenology finished its work by trying to bring the thinker back into the world, and subsequent philosophers (existentialists in particular) have shown the limitations and failures of phenomenology and the obstacles to moving from the subject to the other things that affect human lives.<sup>861</sup> The aim of existential phenomenology, shared by Merleau-Ponty, is to help the reader to orient themselves practically in the world in which phenomena can unfold.<sup>862</sup>

Merleau-Ponty has made a very significant contribution to this aim. Unlike Heidegger, who left corporeality aside, Merleau-Ponty presents perception and the body as the most important phenomena for what one understands as being in the world (*être au monde*). Merleau-Ponty's insight into the corporeal nature of perception, the essence of human existence, is considered by many scholars to be his most important and original contribution to philosophy.<sup>863</sup> These insights are not limited to philosophy and psychology, but extend to art, literature, history, and politics. Because the significance of phenomena was global for Merleau-Ponty, he sought a multifaceted approach to phenomena. In his view, all aspects of human life are influenced by an embodied, situated world-view perspective.

### 3.2.2. *Merleau-Ponty's areas of interest*

It was not only the context of philosophical ideas that was important for Merleau-Ponty's thought. According to Landes,

[...] drawing from existentialism and phenomenology, certainly, but also from empirical psychology, Gestalt psychology, neurology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, structuralism, sociology, political philosophy, the philosophy of history, and advances in literature and painting, Merleau-Ponty's approach took up not simply a set of solutions from these sources in order to create a mere philosophical hodgepodge, but rather incorporated what he understood to be their promise into an unified patchwork in the direction of a genuine philosophical interrogation.<sup>864</sup>

In this subsection I will briefly discuss Merleau-Ponty's interest in psychology and the arts, which figured prominently in the argument of his philosophical thought.

#### 3.2.2.1. *Merleau-Ponty and psychology*

Aron Gurwitsch (1901–1973) is a Lithuanian-born phenomenologist who influenced the young Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty met Gurwitsch in the mid-1930s, thanks to Marcel.

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<sup>861</sup> David Morris, *The Sense of Space* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 58.

<sup>862</sup> Carman and Hansen, "Introduction," 10.

<sup>863</sup> Ibid.

<sup>864</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, xi.

In 1935, when Merleau-Ponty returned to Paris as junior member in École Normale, he attended Gurwitsch's lectures on Gestalt psychology.<sup>865</sup>

For Merleau-Ponty, this phenomenologist was very important because he bridged the gap between Husserl's phenomenological reduction and the Gestalt psychology.<sup>866</sup> Merleau-Ponty deemed that such a bridge was needed, because although Husserl rejected Gestalt psychology as he believed that all psychology tended to naturalize consciousness,<sup>867</sup> Merleau-Ponty considered that there was a convergence between Husserl's "eidetic psychology" and Gestalt psychology. Later Merleau-Ponty sought to identify the "diffuse" influence of phenomenology on modern psychology, such as espoused by Karl Jaspers, Ludwig Binswanger, and Eugène Minkowski.<sup>868</sup>

Gestalt psychology, developed by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Koffka and others in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was a response to theories that attempted to recreate perceptual or psychic experience by constructing it out of mechanistic or atomistic building blocks. Its central insight, that the whole is not merely the sum of its parts, implies that the direct perception of meaning and value takes place in a field structured by figure and ground.<sup>869</sup> Initially Gestalt psychologists were looking at visual perception and the perception of motion, but in later studies the significance of perceptual structures was developed to address a much wider range of issues, including the behavior of organisms, learning, and other psychological, social, and even political issues.

Another important figure in Gestalt psychology, who is associated with the later period of Gestalt studies, and who had a considerable influence on Merleau-Ponty, especially in his first two books, is German neurologist and psychologist Kurt Goldstein (1878–1965).<sup>870</sup> However, although Merleau-Ponty was attracted to Gestalt theory from an early stage of his philosophical development as a way of describing perception and overcoming the split between empiricism and intellectualism, he always maintained, following Gurwitsch, a certain critique of Gestalt psychology, stressing that the realism inherent in the theory of the Gestalt has to be

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<sup>865</sup> Carman and Hansen, "Introduction," 2. About Merleau-Ponty's relations with Gestalt psychology, see: Lester Embree, "Merleau-Ponty's Examination of Gestalt psychology," *Research in Phenomenology* 10 (1980): 89-121. Merleau-Ponty acknowledges Gurwitsch's contribution in the article "Some Aspects and Developments in Gestalt Psychology" (1936). Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 3.

<sup>866</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 90.

<sup>867</sup> More on the relationship between Husserl's phenomenology and psychology, see Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 22-31.

<sup>868</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 43.

<sup>869</sup> The principle of figure and background states that people instinctively perceive objects as being in the foreground or background. However, it is a unifying theory of perception, arguing that the attributes of the whole cannot be determined by analysing the individual parts.

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*, 90, 10.

overcome by returning to the phenomenological field.<sup>871</sup> He especially criticized Köhler's Gestalt psychology, which returned to the causal mode of explanation found in the universe of mechanics, the objects of physics.<sup>872</sup>

After publishing *Sense and Non-sense*,<sup>873</sup> a collection of essays on aesthetics, metaphysics, and psychology, and having gained a strong reputation, Merleau-Ponty joined the faculty of Sorbonne in 1948 and in 1949 became professor of psychology and education at the Institute of Psychology. Here he turned his attention to theoretical issues in developmental psychology, including the experimental work of Jean Piaget, Henri Wallon, Wolfgang Kohler, and Melanie Klein.<sup>874</sup> The lecture notes from this period are published as *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures (1949–1952)*.<sup>875</sup>

Merleau-Ponty writes extensively on psychoanalysis in the Sorbonne lectures. However, he distinguishes between a “broad” and a “narrow” conception of psychoanalysis and, while acknowledging that Freud's theory supports both, he favors the former. Merleau-Ponty was greatly influenced by Georges Politzer's critique of Freud, and he often quotes Politzer, who summarized Freud's theories. Merleau-Ponty also discusses extensively the work of several contemporary psychoanalysts, including (his friend) Jacques Lacan, Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, Helene Deutsch, Germaine Guex, and J. L. Moreno, as well as several psychoanalytic anthropologists.<sup>876</sup>

Psychological sciences had very big impact on the development of Merleau-Ponty's ideas.<sup>877</sup> As Claude Imbert observes, psychology, alongside other humanities (linguistics, anthropology, psychoanalysis) or biomedical sciences (neurophysiology, biology, ethology, embryology), continuously fed Merleau-Ponty's work and thought by projecting the light of an “external vision” onto the human (or animal). Gestalt psychology, behaviorism, animal psychology, psychopathology, and child psychology helped Merleau-Ponty to rethink life, perception, consciousness, and knowledge in a way that was lacking in the philosophical tradition.

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<sup>871</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>872</sup> Michael Corriveau, “Phenomenology, Psychology, and Radical Behaviorism: Skinner and Merleau-Ponty on Behavior,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 3.1 (1972): 20.

<sup>873</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

<sup>874</sup> Carman and Hansen, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>875</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010).

<sup>876</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>877</sup> It should be noted that Merleau-Ponty was married to Suzanne Berthe Jolibois (1914–2010), a prominent physician and psychiatrist. Fisher, *The Essential Writings*, 5.

Already in *The Structure of Behavior*,<sup>878</sup> Merleau-Ponty draws on inter-war German psychology, which advocates a holistic view of perception, motor skills, learning, and the living person in general, in order to resist an associative, mechanistic, and reductionist conception of behavior. From behaviorism and animal psychology, which propose studying psychological phenomena only externally and without introspection, Merleau-Ponty adopts the concept of *capital de comportement*, which later becomes an axis for the new definition of the organism. What characterizes a living being is the fact that it is behavioral, in that it exists only in a constant dialectic with its environment, which is outside it. The orientation towards the external is therefore the primary fact by which the organism exists and signals itself as such, and is not the result of a gradual adaptation resulting from a composition of blind reflexes. The concept of behavior understood in this way, Imbert explains, is not only of methodological value, as some psychologists understand it, but it guarantees the objectivity of behavior.<sup>879</sup> Merleau-Ponty sees behavior as pointing to the original order of reality. Behavior is a structure, that is a frame of reference, manifested at the interface between the body and the environment. Merleau-Ponty later reflected on this structure in an analogy with language.<sup>880</sup>

In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, with the help of the psychological sciences, Merleau-Ponty finds a way to break down traditional philosophical conceptions of perception. The psychology of form, which shows experimentally that the perception of human beings is not determined by the absolute properties of individual stimuli but by the structural properties of the entire perceptual field, allows Merleau-Ponty to show perception of experience not as consisting of a disjointed patchwork of sensations, but as being globally structured from the very beginning. Studies in psychopathology, child psychology, and ethnopsychology show the origin and heterogeneity of the categories with which subjects structure the world, thus refuting the Kantian postulate of a universal transcendental equipment, equally applicable to experience. More profoundly, Imbert argues, such an appeal to the “margins” of the intellect – especially to the data of childhood experience – allows one to emphasize the gap that separates perception from abstract intellectual activity, and to bring out the nature of the imperatives that come, in the first place, directly from reality.<sup>881</sup>

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<sup>878</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

<sup>879</sup> Imbert, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 29.

<sup>880</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 452-454.

<sup>881</sup> Imbert, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 30. On the comparison of Merleau-Ponty’s and Piaget’s notion of structure, see Richard Rojcewicz, “Merleau-Ponty and Cognitive Child Psychology,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 18.2 (1987): 201. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1308104508?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&imgSeq=16> [accessed 01 November 2022].

When Merleau-Ponty analyzes childish drawing (based on the work of the psychologist Georges-Henri Luquet<sup>882</sup>), he observes that the child's ignorance of perspective expresses their "immeasurable objectivity," that is the child's effort to represent things themselves, including their affective resonances, rather than to copy their appearance. The child's drawing illustrates their freedom from the postulates of culture, and invites one to free oneself from the evidence that a long pictorial tradition since the Renaissance has given to perspective. Children's drawings, as is often the case with great painters, helps one to grasp other aspects of pictorial representation, such as the creation of an affective counterpart to objects.<sup>883</sup>

Merleau-Ponty based his philosophical reflections on extensive and critical discussions of the psychological literature.<sup>884</sup> He drew on the work of Koffka, Kohler, Wertheimer, Goldstein, Freud, and many other psychoanalysts, as well as Wallon, Piaget, and other developmental psychologists.<sup>885</sup> The facts raised by psychology allowed Merleau-Ponty to critically evaluate the world of art too.

### 3.2.2.2. *Merleau-Ponty and art*

The same philosophical questions about the interaction between the self, the body, the mind, and the world remain important in Merleau-Ponty's reflections on art. In his major essays on the visual arts – "Cézanne's Doubt" (1945), "Indirect Language and Voices of Silence" (1952) and "The Eye and the Mind" (1961) – Merleau-Ponty attempts to challenge the prevailing philosophical and scientific views on perception, meaning, the imagination, and the subjectivity of the human person.<sup>886</sup>

"Art is about neither truth nor pleasure; art *is expression*, the paradoxical taking up of the past toward a future in a response to that which only exists after the expression,"<sup>887</sup> is how Landes describes Merleau-Ponty's philosophical attitude to art. In other words, neither the conception of a piece of art, nor the content of ideas but the execution itself, the complete work is what must precede. Art is very special for human beings, because, in Merleau-Ponty's view,

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<sup>882</sup> Georges-Henri Luquet (1876–1965) was a French philosopher, student of Bergson and Lévy-Bruhl, ethnographer, and pioneer in the study of child drawing.

<sup>883</sup> Imbert, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 33.

<sup>884</sup> For Merleau-Ponty's critique of psychology, see Francois H. LaPointe, "Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenological critique of Psychology," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 2.2 (1972): 244-255.

<sup>885</sup> Amedeo Giorgi, "The Meta-Psychology of Merleau Ponty as a Possible Basis for Unity in Psychology," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 5.1 (1974): 54.

<sup>886</sup> Jonathan Gilmore, "Between Philosophy and Art," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty* (2005), 291.

<sup>887</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 36.

it can reveal the truth of being in very appealing way, as the material traces of the creative actor's expressive activity can awaken the sense of the expression in another person.<sup>888</sup>

Jonathan Gilmore notes the double meaning of the English word 'realization' in terms of speaking about Merleau-Ponty's ideas on expression through art:

Art expresses, but not just in the limited sense of articulating something that exists in one's mind prior to being made public. Rather, art expresses in the sense of bringing into being something that is only inchoately, if at all, conceived before it is given form. The English term "realization" has the dual meaning that expression does in this view: one can realize something in the sense of discovering some truth that was, in principle, available prior to its realization; however, one can also realize something in the sense of bringing it into being – in a sense, creating it.<sup>889</sup>

As with the drawings of children, in the canvasses of such painters as Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso, Merleau-Ponty sees their ability to interrogate the rich presence of objects in one's lived experience, rather than presenting them according to the conventional beliefs. According to Landes, the goal of the modern painter for Merleau-Ponty "is not a perfect representation, but rather a genuine expression."<sup>890</sup> Merleau-Ponty approaches cinema with a similar expectation, and discusses music and literature in a similar vein. Here, perception becomes the key to understanding any work of art, and a similar expectation is expressed with regard to visual arts such as painting – the paradoxes of the world of perception must encompass all experience, including art.<sup>891</sup>

In *The World of Perception*<sup>892</sup> Merleau-Ponty attacks the clear division between space and the things that occupy it. Cezanne tried to reveal forms (through the arrangement of colors) as one sees them. Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, when Cezanne paints an apple with great patience, he produces a texture of color such that the apple eventually swells and bursts out of the confines of the neat scribble.<sup>893</sup> In opposition to the classical doctrine of perspective, Cezanne sought to recreate the birth of landscape through perceptual experience itself. Lazy

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<sup>888</sup> Ibid., 36. Although all human life is an objective expression (which means that it addresses the other), expression through art can be seen as an elevated expression – persisting in creation.

<sup>889</sup> Gilmore, "Between Philosophy and Art," 303.

<sup>890</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 250.

<sup>891</sup> The world of perception, according to Merleau-Ponty, is a world that does not require calculation or measurement. It is enough to open one's eyes. But a lot of effort and time and cultural activity has been devoted to somehow diminishing this world. It is only thanks to modern art and philosophy that people are rediscovering the world in which they live and which they still tend to forget. By giving up trust in one's senses to scientists and experts who explain things better, one begins to imagine the world as something other than "the fleshy spectacle which passes before my eyes." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2004), 41. Merleau-Ponty cites the art of Balzac, Proust, Valéry, Cézanne and others as examples of such art.

<sup>892</sup> The book consists of seven conversations by Merleau-Ponty, written and read in a series of radio broadcasts in 1948. In these lectures Merleau-Ponty discusses or cites Breton, Bataille, Blanchot, Mallarmé, Ponge, Kafka, Proust, Cézanne, and Sartre.

<sup>893</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, 52.



observers, according to Merleau-Ponty, will only notice errors of perspective. A more attentive viewer, however, will feel that no two objects can be seen at the same time. This is a world in which the edges of space are separated by time, and the gaze must move from one edge to the other. It is a world in which existence is not served up as if on a plate, but is found over time. Space is no longer a medium without a point of view, without a body, without a position in space. In other words, space is no longer a medium of pure intelligence.<sup>894</sup> Following the insights of painters, philosophers, and psychologists, Merleau-Ponty argues that one's relation to space is not that of a disembodied subject and a distant object. Humans are beings who inhabit space, through time, as their home.

Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on psychology and art emerge in the context of his philosophy of perception, which is inseparable from movement and which I will discuss in the fourth part of this chapter (3.4.).

### **3.3. The Influence of Mauss on Merleau-Ponty**

The previous part of the chapter has introduced the main influential sources for Merleau-Ponty's philosophy that encompass, philosophers, psychologists, and artists. In this part of the chapter, I will present Mauss as very important source for Merleau-Ponty's thought development.

As set out in Chapter 1, Mauss was a pioneer in the study of movement, shedding light on the phenomenon in such a way that all aspects of the phenomenon – the biological, the sociological, and the psychological – are emphasized. Merleau-Ponty was familiar with Mauss's work. Merleau-Ponty himself comments, "Now no one in France has anticipated this more supple sociology as Marcel Mauss has. In many respects, social anthropology consists of Mauss's works, which are still vital in our time."<sup>895</sup>

In order to achieve my goal, of thoroughly investigating Mauss's influence on Merleau-Ponty, I will seek to answer the question to what extent Mauss's revelations have been taken for granted and have provided an unquestionable basis for Merleau-Ponty's reflections on movement.

Acknowledging the influence is important for two reasons. First, it is essential for recognizing Merleau-Ponty's original contribution to the study of movement. The other reason for this is no less important. Seeing Merleau-Ponty's ideas in the light of Mauss's

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<sup>894</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>895</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "From Mauss to Lévi-Strauss," in *Signs*, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 114.

work can help to avoid the misinterpretation of embodiment that brings the philosophical problem of the dualism of body and mind (against which Merleau-Ponty fought) into the areas that have not previously encountered them.<sup>896</sup> Crossley suggests that it is important to see Mauss and Merleau-Ponty in relation to avoid abstractness and such a theorization of “embodiment” that ends with the body’s focus on itself, leading to bodily dysfunction.<sup>897</sup>

There are two obvious points of intersection when thinking about Mauss’s influence on Merleau-Ponty: one through Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism, the other, the mention of Mauss in Merleau-Ponty’s “Psychological Lectures.” The first subsection discusses the interconnections, starting with relations of the triangle of Mauss, Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty (3.3.1.), while the second intersection, related to the dialogue with psychology, forms the subject of section 3.3.4. The second subsection (3.3.2.) centers on Merleau-Ponty’s statements concerning Mauss and the “Technique of the Body” in the essay “From Mauss to Lévi-Strauss”. Following on from the discussion of the relationship with structuralism, the particular focus here will be on the closeness of Mauss and Merleau-Ponty’s approach to movement. Section 3.3.3. offers a brief comparison which will review the similarities between the scientific methods used by Mauss and Merleau-Ponty. The discussion of the treatment of society and the use of the concept of habitus – the two most apparent commonalities in Mauss and Merleau-Ponty’s work – concludes this part of the chapter (subchapters 3.3.5 and 3.3.6.).

### 3.3.1. Mauss, Lévi-Strauss, and Merleau-Ponty

According to Keith Hart, Claude Lévi-Strauss was the chief champion of Mauss’s heritage and merit, whose introduction to the collected essays was designed to harness Mauss’s reputation to his own theory of reciprocity.<sup>898</sup> However, there is controversy amongst scholars over presenting Mauss to future generations through structuralism.

Mauss was a great inspiration for Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism. Immediately after Mauss’s death in 1950, a collection of Mauss’s early major essays, entitled *Sociology and Anthropology*, were published with an introduction by Lévi-Strauss.<sup>899</sup> In it, Lévi-Strauss presented Mauss’s work as a not quite “mature” version of his own structuralism. To publish

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<sup>896</sup> Such as sociology or dance.

<sup>897</sup> Nick Crossley, “Researching Embodiment by Way of ‘Body Techniques’,” *The Sociological Review* 55.1 (2007): 80-94.

<sup>898</sup> Keith Hart, “Marcel Mauss: In pursuit of the Whole. A Review Essay,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49.2 (2007): 482. Although Merleau-Ponty’s essay is more focused on recognition of the importance of his colleague’s Lévi-Strauss’s work, Mauss is presented in it as a very important author.

<sup>899</sup> Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: PUF, 1950).

Mauss's work with a Lévi-Strauss introduction, which is still in print today, is a serious distortion of Mauss's work, Szokolczai and Thomassen deplore.<sup>900</sup> Their critique is that Lévi-Strauss distorted and deprived Mauss's ideas of meaning (about the system of "total services") by transforming them into "the foundations of his mechanised, lifeless structuralism."<sup>901</sup>

Jean-François Lyotard also points to the interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's student Lefort of Mauss's famous work "The Gift," which is opposed to the structuralist interpretation given by Lévi-Strauss in his introduction. Mauss, according to Lyotard, is clearly more inclined towards an understanding of the gift than towards a formal systematization of the social or interpersonal tensions inherent in the gift.<sup>902</sup>

However, there is another interpretation of events which emphasizes Lévi-Strauss's sincere gratitude to Mauss. Leonardo Tavares maintains that by inviting Lévi-Strauss to write the introduction to Mauss's *Sociology and Anthropology*, Georges Gurvitch captured the historical moment of structuralism. Undoubtedly the question arises at the outset whether Lévi-Strauss's introduction was written to introduce the works in the collection or whether it says more about the author's own structuralist project. Nevertheless, in Tavares's opinion, it is no coincidence that the first steps of structuralism's methodological rigour are revealed in the introduction to Mauss's work. Lévi-Strauss regarded him as the forerunner of his project, in a sense the pioneer of the structuralist method. He justifies the fusion of anthropology and linguistics on the basis of the desire to take anthropological theories out of the predominantly biological scientific paradigm in order to confront them with the cultural and social phenomena under study, the constructed facts and the world of symbols.<sup>903</sup>

Whichever way one looks at it, the figure of Lévi-Strauss was important for Merleau-Ponty's exposure to Mauss's ideas. This is at least suggested by the title of Merleau-Ponty's essay "From Mauss to Lévi-Strauss," which I will discuss immediately after some further comments on Lévi-Strauss's "Introduction to the Writings of Marcel Mauss."

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<sup>900</sup> Szokolczai and Thomassen. "Marcel Mauss. From Sacrifice to Gift-Giving", 66. Szokolczai and Thomassen also draw attention to the need for the liberation of Mauss "from the usual encapsulation in a Durkheim/Mauss/Lévi-Strauss trilogy, as his mature work simply cannot be encompassed within either." Ibid.

<sup>901</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>902</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Phenomenology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 105. The fact noted in the previous chapter (2.3.1.) that Bourdieu had to take a detour in order to move away from philosophy (in reaction to Lévi-Strauss's strain of philosophy) towards sociology in order to get closer to Mauss's ideas, is also indicative of the 'disservice' done by intervention of structuralism in 'representing' Mauss's ideas.

<sup>903</sup> Leonardo de Sousa Oliveira Tavares, "A estrutura em território filosófico: uma leitura de Mauss, Lévi-Strauss e Merleau-Ponty," *Trilhas Filosóficas* 9.1 (2016): 64. <http://www.marceljousse.com/qui-est-marcel-jousse/une-courte-biographie> [accessed 10 February 2022].

*Lévi-Strauss's Introduction to Mauss*

Lévi-Strauss highlighted the revolutionary character of Mauss's works and the novelty of Mauss's statements, which influenced him very much.<sup>904</sup> Lévi-Strauss drew attention to the fact that Mauss was one of the first (from 1926 onwards) to emphasize the importance of bodily techniques for the correct interpretation of individual-group relations.<sup>905</sup> Another problem of thinking Mauss addressed, Lévi-Strauss shows, was the status quo of detached scientific observation.<sup>906</sup>

Here I will briefly discuss the first of the points mentioned by Lévi-Strauss (the correction of the individual-group relation), which is controversial but becomes important in the relationship between Mauss and Merleau-Ponty.

Lévi-Strauss states that in providing examples of body techniques, Mauss effectively illuminated the subordinate relation of the psychological to the sociological.<sup>907</sup> Mauss showed that the modes of individual behavior are never symbolic to themselves, rather they are the elements of a symbolic (collective) system.

However, critics note that Lévi-Strauss's reflections on the conformity and primacy of society over the individual, the determination of bodily action and the constitution of the psyche under the control of the collective, are nothing less than the principle of the structuralist project, the result of Lévi-Strauss's reading of Mauss. And the resulting observation that the psychological formulation is nothing more than a translation of the sociological structure found at the level of the individual psyche does not reflect the creative tension between the individual and the social revealed by Mauss.<sup>908</sup>

It can be argued that Lévi-Strauss would not have credited Mauss with laying the foundations of structuralism if Mauss's theories had not been appropriate. However, as Tavares

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<sup>904</sup> Few recognized the importance of this great thinker, and this is what Lévi-Strauss wanted to reverse, or to contribute to the repayment of a debt (his and that of his generation). "The teaching of Marcel Mauss was one to which few can be compared. No acknowledgment of him can be proportionate to our debt." Quote from Lévi-Strauss on the front of *The Gift*. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>905</sup> Likewise, social anthropologist Wendy James claims, that Mauss was the first to call this level of material or corporeal life and its public face by using the Latin term *habitus*, which later was developed by his disciple Pierre Bourdieu. James, "One of us," 20.

<sup>906</sup> "To call the social fact *total* is not merely to signify that *everything observed is part of the observation*, but also, and above all, that in a science in which the observer is of the same nature, as his object of study, *the observer himself is a part of his observation*." Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction," 29 (emphasis original).

<sup>907</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>908</sup> In a similar way, Tavares argues, Lévi-Strauss interprets the universality of Mauss's gift as a formal principle derived from abstraction rather than as an empirically verified fact. Eventually Lévi-Strauss's proposal approaches the natural sciences and to some extent attempts to define in terms of structural systems what Mauss described only as the continuous flow of factors that make up the social world – a dimension that the sociologist has to address globally. Tavares, "A estrutura em território filosófico," 67-69.

shows, Merleau-Ponty saw through and corrected the unforeseen ethnological errors of structuralism and, to some extent, of Mauss, by introducing a dimension of historicity into his philosophical reflections on being in the world.<sup>909</sup>

According to Noland, after praising his predecessor, in the second part of the “Introduction” Lévi-Strauss criticizes Mauss for failing to go beyond the order of description, and hence of the meaning that the participants attribute to their actions, towards the objective analysis of the phenomena concerned. (Although, somewhat paradoxically, Lévi-Strauss accompanies his accusation of Mauss’s subjectivism with the assertion that any description of a cultural practice is incomplete if it does not take into account the subjective experience of the participant.) So, it is Merleau-Ponty who will find that objective analysis and subjective imagination intersect fruitfully in Mauss’s work. According to Noland, Merleau-Ponty takes up Lévi-Strauss’s critique of Mauss, but turns it on its head by turning Mauss’s “weakness” – his tendency to place value on subjective experience – into a strength.<sup>910</sup>

### 3.3.2. Merleau-Ponty about Mauss and “Techniques of the Body”

I will begin my discussion of Mauss’s influence on Merleau-Ponty with Merleau-Ponty’s own thoughts on Mauss in relation to the latter’s view of the relationship between the individual and social and cultural facts. It should not be forgotten that Merleau-Ponty deliberately treated Mauss as standing in opposition to structuralism’s reductions.,

Mauss’s contribution, which Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the most, is a deep respect for individual, social reality, and cultural diversity. According to Merleau-Ponty, these things had been raised by Mauss in such a way that no one was made impervious to the other.<sup>911</sup> There was no need to choose between the individual and the collective. Instead of opposing society and the individual, or providing very little explanation of their relationship,<sup>912</sup> Mauss showed how they are actually related and articulated this relation very clearly in his works. The *socium* lost its status of a massive and opaque reality. It has now become an effective symbolic system or symbolic network of values that have been embedded in the depths of the individual. According Merleau-Ponty, Mauss even provided concepts, which have served as “emotional cement” between various interrelated facts,<sup>913</sup> and demonstrated the ways societies function,

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<sup>909</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>910</sup> Noland, “The ‘Structuring’ Body,” 43, 44. For more on Lévi-Strauss’s critique of Mauss, see: Ibid., 43-45.

<sup>911</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 116.

<sup>912</sup> As Durkheim did, for example – defining the social as “pertaining to the psychical.” Ibid., 114.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid., 116.

without reducing them to “effects,” or without taking anything out of the picture.<sup>914</sup> This was the essence of Mauss’s symbolic treatment of society.

Again, the context is important here. One can see that in speaking this way, Merleau-Ponty is strongly criticizing the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, and contrasting Mauss’s protophenomenology<sup>915</sup> with it.

As will become clear, it is very important to Merleau-Ponty that scientific research is never separated from one’s experiences as a social being.<sup>916</sup> This relates to the question of why Merleau-Ponty prefers “Techniques of the Body” to “The Gift.” Noland argues that it is very important for Merleau-Ponty that the first essay was based on the author’s own movement experience (specifically, swimming), and that the starting point of Mauss’s theory was his own habit. Thus, in thinking about the objectivity that the social sciences in general strive for (but which, according to Merleau-Ponty, is a false and impossible goal to achieve), Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the importance of embodied experience. As Noland writes,

Merleau-Ponty underscores the true significance of Mauss’s contribution to a phenomenological theory of gesture: his insistence on the centrality of interoceptive, kinesthetic experience—both that of the subject observed and that of the subject observing—for understanding how objective, meaning-making structures work, how they can take root in the body but also how they can be changed.<sup>917</sup>

In this understanding, techniques of the body play a particularly important role. It offers a method of observation (such as Mauss uses in “Techniques of the Body”) that requires a double process of simultaneous “décentration et recentration” from the observer, where one’s own subjective “intimate experience of living with others” becomes the source of a self-reflecting and objectifying analysis, which makes it possible to highlight the specific ways in which ones use ones’ own bodies and create meaning. Noland argues that the constant alternation of points of view, between first and third person narratives, practiced in *Phenomenology of Perception*, is Merleau-Ponty’s preferred method, promising not only an understanding of different systems of meaning-making, but also of the drive for meaning inherent in all of them and underlying them. It is also a method which, like that of “Techniques of the Body,” takes one out of oneself through a survey of other cultural techniques<sup>918</sup> in order

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<sup>914</sup> Without leaving out either the reality of the individual, or the social reality, or the cultural diversity.

<sup>915</sup> Noland, “The ‘Structuring’ Body,” 45.

<sup>916</sup> “In sociology, too, there are considerations of scale, and the truth of general sociology in no way detracts from that of microsociology.” Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 119.

<sup>917</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>918</sup> Examples of this are particularly abundant in psychology lecture notes. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010).

to better understand the techniques in which one's own body participates. This method leads to the realization that techniques of the body are also artificial, the body is not entirely one's own body:<sup>919</sup>

An invasion of the social occurs even in the corporal: signs, instituted symbols, tears. It is not a matter of reducing the individual to the collective; the individual transforms institutions. But one cannot isolate within an individual life a sole fact that is not equally in sociology's jurisdiction.<sup>920</sup>

### 3.3.3. *Similarity between the Merleau-Ponty and Mauss approaches*

What becomes clear from the previous subsection, is Mauss's attentivity to the facticity of embodied experience goes in line with Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology.<sup>921</sup> But the closeness between Mauss and Merleau-Ponty can be seen not only in their approach to movement, which alternates between first and third person points of view, but also in their scientific approaches related to interdisciplinarity and generalizing theories.

As described in Chapter 1, Mauss saw social phenomena as interconnected, but he did not give any of them a privileged position in his sociological explanation. According to Mauss, any a priori generalization should be avoided, because ultimately it is about scientific abstractions. An equally important part of Mauss's work was to reorient the sociological heritage and to establish new links between sociology, biology, psychology, history, linguistics, and psychoanalysis, and to open up anthropology to this new space. He maintained that instead of each institution seeking its own (moral, theological, or economic) basis for society, they should be taken together: "one goes in turn from the whole to the parts and that the parts to the whole."<sup>922</sup> The interdisciplinary approach was demanded by his concept of *l'homme total*, which marked Mauss's attempt to study the whole human being, conceived as a complex structure in three dimensions, the psychological, social, and organic. (Accordingly, aided by the notion of structure, Merleau-Ponty will arrive at the conclusion that "the 'physical', the 'vital' and the 'mental' do not represent three powers of being, but three dialectics."<sup>923</sup>)

Mauss attributed the true manifestation of society to collective habits, in other words, to a set of rules of human behavior, thought, and action that undoubtedly affect all its members and their relationship to things. As Mauss scholars have noted, over time, the focus of his

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<sup>919</sup> Noland, "The 'Structuring' Body," 47-48.

<sup>920</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology and Pedagogy*, 234.

<sup>921</sup> As Karsenti notes, "paying attention to the concrete is above all paying attention to lived experience as such." Karsenti, "The Maussian Shift," 78.

<sup>922</sup> Mauss, "Sociology: Its Divisions," 62.

<sup>923</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 184.

attention increasingly turned to the actions and actors that created norms, values, and social institutions.<sup>924</sup>

In a similar way, Merleau-Ponty was suspicious about strict scientific explanations. In describing the structure of human behavior, he highlighted that a structure can never be confused with an idea. According to Merleau-Ponty, things themselves form more coherent structures than any theoretical model. It is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the mind before its capacity to understand can be strengthened. Behind the basic structures that create the link between consciousness and the world, there is a primordial state of existence, a way of being that predates any level of civilisation. In this dimension, in which the objective and subjective sides are confused, mathematical structures cannot order the relation of belonging to the weaving of the world, because at the initial level everything that exists in the world merges into a unity that cannot be analyzed piecemeal without harm.<sup>925</sup> As Merleau-Ponty puts it, “objective thought and analytical reflection are two aspects of the same mistake, two ways of overlooking the phenomena.”<sup>926</sup>

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Merleau-Ponty had a keen interest in psychology and art. He was also a great agitator for cooperation between philosophy and science (sociology in particular). In his opinion,

We need neither tear down the behavioral sciences to lay the foundations of philosophy, nor tear down philosophy to lay the foundations of the behavioral sciences. Every science secretes an ontology; every ontology anticipates a body of knowledge. It is up to us to come to terms with this situation and see to it that both philosophy and science are possible.<sup>927</sup>

Thus, Mauss and Merleau-Ponty were of a similar mind, both in terms of the need for interdisciplinarity and the limitations of separate disciplinary methods. But even more, both treated the embodied action in the world as the primary, and therefore privileged, manifestation of human existence.

#### 3.3.4. *Mauss in Merleau-Ponty's Psychological Lectures*

At the Sorbonne, while teaching various courses in developmental psychology and linguistics, Merleau-Ponty studied the works of Durkheim and Mauss and commented

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<sup>924</sup> Gofman, “A Vague but Suggestive Concept,” 68.

<sup>925</sup> Tavares, “A estrutura em território filosófico,” 75.

<sup>926</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 514-515.

<sup>927</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Philosopher and Sociology,” in *Signs* (1964), 98.



enthusiastically on the writings of Lévi-Strauss.<sup>928</sup> In this subsection I will discuss how Merleau-Ponty draws on Mauss's work in his psychological lectures.

"From now on, we must take into account the psychological and social phenomena without always reducing one to the other."<sup>929</sup> Merleau-Ponty's statement sounds very similar to Mauss's stress on the importance of "two special kingdoms: the kingdom of consciousness on the one hand, and the kingdom of collective consciousness and community on the other."<sup>930</sup>

In line with Mauss, Merleau-Ponty welcomes all fruitful collaboration of psychologists and sociologists. For example (and it is very likely that it was Mauss's remarks on *Totem and Taboo* that influenced this understanding), Merleau-Ponty reminds that, despite his dogmatism, Freud has the merit of paving the way for the analysis of pathological phenomena in relation to sociological facts.<sup>931</sup> And as the ideological example of this needed collaboration, he cites Mauss and discusses his "Rapports réels et pratiques de la psychologie et de la sociologie" in the chapter "Mauss's Ideas About the Relationship Between Psychology and Sociology."<sup>932</sup>

Merleau-Ponty introduces Mauss's basic view of the distinction between psychology and sociology: psychology may be animal and human, but sociology is essentially human and anthropological, because it deals with the institutions that are a feature of the common life of human beings. Also, psychology focuses on the individual, whereas sociology focuses on the collective. Collective psychology or interpsychology, cannot replace sociology because, according to Mauss, social fact equally involves the material substrate and the actuality of the group, whereas interpsychology deals only with the mentality of the group.

Importantly, Merleau-Ponty draws attention to the fact that the invasion of the social takes place in corporeal things: signs, institutionalized symbols, tears. It is not the reduction of the individual to the collective; rather, the individual transforms institutions. However, in the life of the individual, there is not a single fact that can be singled out which is also outside the jurisdiction of sociology.<sup>933</sup> Psychology is an important complement to sociology when it is the psychology of the whole person, when it is contrasted with the psychology of abilities and functions, and when it is used to describe the relationship between consciousness and the

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<sup>928</sup> Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 14.

<sup>929</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 231.

<sup>930</sup> Mauss, "Rapports réels et pratiques," 5.

<sup>931</sup> "At the end of his life, [Freud] returns to his first affirmation in saying that neurosis is a caricature of social phenomena. Hysteria is thus a deformed work of art, paranoid mania a counterfeited philosophy, and the obsession is a deformed religion." Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 232. He later reiterates this by referring to Mauss's thoughts on *Totem and Taboo*. *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>932</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 234.

<sup>933</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

body.<sup>934</sup> Sociology's "service" to psychology is to show that there are states that are normal in the collective but become pathological individually. Merleau-Ponty reminds one that for Mauss, linguistics is part of sociology, and from linguistics, psychology can learn to treat the human being as a whole, since language is a biological, psychological, and social phenomenon.

The symbols of the body (for example, Vishnu's many hand symbols as an expression of the diversity of consciousness in society, or the meaning of right and left) are neither physiological nor psychological, but essentially institutional. The principles of proximity and distance also have institutional and social origins.

In summary, Merleau-Ponty argues that Mauss recommended cooperative relations within the purposively undefined boundaries of psychology and sociology. Both thinkers advocate reciprocal envelopment rather than competition. Sociology studies institutionalized human life; psychology studies human life from birth and does not reduce it to social phenomena. According to Merleau-Ponty, Mauss's conception of techniques of the body is crucial for understanding the relations occurring in the individual embodiment of the collective spirit:

Mauss says that humanity has constructed its spirit in using its body (body technique) in a complete osmosis of all domains that were typically distinguished. Psychology reveals a perspective of comprehension; sociology an objective perspective on institutions and norms.

One understands thus the necessity of convergent effort toward a sole reality which blends body, soul, and society because it is concerned with "phenomena of totality." But the ambiguity remains, since individuals and society are two totalities: there is therefore a totality in a totality and a double perspective. Psychology can no longer be a faculty psychology; it must instruct us to know the affected man in all his being, no matter what physical or psychological shock he has undergone.<sup>935</sup>

### 3.3.5. Mauss's and Merleau-Ponty's understanding of society

As stated in the quotation above, Merleau-Ponty did not see human psychology as separate from social life. His observations about the close connection between psychology and sociology are in dialogue with the ideas of Mauss. So, what was Merleau-Ponty's attitude towards society itself?

James Schmidt's book *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Between Phenomenology and Structuralism* (1985),<sup>936</sup> which discusses the influence of Mauss's work on Merleau-Ponty,

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<sup>934</sup> Merleau-Ponty mentions Mauss's phenomenon of *thanatomania* as the possible example, where psychopathological studies of psychoses and neuroses can be applied to the study of Australian society. Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 235.

<sup>935</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 235.

<sup>936</sup> James Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Between Phenomenology and Structuralism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985).

points out that Mauss and Merleau-Ponty are close in the sense that they treat society as an effective system of symbols that has a very strong influence on the individual. Both thinkers, according to Schmidt, emphasize the specificity of social facts. Mauss's approach that "in society there are not merely ideas and rules, but also men and groups and their behaviours,"<sup>937</sup> is very close to Merleau-Ponty's. Mauss and Merleau-Ponty's common vision of society is the subject of this section.

The first chapter highlighted how Mauss was able to analyze society through the notion of bodily technique, without diminishing the effectiveness of either collective or individual factors, but showing their interconnectedness and symbolic functioning. Merleau-Ponty has a similar approach to society. In elaborating on how he reveals the embodied nature of human behaviour, it is necessary to point out a few concepts that (similar to Mauss's techniques of the body in the matrix of the total social fact) help Merleau-Ponty not to lose sight of the specificity of social facts. These are the concepts of situation and the concept of structure.

### *Situation*

The human situatedness, according to Laurie Spurling, is an extension of the fact of human embodiment into the social sphere. "There are not men, but men-in-situations." The notion of situation makes it possible to speak of the individual in relation to other individuals, and of social groups in general, in so far as they exist in the common experience and practice.<sup>938</sup> One is never 'free' from one's social situatedness, which precedes one's perception and judgment:

We must therefore rediscover, after the natural world, the social world, not as an object or sum of objects, but as a permanent field or dimension of existence: I may well turn away from it, but not cease to be situated relatively to it. Our relationship to the social is, like our relationship to the world, deeper than any express perception or any judgement.<sup>939</sup>

Landes notes that Merleau-Ponty understands human action as neither completely free nor completely determined. Human freedom as well as motivation is born in one's situation.<sup>940</sup> By the concept of 'situation' Merleau-Ponty points out "the thisness" of perception. The perceptual being or perceptual consciousness is inseparable from a particular time and place:<sup>941</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> Schmidt, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 49. Original citation: Mauss, *The Gift*, 102.

<sup>938</sup> Spurling, *Phenomenology and the Social World*, 88.

<sup>939</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 421.

<sup>940</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 173.

<sup>941</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 49.

The world, which I distinguished from myself as the totality of things or of processes linked by causal relationships, I rediscover ‘in me’ as the permanent horizon of all my *cogitationes* and as a dimension in relation to which I am constantly situating myself.<sup>942</sup>

In order to understand Merleau-Ponty’s view more deeply, Lyotard’s explanation of the relationship between phenomenology and sociology is useful: for the phenomenologist, sociality is by no means an object; it is conceived as a lived experience and requires an adequate description of this experience in order to recover its meaning. However, such a description can only be made on the basis of sociological data, which are themselves the result of a prior objectification of sociality.<sup>943</sup> Lyotard points out that this primary sociality, as an important dimension of existence, may at first sight seem underdeveloped in certain passages of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*. In fact, however, phenomenology (including Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, as becomes apparent) seeks to overcome the traditional antinomy between the individual and society on this basis, by joining in with specific sociological and ethnological research. In this way, phenomenology is in line with Mauss’s position in the “Rapports réels et pratiques de la psychologie et de la sociologie,” in which he recommends the overlapping of the two disciplines, without strict limits.<sup>944</sup> Merleau-Ponty can thus be said to improve on the work begun by Mauss in a certain way, by opening up, in Lyotard’s words, “truths of concrete human beings”:

Objective research can thus, if ‘appropriated,’ return the truth of the social to us, just as it can unmask the truth of the psychological. This truth, these truths, are inexhaustible, since they are those of concrete human beings. Mauss knew this, but he also knew that they are penetrable by the categories of meaning. Culturism remains, for its part, too beholden to the causal categories of psychoanalysis, already corrected by Merleau-Ponty in his discussion of sexuality. The truth of humanity is not reducible, not even to sexuality or society, and this is why every objective approach must be not rejected, but redressed.<sup>945</sup>

Going back to the concept of situation, Spurling asks, “What do I take as my situation?”, naming amongst others, my previous life, my family, my profession, my bank balance, my race, my gender, my emotional make-up.<sup>946</sup> The combination of all these aspects forms my situation – my existential project, which is expressed through actions.<sup>947</sup>

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<sup>942</sup> Ibid., xiv (emphasis original); Fisher, *The Essential Writings*, 34.

<sup>943</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Phenomenology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 105.

<sup>944</sup> Ibid., 105-106.

<sup>945</sup> Lyotard, *Phenomenology*, 109.

<sup>946</sup> Spurling, *Phenomenology and the Social World*, 89.

<sup>947</sup> “But these are the virtues proper to action and commitment; at the outset, I am not an individual beyond class, I am situated in a social environment, and my freedom, though it may have the power to commit me elsewhere, has not the power to transform me instantaneously into what I decide to be. Thus to be a bourgeois or

### *Structure*

For Merleau-Ponty structure is an overarching situation. The philosopher uses this term to refer to the whole of society, in the same way as he uses it to refer to the overall functioning of an individual organism. The search for the structure of society, according Spurling, is an attempt to find the fullest possible perspective from which to view it, one that takes into account the viewpoints of both the members of society and the theoretician, and the relationship between them.<sup>948</sup>

Conceptions of law, morality, religion and economic structure are involved in a network of meanings within the Unity of the social event, as the parts of the body are mutually implicatory within the Unity of the gesture, or as 'physiological', 'psychological' and 'moral' motives are linked in the Unity of an action. It is impossible to reduce the life which involves human relationships either to economic relations, or to juridical and moral ones thought up by men, just as it is impossible to reduce individual life either to bodily functions or to our knowledge of life as it involves them.<sup>949</sup>

Again, this recalls Mauss's conviction that, although social phenomena may be interrelated or interconnected, none of them can occupy a privileged position in sociological explanation.<sup>950</sup>

"I am a psychological and historical structure, and have received, with existence, a manner of existing, a style,"<sup>951</sup> says Merleau-Ponty, with a very clear emphasis on movement. Merleau-Ponty's approach, while incorporating historical and other structures of "law, morality, religion and economic" as "involved in a network of meanings within the Unity of the social event,"<sup>952</sup> reveals the structure mostly from the first-person point of view. In this way, Merleau-Ponty's approach confirms Mauss's words that "in society there are not merely ideas and rules, but also men and groups and their behaviours,"<sup>953</sup> as if from inside those behaviors. In other words, he draws humans into the deep and complex density of "the Unity"<sup>954</sup> revealed through movement.

One may ask why both Mauss and Merleau-Ponty put so much emphasis on movement or human behavior as a methodological perspective. The answer is clear: because there is no

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a worker is not only to be aware of being one or the other, it is to identify oneself as worker or bourgeois through an implicit or existential project which merges into our way of patterning the world and co-existing with other people." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 520.

<sup>948</sup> Spurling, *Phenomenology and the Social World*, 89.

<sup>949</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 200.

<sup>950</sup> According to Mauss, science must avoid any a priori generalization: "To explain, in sociology as in all science, is thus to discover more or less fragmentary laws, that is, to link definite in terms of definite relations. Mauss, *The Nature of Sociology*, 20.

<sup>951</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 529.

<sup>952</sup> See quotation above. *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>953</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 102.

<sup>954</sup> See quotation above.

other phenomenon that reveals the structures “involved in a network of meanings”<sup>955</sup> in such an actual and a unique way. According to Noland, “gestures are the site of a complex negotiation of forces without which situated meanings would never appear and the history of such meanings would never evolve.”<sup>956</sup> As is becoming increasingly clear, human action is the source of the continuity and renewal of this “network of meanings.” Merleau-Ponty has contributed to this understanding by emphasizing the historical dimension of behavior, which is crucial to the study of the transformative power of movement, to which I will return in the last part of this chapter. The final point to make here is to consider the concept of habitus, which Merleau-Ponty took from Mauss.

### 3.3.6. *Mauss and Merleau-Ponty on habitus*

Merleau-Ponty’s contribution is not only a detailed elaboration of Mauss’s main intention of showing the importance of individual experience in cultural development, but also to shed light on new areas that Mauss had not touched. I will examine Merleau-Ponty’s use of the term habitus, comparing it with the use in his predecessor’s work, and this will show what new insights the philosopher has brought to the research of movement.

I will discuss four main differences, but I will start with the commonality. The quote below from Noland perfectly underlines important aspects of the relationship between Mauss and Merleau-Ponty – that they both explored the structure of habitus, and that it was by delving into this structure that Merleau-Ponty deepened the knowledge of embodied experience:

Moving quickly from swimming to shoveling, walking, table manners, and finally the centerpiece of the essay, the training of gender, Mauss introduces the Aristotelian term *habitus* to cover all of these, that is, to designate all techniques of the body that are at once faculties—the “I can’s” a subject possesses—and, paradoxically, acquisitions, faculties that do not exist until they are learned. *Habitus* is well chosen, insofar as it captures the odd temporality of the gestural, that sudden ownership of a capacity that is both always virtually one’s own (an innate faculty of the moving body) and, paradoxically, something one obtains *only through the intermediary of the other*. Ultimately, it is Merleau-Ponty who turns out to be the theorist of this paradoxical structure; however, it is Mauss first who puts the structure in his way.<sup>957</sup>

Moving on to the differences, according to Noland, the most important difference between Merleau-Ponty’s insights and Mauss’s conception of bodily techniques is that the philosopher also treats facial expressions and body language, from smiling to greeting, as

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<sup>955</sup> See quotation above.

<sup>956</sup> Carrie Noland, “Gestural meaning: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Bill Viola and the Primacy of Movement,” in *Agency and Embodiment*, by Carrie Noland (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 62.

<sup>957</sup> Noland, *Agency*, 23-24 (emphasis original).

habits of movement. For Merleau-Ponty, the ways in which facial muscles express emotions are as socially constructed as, for example, sewing, although they may have been acquired much earlier and in different ways. The expression of emotion is conventional because social forces give it meaning, and necessary because it is inspired by biological motivation.<sup>958</sup> Mauss had already stressed the inseparability of biological and social meanings, but he had not taken it to this level. Merleau-Ponty worked with what bodily phenomena Mauss was calling ‘natural’ to ones and are unconsciously done, because they are simply learned very early on. It could be argued that what Merleau-Ponty uncovered opened up those layers of the ‘unconscious’ that Mauss did not reach.

It should be noted that Merleau-Ponty prefers the term habit to habitus. Mauss (and later Bourdieu) used the concept of habitus to encompass all that is sociologically necessary in the concept of ‘habit’, while rejecting the more problematic connotations that ‘habit’ has acquired from behaviorism (that habit denotes mechanical, repetitive behaviors). Meanwhile Merleau-Ponty chose to rehabilitate the ‘habit’.<sup>959</sup> Merleau-Ponty’s critique of the mechanical forms of behaviorism occupied an important part of his argument,<sup>960</sup> and that the concept had the possibility to be successfully rehabilitated.

But these are not the only differences. One has to agree with Crossley that Merleau-Ponty describes in a very dynamic way the process by which habits form, change, and in some cases disappear. He examines this process more closely than Mauss and identifies its mechanisms. However, in my view, this is not an oppositional difference, but rather research along the same lines but at different levels and proportions. Crossley’s generalization of the Merleau-Ponty habit does not seem far removed from Mauss’s definition of the techniques of the body, which I examined in Chapter 1. Crossley states,

Habits, for Merleau-Ponty, are structures of behaviour, attaching the embodied actor to their world, which take shape and are reshaped (and sometimes extinguished) in the dynamic and always ongoing process of interaction between actor and world. They form the actor but are equally formed by way of the actor’s engagement in specific interactions and the resourcefulness of the actor (qua creative and resourceful organic structure) in handling novel situations.<sup>961</sup>

Since, as the end of the quotation shows, habit is intrinsically linked to novelty and creativity and therefore must have an impact on transformativeness, this concept will be very

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<sup>958</sup> Noland, “Gestural meaning,” 61.

<sup>959</sup> Crossley, “Pierre Bourdieu’s Habitus,” 270-271.

<sup>960</sup> This can be found in my article: Gilija Žukauskienė, “Encouraging Actors: Techniques of the Body and the Role of the Body in Politics,” *Communio Viatorum* 62.3 (2020): 303–321.

<sup>961</sup> Nick Crossley, “Habit and Habitus,” *Body & Society* 19.2-3 (2013): 147.

important in the following parts of the chapter. Merleau-Ponty's main contribution to the concept of habit and the fundamental difference between his concept of habitus and Mauss's habitus – the development of the temporal dimension – will open up the world of human existence in a very interesting way.

### *Summary*

The third part of the chapter has examined Mauss's influence on Merleau-Ponty. I discussed two obvious points of contact between Mauss and Merleau-Ponty: through the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, and through the interdisciplinary dialogue when Mauss is referred in Merleau-Ponty's "Psychological Lectures." This revealed what the philosopher valued most in his predecessor's work: the fruitful intersection between objective analysis and subjective experience. I discussed the similarities between Mauss and Merleau-Ponty's thinking about society and drew attention to the terms used by Merleau-Ponty (situation and structure). The similarity between the two thinkers in that they explored the structure of the habitus, and the differences between Mauss's habitus and Merleau-Ponty's habit, were also examined.

Merleau-Ponty had a deep understanding of Mauss's intellectual endeavors. He criticized the structuralist interpretation of Mauss's ideas and 'corrected' them in a certain way, turning Mauss's 'weakness' (according Lévi-Strauss), namely his tendency to place value on subjective experience, into a strength.<sup>962</sup> Merleau-Ponty particularly appreciated Mauss's "Techniques of the Body," not only because, like Mauss, he was most interested in bodily actions, but also because of Mauss's personal kinesthetic experience, which Merleau-Ponty particularly valued as a method of studying the manifestations of movement.

Mauss and Merleau-Ponty alike perceived society as an effective symbol system with a very strong influence on the individual, manifested through movement – the behaviour of individuals and groups. In addition to this similar conception of society, Merleau-Ponty and Mauss shared similar ideas about science, the need for interdisciplinary collaboration in research, and the limitations of research methods.

The concept of situation and the concept of structure, invoked by Merleau-Ponty, can be viewed as the equivalent to Mauss's conception of techniques of the body seen in the matrix of the total social fact. Merleau-Ponty's concept of habit denotes the same intelligent behavior as Mauss's habitus. Merleau-Ponty's critique of behaviorism occupied an important part of his

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<sup>962</sup> Noland, "The 'Structuring' Body," 43, 44.



argument, thus the concept of habit (earlier avoided by Mauss) had the possibility of being successfully rehabilitated and no longer linked to mechanical, repetitive behaviour.

By using the concept of habit, Merleau-Ponty reached deeper levels of unconscious behaviour that Mauss did not go into. For example, the philosopher treats facial expressions and body language as habits of movement. In the following parts of this chapter, I will return to the notion of habit, which will be crucial to the discussion of Merleau-Ponty's original contribution to the study of movement and its transformative power.

### **3.4. Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Movement**

This part of the chapter will be devoted to the analysis of Merleau-Ponty's approach to movement. It consists of an analysis of the main themes of the philosopher's approach: the concept of behavior and its relation to consciousness (3.4.1); intentionality and its relation to mobility (3.4.2); habitation, with a focus on space (3.4.3) and time (3.4.4); and also expression (3.4.5) and habit (3.4.6).<sup>963</sup> The ideas of Mauss and Jousse on the subject of movement, discussed in the previous chapters, will help to penetrate Merleau-Ponty's most original insights on the subject of movement. What did the philosopher open up that his predecessors had not addressed?

As the previous part of the chapter highlighted, Merleau-Ponty took very seriously Mauss's tendency to value subjective experience in the analysis of society. In his own works, Merleau-Ponty (like Mauss in "Techniques of the Body") describes his personal kinesthetic experience. And this is not some methodological limitation that encloses the research of movement in subjectivity as givenness. As already mentioned, Merleau-Ponty's treatment of society was quite similar to Mauss's, and in his analysis of human behavior he certainly did not ignore or underestimate one factor in favor of another.<sup>964</sup> His focus on personal kinesthetic experience is a deliberately chosen method, which becomes a source of self-reflexive and objectifying analysis that seeks to penetrate the depths of embodied experience that are inaccessible by other means.

Merleau-Ponty uses a similar approach to Mauss's, kinesthetic self-observation to study human behavior, but with slightly different goals. Whereas Mauss's notion of bodily technique allowed him to uncover the mechanics of physical, psychological, and social interaction in the

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<sup>963</sup> I have already analyzed Merleau-Ponty's use of the concepts of body and perception, and discussed the philosophical and scientific problems he was trying to solve in my article: Gilija Žukauskienė, "Encouraging Actors: Techniques of the Body and the Role of the Body in Politics," *Communio Viatorum* 62.3 (2020): 303–321.

<sup>964</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Phenomenology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 109.

study of societies, Merleau-Ponty is more interested in the same mechanics as focused on the phenomenon of consciousness. He wanted to change the traditional way of thinking about human consciousness, to show it in a network of relationships and world events, and, above all, to show its operative character and bodily nature. Although this was already partly done by his predecessors Mauss and Jousse, Merleau-Ponty discovers philosophical language and its arguments. In addition, Merleau-Ponty explores behavior to uncover the subtleties in the mechanics of physical, mental, and social factors, leading to new insights into movement.

### *3.4.1. Behavior and consciousness*

In order to understand the nature of the human being in the world, Merleau-Ponty focused on the concept of behavior and its relationship to consciousness. The concept of behavior, according to Michael Corriveau, is vital to Merleau-Ponty's research precisely because, according to him, it is essentially neutral with respect to the classical distinctions between "mental" and "physiological" and can thus provide fruitful information when one tries to redefine them. Merleau-Ponty therefore presents consciousness not as a psychic reality and not as a cause, but as a structure, and his research focuses on unravelling the meaning of this structure and the way it exists.<sup>965</sup>

"We cannot relate certain movements to bodily mechanism and others to consciousness," writes Merleau-Ponty, "the body and consciousness are not mutually limiting, they can be only parallel."<sup>966</sup> However, this parallelism can be grasped only in the movement itself. At the same time, Merleau-Ponty shows that any physiological explanation generalized in mechanistic physiology, like any achievement of self-consciousness generalized in intellectualistic psychology, is incapable of sustaining the tension of these parallels.

Even when Merleau-Ponty speaks of the body (which many scholars consider to be at the center of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy<sup>967</sup>), the body for him is the acting body in a concrete situation. In other words, when Merleau-Ponty speaks of the body, he means active subject. That is why Merleau-Ponty often says "my" body or "this"<sup>968</sup> body. The reference to subjective

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<sup>965</sup> Corriveau, "Phenomenology, Psychology," 19.

<sup>966</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 142-143.

<sup>967</sup> Arthur David Smith, "The Flesh of Perception: Merleau-Ponty and Husserl," in *Reading Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (London: Routledge, 2007), 12; David Morris, "Body," in *Merleau-Ponty: Key Concepts*, ed. Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2014), 119.

<sup>968</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 501.

experience is a reference to the concreteness of experience. This is very important for movement research, as motion never takes place in a vacuum.

So, as one sees, Merleau-Ponty's statement "I am the body" was attacking the ontology of the person.<sup>969</sup> But what Merleau-Ponty undoubtedly shows is that personality is revealed by behavior. And this is true of oneself as well as of the other (unfortunately, there is little further insight into group movement in Merleau-Ponty):

I experience my own body as the power of adopting certain forms of behaviour and a certain world, and I am given to myself merely as a certain hold upon the world; now, it is precisely my body which perceives the body of another, and discovers in that other body a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world. Henceforth, as the parts of my body together compromise a system, so my body and the other's are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously.<sup>970</sup>

Merleau-Ponty's "body-subject," as Corriveau explains, is neither an object, nor a mechanism, nor a machine, in the sense that the human body is not controlled as an object that has a determinate place in space and time. The body is an existence of a subjective nature. The body-subject for Merleau-Ponty is the being through which sensory structures come into being.<sup>971</sup> To put it in another way, because of motor powers of the body in relation to the world, one is able to sense, interpret, and work out the meaning of one's being. All of these behavioral capacities are inseparable, whatever language one tries to use to describe them. So, according to Merleau-Ponty,

There is no physiological definition of sensation, and more generally there is no physiological psychology which is autonomous, because the physiological event itself obeys biological and psychological laws. [...] Psychology and physiology are no longer, then, two parallel sciences, but two accounts of behaviour, the first concrete, the second abstract.<sup>972</sup>

The body's relation to the world is expressed by the concepts of situation, which I presented in the previous section. Even when a philosopher goes into deep "concrete and abstract" reflections on behavior, the detailed look does not invalidate the fact that human behavior is always situated in the social world: "The social is already there when we come to

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<sup>969</sup> Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*, 57.

<sup>970</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 412.

<sup>971</sup> Corriveau, "Phenomenology, Psychology," 19.

<sup>972</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 11.

know or judge it. [...] Prior to the process of becoming aware, the social exists obscurely and as a summons.”<sup>973</sup>

Merleau-Ponty uses Hegel’s phrase “penetration in being” to describe consciousness.<sup>974</sup> These two related axes – the active mode and ‘being’ – can be said to be at the heart of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy on consciousness and at the heart of all his debates, especially with traditional philosophy and classical psychology. The active mode is important in defining consciousness because perception is inseparable from behavior. As will be discussed in the next subsection, the active manner is associated in Merleau-Ponty’s writings with the concept of intentionality. The second axis of ‘being’ (or existing), according to Merleau-Ponty, concerns “being in and of the world.”<sup>975</sup> His subsequent definition of consciousness as “Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body,”<sup>976</sup> already presupposes both axes – the active mode and the world (things not in a vacuum).

In other words, the body has its own intentions, possibilities, and expectations precisely from its practical, motor approach to the world. Consciousness is self-knowledge,<sup>977</sup> which does not take place in isolation or immobility. “[...] [T]here is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself,”<sup>978</sup> in the same way as “there can no longer be any objective spirit,” says Merleau-Ponty, and warns of the dangers of a psychic life that retreats into an isolated consciousness devoted solely to introspection “instead of extending, as it apparently does in fact, over human space which is made up by those with whom I argue or live, filling my place of work or the abode of my happiness.”<sup>979</sup>

However, as a disciple of Merleau-Ponty, Claude Lefort points out that Merleau-Ponty is certainly not proposing “to transfer to the body the origin that modern philosophy had situated in consciousness.”<sup>980</sup> Merleau-Ponty’s shift to experience marks an attempt to expose the shortcomings of philosophical categories and psychological analyses, and to evaluate the unreflected life of consciousness. Merleau-Ponty’s embodied subject, or rather the subject of behavior, is not to be confused with the transparent subject of objectifying actions. Merleau-Ponty replaces the face-to-face encounter between reflexive consciousness and the pure object

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<sup>973</sup> Ibid., 422.

<sup>974</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 126.

<sup>975</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 421.

<sup>976</sup> Ibid., 159-161.

<sup>977</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>978</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>979</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>980</sup> Claude Lefort, “The Body, the Flesh,” in *Merleau-Ponty and the Possibilities of Philosophy: Transforming the Tradition*, ed. Bernard Flynn, Wayne J. Froman, Robert Vallier (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009), 276.

with “the complicity of an incarnated, indistinctly active and perceptive subject with a perceived world,” according to Renaud Barbar. <sup>981</sup>

The question is, what can these insights reveal about movement itself? Lefort argues that Merleau-Ponty, by returning to the effect of the ambiguity that marks the position of each subject, while forbidding one to locate the genesis of the sensible world and its representation in the body, finds in the body the power to move towards the unreflected life of consciousness. Merleau-Ponty is attentive to the exchange of the body-subject with the world (“where it institutes itself in the movement of incorporation and where simultaneously something happens [advient]”<sup>982</sup>). In other words, Merleau-Ponty’s “new theory of the cogito,” which is about the embodied, acting subject, and which seeks to reflect the unreflected forms of self-knowledge, is potentially tempting for the researcher of the unexplored aspects of movement. If one recalls Mauss’s metaphor of the cogwheel in “Techniques of the Body,” describing “an enormous biological and physiological apparatus,”<sup>983</sup> presupposed by the movement of the body, then Merleau-Ponty’s insights lead precisely to a deeper understanding of the apparatus, that is, to an examination of the connecting cogs and the mechanics of how they work.

### 3.4.2. *Intentionality*

The active way of being in the world is associated in Merleau-Ponty’s writings with the concept of intentionality. He refers to the Husserlian origin of this concept, which, according to Merleau-Ponty, lies in the discovery “of a deeper intentionality, which others have called existence.”<sup>984</sup> In other words, the existence or “being in and of the world”<sup>985</sup> must be conceived as intentionality. It is connected with the human body’s striving “every moment of its life to found a consistent liveable world.”<sup>986</sup> In Corriveau’s description, it is essentially the giving of meaning to the world. But it cannot be reduced to consciousness transparent to itself or to thinking. As Merleau-Ponty explains,

What is meant by saying that this intentionality is not a thought is that it does not come into being through the transparency of any consciousness, but takes for granted all the latent knowledge of itself that my body possesses.<sup>987</sup>

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<sup>981</sup> Renaud Barbaras, “The Turn of Experience: Merleau-Ponty and Bergson,” in *Merleau-Ponty and the Possibilities of Philosophy: Transforming the Tradition* (2009), 42.

<sup>982</sup> Lefort, “The Body, the Flesh,” 276.

<sup>983</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 92.

<sup>984</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 140.

<sup>985</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

<sup>986</sup> Corriveau, “Phenomenology, Psychology,” 22.

<sup>987</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 270.

This taken-for-granted “latent knowledge of itself that my body possesses” is the condition from which all action or thought springs:

These elucidations enable us clearly to understand motility as basic intentionality. Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of ‘I think that’ but of ‘I can’. [...] Movement is not thought about movement, and bodily space is not space thought of or represented.<sup>988</sup>

Merleau-Ponty takes the phrase “I can” from Husserl as a way of describing one’s experience of bodily intentionality. Intentionality is always directed towards its objects in the world, so Merleau-Ponty adopts from Heidegger the etymological sense of ecstasy (*ek-stase*<sup>989</sup>) to refer to intentionality as “outside of self.” According to Merleau-Ponty, human being-in-the-world is oriented towards a world of possible actions and gestures that coaxes human bodies according to motor signification. To speak about an originary form of intentionality by which persons are in and toward the world in the lived experience,<sup>990</sup> Merleau-Ponty uses the phrases “non-thetic consciousness” or operative intentionality, motor intentionality.<sup>991</sup>

Hence, for Merleau-Ponty, motility is not, as he puts it, “a handmaid of consciousness, transporting the body to that point in space of which we have formed a representation beforehand.”<sup>992</sup> Because the body is not just a receiver and transmitter of meaning. Rather, by moving, the body communicates with the material and meaningful world even before thinking and linguistic expression as their condition. Moreover, as a nexus of material significations, the body actualizes meaning prior to reflection.<sup>993</sup>

Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts on intentionality in the sense of intentionality that follows the general flow of existence and succumbs to its movements, that reveals the vital origins of perception, mobility, and representation, and that gives vitality and fruitfulness to the experience,<sup>994</sup> are very close to the insights of Jousse’s anthropology of gesture. I will come back to the comparison of their ideas later (3.5.5.).

Likewise, the “outside of self” of intentionality will be returned to in the last part of this chapter (in 3.5.3.), where consciousness as the manifestation of the “inside” on the

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<sup>988</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>989</sup> The concept denotes the active transcendence of the subject in relation to the world. Ibid., 81.

<sup>990</sup> Also, Merleau-Ponty wanted to distinguish this originary form of intentionality from the form of intentionality that is central to classical idealism, which explicitly posits or thematizes objects through intellectual action.

<sup>991</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 102, 68, 133, 142.

<sup>992</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 161.

<sup>993</sup> Harry Adams, “Expression,” in *Merleau-Ponty: Key Concepts* (2014), 154.

<sup>994</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 181-182.

“outside,” the projection of a new environment into the world,<sup>995</sup> will be discussed while examining transformation through movement in Merleau-Ponty works.

### 3.4.3. *Inhabitation. Space*

“[...] [M]y body is my general power of inhabiting all the environments which the world contains, the key to all those transpositions and equivalences which keep it constant,”<sup>996</sup> writes Merleau-Ponty.

In defining the “outside of self” of intentionality, Merleau-Ponty speaks of inhabitation as one’s existence in movement. David Morris points out that according to Merleau-Ponty, the body is not neutrally present in space but inhabits or enlivens (*habite*) space. The movement of the body shows that it itself has a meaning in relation to objects: the movement of the body is not the translation of an object in a Cartesian coordinate system, but the execution of meaningful projects that intersect with objects and places that have meaning. In other words, the movement of the body itself, which is meaningfully “about” things, is intentional.<sup>997</sup>

Merleau-Ponty uses the Gestalt metaphor of the figure and the background to talk about the moving body in space:

If bodily space and external space form a practical system, the first being the background against which the object as the goal of our action may stand out or the void in front of which it may *come to light*, it is clearly in action that the spatiality of our body is brought into being, and an analysis of one’s own movement should enable us to arrive at a better understanding of it.<sup>998</sup>

And although the direction of the philosopher’s analysis of movement, as I said at the beginning, is towards that self-evident, invisible ‘background’ – the newly interpreted consciousness – his observations are undoubtedly important. What, then, are Merleau-Ponty’s insights into the experience of bodily spatiality?

First of all, descriptions of spatiality are linked to the analysis of human action.<sup>999</sup> Action is not something that happens in space, but rather something that, through motor intentionality, creates the very spatiality of living. Let us take a closer look at this idea.

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<sup>995</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 162.

<sup>996</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 363.

<sup>997</sup> Morris, “Body,” 116.

<sup>998</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 117 (emphasis original).

<sup>999</sup> Landes notes, that while offering a nuanced phenomenological theory of human action, Merleau-Ponty initially expressed some reservations regarding this term. In *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty argues that “action must be understood as between a passive structure of stimulus-response and an active expression of a pure decision,” Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 10-11.

The body is an element of the subject and its world system. The task to be performed elicits from it the necessary movements through a certain remote attraction acting in the field of vision. The motor reactions evoked determine the most effective balance between them. Merleau-Ponty gives an example of how the conventions of one's social group immediately elicits from one the right words, attitude, and tone. Not because one is trying to hide one's thoughts or please others, but because one is literally what others think one is and what one's world is.<sup>1000</sup> In other words, my body is the potential of my (concrete) world.

Due to movement "we choose our world and the world chooses us."<sup>1001</sup> The physical and social world, according to Merleau-Ponty, "always functions as a stimulus to my reactions, whether these be positive or negative."<sup>1002</sup> But my response is never independent of the situation, nor hostage to it. In each case the situations may vary considerably, and the movements of the response may be entrusted sometimes to one operating organ and sometimes to another, but both the situations and the response in different cases have not so much a partial identity of the elements as a common meaning.<sup>1003</sup> Spatiality of the body is the friction between the body and space, their co-work, manifested through the act of grasping objects.<sup>1004</sup>

According to Merleau-Ponty, even if thinking and the perception of space are subsequently freed from mobility and spatial being, in order to be able to conceive space it is first necessary for one to have been pushed into it by one's body. Movement is the primary sphere in which the meaning of all significances first emerges.<sup>1005</sup>

On the other hand, with movement, a person does not disclose something that they previously were, nor do they accomplish a becoming; a person's balance situates themselves in an ever-changing space. Merleau-Ponty, in his summary of human development, argues that the essential nature of development is restructuring, in which a new bodily situation is assumed

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<sup>1000</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 122.

<sup>1001</sup> *Ibid.*, 527.

<sup>1002</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

<sup>1003</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-165.

<sup>1004</sup> "A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its 'world', and to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 159-161.

<sup>1005</sup> *Ibid.*, 164. "In all uses of the word *sens*, we find the same fundamental notion of a being orientated or polarized in the direction of what he is not, and thus we are always brought back to a conception of the subject as *ek-stase*, and to a relationship of active transcendence between the subject and the world. The world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects. The subject is a being-in-the-world and the world remains 'subjective' since its texture and articulations are traced out by the subject's movement of transcendence. Hence we discovered, with the world as cradle of meanings, direction of all directions (*sens de tous les sens*), and ground of all thinking, [...], as standing on the horizon of our life as the primordial unity of all our experiences, and one goal of all our projects." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 499-500 (emphasis original).



when realizing a new type of life.<sup>1006</sup> Development is neither a purely bodily fact nor is it entirely cultural. In this dual situation, a type of behavior develops that seeks “an equilibrium, one that cannot be found by a simple addition. It is necessary to find a true present between anticipation and regression, a present that initiates the future: a future that is full and unanticipated.”<sup>1007</sup> (I will come to the subject of time in section 3.3.4. below.)

Another part of Merleau-Ponty’s insights into spatiality concerns the distinction between concrete and abstract movement, which has important implications for the theme of the “third dialectic” (3.5.3.). This distinction brings one back to the metaphor of figure and background, although the philosopher already interprets this metaphor in a slightly different way, such that “movement and background are, in fact, only artificially separated stages of a unique totality.”<sup>1008</sup>

Merleau-Ponty draws attention to the distinction between abstract and concrete movement: the background of concrete movement is the given world, whereas the background of abstract movement is built up. Simply put, a concrete movement is a gesture that responds to a real situation, such as using a familiar tool. In contrast, abstract movement is movement that takes place “outside” real life experience, for example when asked to perform an imaginary action such as a military salute, explains Landes,<sup>1009</sup> and recalls the example of Merleau-Ponty:

The normal subject, on giving, to order, a military salute, sees in it no more than an experimental situation, and therefore restricts the movement to its most important elements and does not throw himself into it. He is using his body as a means to play acting; he finds it entertaining to pretend to be a soldier; he escapes from reality in the rôle of the soldier just as the actor slips his real body into the ‘great phantom’ of the character to be played. The normal man and the actor do not mistake imaginary situations for reality, but extricate their real bodies from the living situation to make them breathe, speak and, if need be, weep in the realm of imagination.<sup>1010</sup>

Thus, Merleau-Ponty associates the abstract movement with experimentation, playfulness, and creativity, which allows one to escape the real situation by ‘covering’ it with an imaginary situation. And, in fact, thanks to this ‘covering’, which takes place through movement, the human situation is indeed changed. Merleau-Ponty goes on to make the following observations about the mechanics of abstract movement.

The abstract movement carves out within that plenum of the world in which concrete movement took place a zone of reflection and subjectivity; it superimposes upon physical space a virtual or human space. Concrete movement is therefore centripetal

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<sup>1006</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 222.

<sup>1007</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>1008</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 159.

<sup>1009</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 10.

<sup>1010</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 120.

whereas abstract movement is centrifugal. The former occurs in the realm of being or of the actual, the latter on the other hand in that of the virtual or the non-existent; the first adheres to a given background, the second throws out its own background.<sup>1011</sup>

In other words, abstract movement is a doing that displaces the concrete spatiality of itself. It can also be imagined as an overlapping of spatialities (the present, the real and the past, the imaginary, although the latter group will necessarily be based on spatiality as well).

The distinction between abstract and concrete movement is therefore not to be confused with the distinction between body and consciousness. According to Merleau-Ponty, it does not belong to the same dimension of reflection, but only to the behavioral dimension.<sup>1012</sup> As has already been emphasized, in Merleau-Ponty's view, "the body and consciousness are not mutually limiting, they can be only parallel."<sup>1013</sup> Instead of bringing "behaviour down to the same uniform level and wipe out the distinction between abstract and concrete movement,"<sup>1014</sup> one should rather follow the actual movement by which consciousness resumes its activity each moment, focusing it on a recognizable object, gradually moving from "seeing" to "knowing" and "achieving the unity of its own life."<sup>1015</sup>

Hence, if one thinks of consciousness as deriving from movement in the world, then the abstract movement can be seen as a cause of possible changes in it – changes in the state of mind, in the styles of thinking, and so forth. In other words, abstract movement has much to do with creating different states of mind. Merleau-Ponty's insights about abstract movement helps to understand Mauss's idea that "at the bottom of all our mystical states there are techniques of the body."<sup>1016</sup>

The parallelism between the body and consciousness plays a decisive role, but also the dimension of subjectivity in action, so emphasized by Merleau-Ponty. This means that, thanks to the parallelism between consciousness and action, or the lack of their congruence and sameness, and to the constant changes in the environment of the subject, it is possible to have highly original human actions.

#### *3.4.4. Inhabitation. Time*

According to Merleau-Ponty, the moving body inhabits space and time; it actively assumes them, it takes on their fundamental meaning, which is often "obscured in the

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<sup>1011</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>1012</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>1013</sup> Ibid., 142-143.

<sup>1014</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1015</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>1016</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 93.

commonplaceness of established situations.”<sup>1017</sup> Every voluntary movement takes place in an environment, in a background that is determined by the movement itself. The aspect of time in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy relates to the experience of the significance of human movement. If, in the subject’s situation, space and movement tend to coincide over time, giving birth to preparations for action, the temporal aspect so to speak, both overlay and renew these preparations. Although the theme of time is closely related to the theme of habit, I will try to separate them a little and first discuss Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts on movement and time.

The way the modern mind thematizes or objectifies time causes the losing sight of it. There is more truth in mythical personifications of time than in scientific ways of identifying time as a variable of nature in itself. According Merleau-Ponty, “there is at the core of time a gaze,” the subjectivity itself:

We are not saying that time is for someone, which would once more be a case of arraying it out, and immobilizing it. We are saying that time is someone, or that temporal dimensions, in so far as they perpetually overlap, bear each other out and ever confine themselves to making explicit what was implied in each, being collectively expressive of that one single explosion or thrust which is subjectivity itself.<sup>1018</sup>

The subject is in a synthesis with time, which is experienced through action in the present, and this is the zone where consciousness and being coincide. Therefore, time, according to Merleau-Ponty, is not a real process, not a real sequence that I can record. It comes from my relationship with things.<sup>1019</sup> “We must therefore avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time.”<sup>1020</sup> “Time exists for me only because I am situated in it, that is, because I become aware of myself as already committed to it,”<sup>1021</sup> Merleau-Ponty states. In other words, similar to the way I situate myself in the world, by performing actions in space, so I gain access to time by acting in the present:

Time exists for me because I have a present. It is by coming into the present that a moment of time acquires that indestructible individuality, that ‘once and for all’ quality, which subsequently enables it to make its way through time and produce in us the illusion of eternity. No one of time’s dimensions can be deduced from the rest. But the present (in the wide sense, along with its horizons of primary past and future), nevertheless enjoys a privilege because it is the zone in which being and consciousness coincide.<sup>1022</sup>

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<sup>1017</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 117.

<sup>1018</sup> *Ibid.*, 490.

<sup>1019</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.

<sup>1020</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>1021</sup> *Ibid.*, 492.

<sup>1022</sup> *Ibid.*, 492.

The newly interpreted consciousness, according to Merleau-Ponty, “takes root in being and time by taking up a situation.” It must therefore be understood as an unfolding into multiplicity, as “it is the very action of temporalization—of ‘flux’, as Husserl has it—a self-anticipatory movement, a flow which never leaves itself.”<sup>1023</sup>

The characterization of consciousness as “acting into” is very important in Merleau-Ponty’s consideration of the time. According to the philosopher’s understanding, when one cooperates with the world, one cooperates with oneself. Time in this cooperation is in human beings in its totality, because human beings are present to the world. The essence of subjectivity is to open oneself to multiplicity, to open oneself to the other, to come out of oneself. In other words, going out of oneself creates a sense of time.

For a better understanding, it might be helpful to follow Merleau-Ponty’s critique of the metaphor of time as a river to highlight the way he is aiming to encourage a rethinking of the subject. The metaphor of time as a river flowing from the past into the future presupposes a witness tied to the “events” the river passes.<sup>1024</sup> However, “there are no events without someone to whom they happen and whose finite perspective is the basis of their individuality.”<sup>1025</sup> Change, according Merleau-Ponty, presupposes a certain position that I take and from which I see what is happening in front of me. The same applies to time. “Time presupposes a view of time.”<sup>1026</sup> How can these insights of Merleau-Ponty help to explain not only the experience of time, but also the relation of the temporal dimension to movement?

I would like to suggest that the metaphor of the river as Merleau-Ponty sees it, can be used slightly differently to identify the relationship between movement and time. In my interpretation, movement, not time, is the flowing river (the different valleys are the body’s spaces of action), and the witness (which is needed to determine the flow of the river) is the

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<sup>1023</sup> Ibid., 493. “We said above that we need to arrive at a consciousness with no other behind it, which grasps its own being, and in which, in short, being and being conscious are one and the same thing. This ultimate consciousness is not an eternal subject perceiving itself in absolute transparency, for any such subject would be utterly incapable of making its descent into time, and would, therefore have nothing in common with our experience: it is the consciousness of the present. In the present and in perception, my being and my consciousness are at one, not that my being is reducible to the knowledge I have of it or that it is clearly set out before me—on the contrary perception is opaque, for it brings into play, beneath what I know, my sensory fields which are my primitive alliance with the world—but because ‘to be conscious’ is here nothing but ‘to-be-at . . .’ (‘être à . . .’), and because my consciousness of existing merges into the actual gesture of ‘ex-sistence’. It is by communicating with the world that we communicate beyond all doubt with ourselves. We hold time in its entirety, and we are present to ourselves because we are present to the world.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 492-493.

<sup>1024</sup> “[...] [The witness is] tied to a certain spot in the world, and I am comparing his successive views: he was there when the snows melted and followed the water down, or else, from the edge of the river and having waited two days, he sees the pieces of wood that he threw into the water at its source.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 477.

<sup>1025</sup> Ibid., 477.

<sup>1026</sup> Ibid.

consciousness (which is not possible without kinesthetic feedback). The parallel with the “witness” is very important here. It could be even argued that time is perceived as the comparative effect of kinesthetic feedback caused by the change resulting from the moving body.

To speak in the same metaphorical language, another very important idea in this theme relates to the sedimentation of the river. I note in advance that the parallelism between the “river” and the “witness” is not so clear in the discussion of “sediments,” where consciousness and action have to be seen as very closely intertwined.

Merleau-Ponty speaks of “sediments” as acquired knowledge that is not an inert mass in the depths of our consciousness. Already acquired thoughts are constantly drawing nourishment from the present thought, offering the meaning that the protagonist in the present returns to them. These stores a human being are constantly re-expressing the energy of a person’s present consciousness. According to Merleau-Ponty, sometimes it weakens, as in moments of fatigue, and then the “world” of thought becomes impoverished and narrowed down to one or two intrusive ideas. On the other hand, writes Merleau-Ponty, sometimes one has all one’s thoughts at one’s disposal, and then every word spoken before one gives rise to questions and ideas, re-creates and restructures the psychic panorama, and provides a precise physiognomy. The structure of the world, according to Merleau-Ponty, with its two stages of sedimentation and spontaneity, is the basis of consciousness.<sup>1027</sup>

The life of consciousness – the cognitive life, the life of desire or the life of perception – is enveloped by an intentional arc which projects around human beings their past, their future, their human environment, their physical, ideological, and moral situation. According to Merleau-Ponty, it is this intentional arc that determines the unity of the senses, of the intellect, of sensibility and mobility.<sup>1028</sup> This emphasis on unity is very important in Merleau-Ponty’s work. Consciousness (through kinesthetic feedback, one might add) seeks to unite itself (what is the body), to balance itself, to be in one rhythm, one breath with the world. Such synchronization with the world paradoxically leads to human “stability.” Time appears as the outcome of this constant effort for stabilization with an inner sense that situates one’s experiences in a before and after terminology, which, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the most general feature of “psychic facts.”<sup>1029</sup>

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<sup>1027</sup> Ibid., 150. I will continue this is theme in the discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of habit in section 3.4.6.

<sup>1028</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>1029</sup> Ibid., 477.

What is true, however, is that our open and personal existence rests on an initial foundation of acquired and stabilized existence. But it could not be otherwise, if we are temporality, since the dialectic of acquisition and future is what constitutes time.<sup>1030</sup>

It is in the perspective of temporality that Merleau-Ponty highlights the problem of the other. For Merleau-Ponty, the present is a mediator between individuality and generality.<sup>1031</sup> Subjectivity is identical to being in the world and being for others. As the philosopher says, I am all that I see, I am an intersubjective field not in spite of my body and historical situation, but, on the contrary, by being this body and this situation.<sup>1032</sup> Due to the intentional arc (as embodied and meaningful orientation toward the world according to the dimensions of one's experience) the body projects a certain field of possible actions. The temporal aspect is important because it not only highlights movement as an ever-synthesizing now, before, and after, but also because it allows one to conceive of freedom as a choice that is continuously being re-created, provided that one does not introduce the notion of generalized or natural time.<sup>1033</sup> Human freedom is linked to the incompleteness of the world; the world is already there, but it is also never complete, which means that one is affected by it, but also one is open to infinite possibilities.<sup>1034</sup> That is why

subjectivity is not motionless identity with itself; as with time, it is of its essence, in order to be genuine subjectivity, to open itself to an Other and to go forth from itself.<sup>1035</sup>

#### 3.4.5. *Expression*

In Merleau-Ponty's writings, the "not motionless" and relational identity of subjectivity is most clearly revealed by the concept of expression. Merleau-Ponty describes the body not as a means of expression but rather as a space of expression:

[...] [T]he body is essentially an expressive space. [...] But our body is not merely one expressive space among the rest, for that is simply the constituted body. It is the origin of the rest, expressive movement itself, that which causes them to begin to exist as things, under our hands and eyes.<sup>1036</sup>

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<sup>1030</sup> Ibid., 502.

<sup>1031</sup> One understands others at the intentional origin of their visible behavior. In perceiving the other, I intentionally overcome the infinite distance that always separates my subjectivity from the other, I overcome the impossibility of perceiving the other outside myself, because I see another behavior, another presence in the world. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 503.

<sup>1032</sup> Ibid., 525.

<sup>1033</sup> Ibid., 526.

<sup>1034</sup> Ibid., 527.

<sup>1035</sup> Ibid., 495.

<sup>1036</sup> Ibid., 169.

Human beings are doomed to expression.<sup>1037</sup> Even before thinking and linguistic expression, the body is already in contact with the meaningful world. In opposition to the traditional understanding, Merleau-Ponty refers to the movement of the body as a condition of their emergence, rather than the view of the body as a receiver and transmitter of already existing meaning. Moreover, as the medium of material meanings, the body-subject actualizes meanings by actively “living [them] out” them (which precedes thinking, representation, and formal symbolic activity),<sup>1038</sup> that is to say, creating them and thus making sense of the world.<sup>1039</sup>

As one can see, the actualization of meanings is directly dependent on the expression of subjects. However, as Harry Adams writes, there is a “paradox of expression” in Merleau-Ponty’s writings: the idea that expression is inherently ambiguous because it is never entirely clear who or what is being expressed. It is especially noticeable in *The Visible and the Invisible*, where Merleau-Ponty talks less about individual body-subjects as sites of expression and more about the “flesh of the world.” Here, language, the social world (including the worlds of art, science, and politics), human corporeality, and the natural world are more obviously intertwined,<sup>1040</sup> as Merleau-Ponty describes, “the whole of nature is the setting of our own life, or our interlocutor in a sort of dialogue.”<sup>1041</sup>

For Merleau-Ponty, expression is not the spontaneous creation of total novelty, but something in between the reproduction of what has already been expressed and the creation of new meaning. This means that expression has to take place in some kind of transition between the old and the new, between the text and the interpreter, between the past and the present, between what has already been said and what is yet to be said, writes Adams. For Merleau-Ponty, then, it is precisely this ambiguity, the expressive operation between the transmission and generation of meaning, which is the fundamental paradox of expression. This paradox is

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<sup>1037</sup> “We are always in a plenum, in being, just as a face, even in repose, even in death, is always doomed to express something (there are people whose faces, in death, bear expressions of surprise, or peace, or discretion), and just as silence is still a modality of the world of sound.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 525.

<sup>1038</sup> Corriveau, “Phenomenology, Psychology,” 22.

<sup>1039</sup> “[...] [T]he human body is defined in terms of its property of appropriating, in an indefinite series of discontinuous acts, significant cores which transcend and transfigure its natural powers. This act of transcendence is first encountered in the acquisition of a pattern of behaviour, then in the mute communication of gesture: it is through the same power that the body opens itself to some new kind of conduct and makes it understood to external witnesses. Here and there a system of definite powers is suddenly decentralized, broken up and reorganized under a fresh law unknown to the subject or to the external witness, and one which reveals itself to them at the very moment at which the process occurs.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 225.

<sup>1040</sup> Adams, “Expression,” 154.

<sup>1041</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 374.

ontological and irreducible because it is inherent in the very nature of the expression of the world.<sup>1042</sup>

Just as new ideas and insights emerge through one's linguistic actions,<sup>1043</sup> acting in the world gives people a meaningful existence. From 1947 onwards, according to Adams, Merleau-Ponty increasingly developed this "miraculous advent of meaning," appropriating some of the concepts and distinctions from Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory. However, Merleau-Ponty explains the creative element of linguistic expression by refuting Saussure's preference for synchronic linguistics over diachronic linguistics. For Merleau-Ponty, meaning arises from the intertwining of the synchronic and diachronic registers of speaking: the synchronic register provides the structure and inherited resources of meaningful speaking, while the diachronic register provides the creative, spontaneous, and innovative elements of this speaking. Gestures appear as the primordial expression, "a first language," in this discussion with an infinite variety depending on the situation and the overall intention.<sup>1044</sup>

According to Adams, the distinction and relationship between synchronic and diachronic registers increasingly permeated not only Merleau-Ponty's understanding of language and expression, but also that of art, politics, history, ontology, human agency, and freedom.<sup>1045</sup> In all these reflections, the body remains the seat of dynamic expression between the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of language. These concepts were later replaced by the ideas of *flesh* and *chiasm* that Merleau-Ponty developed towards the end of his career, which implied an essentially ambiguous conjunction of hidden, reversible, and intertwined forces.<sup>1046</sup>

The topic of expression is very much related to the topic of habit, which I will discuss shortly. To conclude the discussion of Merleau-Ponty's treatment of expression, the further

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<sup>1042</sup> Adams, "Expression," 156.

<sup>1043</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>1044</sup> As Baldwin writes, "In a general way expressive gestures (in which the science of physiognomy sought in vain for the sufficient signs of emotional states) have a univocal meaning only with respect to the situation which they underline and punctuate. But like phonemes, which have no meaning by themselves, expressive gestures have a diacritical value: they announce the constitution of a symbolical system capable of redesigning an infinite number of situations. They are a first language. And reciprocally language can be treated as a gesticulation so varied, so precise, so systematic, and capable of so many convergent expressions [recoupe-ments] that the internal structure of an utterance can ultimately agree only with the mental situation to which it responds and of which it becomes an unequivocal sign. The meaning of language, like that of gestures, thus does not lie in the elements composing it. The meaning is their common intention [...]." Baldwin, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 40.

<sup>1045</sup> Adams, "Expression," 157-160.

<sup>1046</sup> As Adams writes, "This presents us with a more complex, even perplexing picture of decentred subjects who call and respond to messages whose origins and meanings are never altogether clear and whose truth is never absolute. The chiasm becomes the nexus around which all meanings, significations, and material forces revolve and intertwine, akin to a tornado that gathers up things in its spiral only to scatter them again." Adams, "Expression," 160.



point to mention, is that expressions create a field of settled meanings. These acquired meanings, according to Landes, must be available not only for repetition but for new expression. Previous expressions are sedimented in the field of language, but not as independent ideas or as clear sign-meaning relations, because they were never such even in their original expression. Landes explains:

The sedimented expressions remain as nothing other than possibilities for future expressions. Just as a habit is not merely mechanical repetition, but the possibility for taking up the *sense* of the gesture again in a new context, the linguistic field orients us toward possibilities for speaking. In lived communication, an idea is acquired once I have taken up “a certain style” of speaking, once the idea has sedimented into my linguistic world through a **coherent deformation** of the available significations that contained it only as a possible transformation and reorganization of the whole.<sup>1047</sup>

According to Dillon, Merleau-Ponty’s notion of expression changes the world by reshaping it in a way that is favorable to a particular opinion, point of view or interpretation. The sediments of expression are meanings which inhabit the world.<sup>1048</sup> They will become the material for new expressions, which will always be inseparable from experience. How does one get to the reservoir of expression sediments? Only through expression.

#### 3.4.6. *Habit*

For Merleau-Ponty, habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary act. It is knowledge in the hands, which comes only when bodily effort is exerted, and cannot be formulated in isolation from that effort. Habit is knowledge that comes from a cognition that does not give one a position in objective space.<sup>1049</sup>

In answering the question, what is habit in Merleau-Ponty’s view, Edward S. Casey emphasizes both its composition, “it is always composed of motoric and perceptual elements in an inextricable mixture,” and its relation with time and space:

Whereas its temporality is most adequately exhibited in the process of sedimentation, its spatiality is best construed in terms of an intuitive incorporation of the space in which it is enacted.<sup>1050</sup>

The highlighted points of spatiality and the temporality will be useful as a conceptual framework for the habitus analysis in this subsection. According to Merleau-Ponty, bodily

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<sup>1047</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 140 (emphasis original).

<sup>1048</sup> Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, 196.

<sup>1049</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 166.

<sup>1050</sup> Edward S. Casey, “Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty,” in *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu*, ed. Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 201.

space is the matrix of the habitual action,<sup>1051</sup> a matrix within which not only actual movements, but also virtual movements emerge. Habit has its seat in the body and works as a mediator of the world. It is to the phenomenon of habit that Merleau-Ponty attributes the possibility of revision of the notion of ‘understanding’ and the notion of the body: “to understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance—and the body is our anchorage in a world.”<sup>1052</sup>

For Merleau-Ponty, habituation is part of human nature. “The plunge into action is, from the subject’s point of view, an original way of relating himself to the object, and is on the same footing as perception.”<sup>1053</sup> Accordingly, habitus appears as kind of preservation of this original attempt. But this preservation becomes possible due to the processes of sedimentation and depersonalization.

#### 3.4.6.1. *Sedimentation*

How does ‘anchoring’ work according to Merleau-Ponty? It works thanks to the past, which is given to persons in and through the body, like a habit. Habit is the residue of past action that influences present action. The body, as the common medium for habit and the past, is the place where they most deeply merge and in turn give it the two necessary dimensions of its own depth. In short, there is “no habit or past without body; no body without habit or past,” as Casey aptly summarizes. The concept of sedimentation, according to the author, shows how this triad of interrelated concepts works together and describes it as a depth-giving process. Sedimentation is implied by my very presence in the world, which “must be as continually resumptive of acquired experience as it is pro-sumptive of experience still to come.”<sup>1054</sup> Indeed, sedimentation is a necessary complement to spontaneity. “The world-structure, with its two stages of sedimentation and spontaneity, is at the core of consciousness,”<sup>1055</sup> writes Merleau-Ponty.

Merleau-Ponty explains that sediments form a certain psychic panorama with clear and unclear areas and situations and dispositions, which is not an inert mass in the depths of one’s consciousness, but is constantly drawing nourishment from one’s present thought, proposing a

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<sup>1051</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 119.

<sup>1052</sup> Merleau-Ponty further elaborates that “it is the body which ‘understands’ in the acquisition of habit. [...] But the phenomenon of habit is just what prompts us to revise our notion of ‘understand’ and our notion of the body. To understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance—and the body is our anchorage in a world.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 167.

<sup>1053</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>1054</sup> Casey, “Habitual Body,” 200.

<sup>1055</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 150.

meaning that is at the same time returned to it. In fact, the available reserves are constantly re-expressing the energy of the present consciousness. What is acquired is only really acquired when it is taken up again by a new impulse of thought. The essence of consciousness is to provide itself with one or more worlds, to place its thoughts before itself as if they were objects, and it inseparably demonstrates its vitality by defining these landscapes for itself and then abandoning them.<sup>1056</sup>

In so far as consciousness is consciousness of something only by allowing its furrow to trail behind it, and in so far as, in order to conceive an object one must rely on a previously constructed ‘world of thought’, there is always some degree of depersonalization at the heart of consciousness.<sup>1057</sup>

#### 3.4.6.2. *Depersonalization*

Hence, as Casey writes, even if sedimentation usually starts with a specific person or place, its main tendency is depersonalization and generalization. Only in this way can one accept new contents of experience “without being dumbfounded by them.” In this way one develops patterns of behavior that, over time, identify one as a continuing individual and makes one’s lives meaningful. And if sedimentation is to be understood as the deposition of the past experience of acts into the present, then it must be understood, according to Casey, as “an active precipitation actively maintained.”<sup>1058</sup> Depersonalization contributes to the maintenance of activity.

The intentionality of the body moves into the future, taking over the past with paradoxical logic, with no need for an explicit intellectual action or signification. The sedimentations or acquired significations is a way of inviting new possible activity. Habit is therefore not just a mechanical repetition, but a possibility to take up the meaning of a gesture again in a new context. Sedimentation and institution, then, Landes states, is the engine of both “personal and interpersonal tradition,”<sup>1059</sup> and here it is useful to recall the links between Mauss’s body techniques and tradition.<sup>1060</sup> Although Merleau-Ponty and Mauss approach the phenomenon from different angles, the mechanisms of the subject’s acting body in habit acquisition are of great interest to both of them, and for both, the actor has the power to transfer a tradition by renewing its efficacy by evaluating and updating it in the light of the original subjective data.

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<sup>1056</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1057</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>1058</sup> Casey, “Habitual Body,” 201.

<sup>1059</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 140.

<sup>1060</sup> In addition, one can recall Jousse’s ideas about tradition as the carrier of great explicative systems (2.1.2.).

Whereas Mauss is more concerned with collective life, Merleau-Ponty articulates the mechanisms of a newly reinterpreted consciousness (I-body). It is not surprising, then, that Merleau-Ponty mentions sedimentation and depersonalization more in the discussions about linguistics and the “world of thought.” However, the interaction with the collective heritage, while remaining somewhat separate, is importantly woven into Merleau-Ponty’s thought. As Crossley argues, Merleau-Ponty, who sees the formation of habits as a constant interaction between the actor and the world, treats habits themselves as the sediments of the interaction between the actor and the world and of certain interaction strategies that have worked well for the actor and have been preserved in the actor’s relation to the world. In discussion with Dewey, Crossley points out a few additional aspects. The first is Merleau-Ponty’s recognition, but underdevelopment, of the fact that these interactions usually involve other human actors and non-human elements, and that habits, as such, derive from, and belong to, the collective human life. (Here one can recall Mauss’s techniques of the body as a developed example of this aspect.) Habits are formed through social interaction. They are social facts, even if in some cases they differ between individuals, Crossley reminds us. The second thing he points out is that everyday life is constantly accompanied by the small and large (much less frequent) crises observed by Bourdieu, which, as Crossley expresses, “motivate both a continual recourse to habits of reflection and a continual revision of certain habits.”<sup>1061</sup>

Unlike Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty sees habit as an extension of human possibilities rather than a limitation of action. Habits expand one’s presence in the world. Merleau-Ponty’s insights into habit are in line with those of Jousse into habit as a mechanism of ‘letting go’ that is installed within the deep intelligence and which allows this intelligence to delve even deeper. According to Jousse’s anthropology of gesture, a person is more human when they have more habits, which they throw back into the unconscious in order to free the intellect, with the aim of guiding it to a certain point.<sup>1062</sup>

Similarly, Merleau-Ponty explains habit as a uniquely human phenomenon. “Although our body does not impose definite instincts upon us from birth, as it does upon animals, it does at least give to our life the form of generality, and develops our personal acts into stable dispositional tendencies.”<sup>1063</sup> Humans are surrounded not only by the physical world, but also by objects, each of which is adapted to the actions of the human being it serves. Each of them radiates an atmosphere of humanity around it. The civilization in which one participates exists

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<sup>1061</sup> Crossley, “Habit and Habitus,” 152.

<sup>1062</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 75.

<sup>1063</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 169.

in a natural way, through the tools with which it is equipped, and it is through the perception of human action and the perception of the other person that the perception of the cultural world can be tested.<sup>1064</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty, just as nature finds its way to the core of my personal life and becomes inextricably linked with it, so behavior patterns settle into that nature, being deposited in the form of a cultural world.<sup>1065</sup>

Through absorption or assimilation, the body receives spontaneous things in such a way that it passes them on to the habit, which further translates them into habitual patterns of behavior, Casey notes.<sup>1066</sup> As Crossley writes, Merleau-Ponty describes habitus as “a power to conserve structures of perception, communication and action which prove useful to us, thereby enhancing agency.” It also gives continuity to our lives. One’s self and one’s life are continuous in time because they are rooted in habits. Habit gives the same continuity to collective history and culture. Human beings are not only creatures of habit, but also of culture, and essentially historical creatures who reflect the historical epoch to which they belong in everything they do, think, perceive, and say. But human beings are so only because they have a body that is inclined and adapted to accept external models and to store past experiences as practical experiences and schemas.<sup>1067</sup>

### 3.4.6.3. *Between custom and spontaneity*

Returning to the aspect of temporality, a habit that occupies a privileged place in human experience is both the most common and the most subtle way of keeping in touch with the past that one carries and that carries one, Casey observes. It is an example of a bodily being that is completely and yet unspecifically rooted in the past. Specification begins with habit, and is reinforced by the bodily memory that habit brings. In this way the habit begins to guide the

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<sup>1064</sup> Ibid., 405.

<sup>1065</sup> Ibid. Merleau-Ponty explains in more detail: “In this sense our nature is not long-established custom, since custom presupposes the form of passivity derived from nature. The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of new significance: this is true of motor habits such as dancing. Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body’s natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world. At all levels it performs the same function which is to endow the instantaneous expressions of spontaneity with ‘a little renewable action and independent existence’. Habit is merely a form of this fundamental power. We say that the body has understood and habit has been cultivated when it has absorbed a new meaning, and assimilated a fresh core of significance.” *Phenomenology of Perception*, 169.

<sup>1066</sup> Casey, “Habitual Body,” 203.

<sup>1067</sup> Crossley, “Habit and Habitus,” 146.

body itself, which it needs for its realization.<sup>1068</sup> As Merleau-Ponty writes, “when we acquire habits, our world is restructured according to the actions and gestures we can make.”<sup>1069</sup>

However, Casey points to a spectrum that runs from spontaneity to habit and from habit to custom. Habit is fairly well established compared to spontaneous action; however, it looks spontaneous when one contrasts it with custom. With habit, one has a world that is at the same time settled and open to free change. Habit is thus in an intermediate position between the very extremes of custom and spontaneity, to which it nevertheless serves as a mediator.<sup>1070</sup>

In this sense, Merleau-Ponty criticizes Sartre’s conception of freedom, and in particular his attempt to place freedom above any relation of the human subject to the world. For Merleau-Ponty, this is a reduction of freedom to indeterminacy and contingency. According to Crossley, for Merleau-Ponty, freedom is only meaningful for a being who has relatively stable preferences and projects to pursue over time, and it is only possible for a being who knows and manages themselves and the world well enough to be able to successfully pursue these projects. These thoughts presuppose a habit. Freedom needs the anchoring in the world that habit provides, and without it is meaningless.<sup>1071</sup>

#### 3.4.6.4. *The role of movement in the acquisition and transfer of habit*

The role of movement in habit acquisition is very important. Merleau-Ponty relates the acquisition of a habit to the perception of meaning, but it is the perception of the meaning of movement – it is “the motor grasping of a motor significance.”<sup>1072</sup> In his psychological lectures, Merleau-Ponty says that this is a form of intelligence which is not fully conscious of itself:

It is found in habits, but not those which we usually think of—mechanical and stereotypical habits—but in habit-aptitudes, act habits (rather than gestures) that permit us to respond to situations of the same type by adaptive and nuanced behavior (knowing how to dance, knowing how to swim).<sup>1073</sup>

Merleau-Ponty explains the plasticity of habit:<sup>1074</sup>

We cannot speak of automatism, since in such a case habit would only function in precise conditions. It is a fact that habits are plastic and neither the situations nor the

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<sup>1068</sup> Casey, “Habitual Body,” 205.

<sup>1069</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 91.

<sup>1070</sup> Casey, “Habitual Body,” 202.

<sup>1071</sup> Crossley, “Habit and Habitus,” 153. Merleau-Ponty also criticizes propagandists who often fail to grasp the situation of workers’ lives, relying on their intellectual projects rather than on the life style of the workers themselves: “What makes me a proletarian is not the economic system or society considered as systems of impersonal forces, but these institutions as I carry them within me and experience them; nor is it an intellectual operation devoid of motive, but my way of being in the world within this institutional framework.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 515.

<sup>1072</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>1073</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 212.

<sup>1074</sup> The incomplete consciousness of a habit is related to its plasticity.

corporeal instruments are fixed once and for all, such as in habit transfer. Furthermore, habit is not subjugated to strictly defined situations. Habit is an aptitude to respond to a certain type of situation by a certain kind of solution. The habitual operation is thus at once corporeal and spiritual; it is an existential operation.<sup>1075</sup>

The acquisition of habit according Merleau-Ponty is “a rearrangement and renewal of the corporeal schema.”<sup>1076</sup> Merleau-Ponty uses the term ‘body schema’ or ‘body image’ (schéma corporel) to refer to the non-explicit awareness the body has of position, posture, and capabilities of one’s own body.<sup>1077</sup> “Psychologists often say that the body image is dynamic,” writes Merleau-Ponty, and shows that “brought down to a precise sense, this term means that my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task.”<sup>1078</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, the ‘body schema’ not only expresses one’s current position, but also encompasses the possibilities of one’s life, and thus expresses one’s habits and style of being in the world. As has already been said, when human beings acquire habits, their world is restructured according to the actions and gestures they can make. The cases where people’s habitual body or the intentionality of their movements can continue to distinguish a world that is no longer accessible due to changes in their actual body,<sup>1079</sup> witness the influence of habit to the corporeal schema.

What is the source of this suppleness of habit, asks Merleau-Ponty and answers that the problem can be resolved only if perception and motor functions are not artificially separated.<sup>1080</sup> What the avoidance of the artificial distinction between perception and motor functions in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy can reveal about transformation through movement will be explored in the next part of the chapter.

### **3.5. The Transformative Power of Movement in Merleau-Ponty**

Above, I have presented the main themes of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy that are the most important for his ideas on movement. I have found very deep insights concerning space and time, connected with the notion of habit, that brought new aspects of movement experience

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<sup>1075</sup> Ibid., 452.

<sup>1076</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 164.

<sup>1077</sup> As Landes points out, the difference of the ‘body schema’ and ‘body-image’, concepts, which come from early neurological studies, is linked to translations of these studies. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 32-33.

<sup>1078</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 114.

<sup>1079</sup> Our body is a living reservoir of potential action that can remain intact, even though the body’s possibilities have been compromised. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 91.

<sup>1080</sup> “In this way, the issue would always involve a certain perception of the situation, on the condition that one grants that this perception behaves according to a corresponding motor adaptation. This bears on child psychology, since the development of motor activity necessarily implies perceptual development, and vice versa.” Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 140.

to light. In other words, Merleau-Ponty's insights into movement attempt to answer precisely the question about how the mechanics of Mauss's "enormous biological and physiological apparatus" operate – what is the breadth of the linking psychological cogwheel?<sup>1081</sup>

In order to come closer to the transformative power of movement in Merleau-Ponty's writings, I will focus on Merleau-Ponty's insight into the process of expression, which he saw as lying at the heart of a new understanding of the relationship between mind and body, visible and invisible.<sup>1082</sup> Then I will highlight the importance of the temporal aspect as Merleau-Ponty's distinctive contribution to the study of movement, and will show its implications for transformation in movement. Finally, I will give a brief comparison between some of the ideas of Merleau-Ponty and Jousse.

### *3.5.1. The paradoxes of expression*

The discussion of the chapter so far has sought to emphasize Merleau-Ponty's philosophical decision to start 'from the bottom', which meant taking up the question of behavior and its structures through some form of concrete description. The aim of the first of Merleau-Ponty's books<sup>1083</sup> was to provide the foundations for a phenomenology of concrete expression. The structure of behavior, in Landes's interpretation, refers to a certain unity or internal harmony possessed by a system, but this internal harmony is not something that exists prior to its expression, but is achieved in the expression or manifestation. In other words, it is achieved in movement and through movement. This emerging intelligibility is very much related to one's potential existence; the form or structure is what persuades one's expressive actions to be accepted as meaningful.

Merleau-Ponty's analysis emphasizes structure, because structure is able to unify the layers of being – the physical, the vital, the human – without reducing any order to a mere epiphenomenon of another. But it is precisely the paradoxical logic of expression that motivates his inquiry,<sup>1084</sup> a paradoxical logic that relates to the most basic levels of learned behaviour, and that is first and foremost rooted in the act of expression and the event of expression itself. As Bernhard Waldenfels writes,

the paradox lies in the relation between the actual expression and what is yet to be expressed, in other words, between what is yet to be expressed and its means, ways, forms, in short, the "ready-made expressions," in which something is already expressed, [...] This paradox originates in an inner tension of the expressive event, an

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<sup>1081</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 92.

<sup>1082</sup> Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*, 153.

<sup>1083</sup> *The Structure of Behavior and Phenomenology of Perception*.

<sup>1084</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 61.



event that is neither homogeneous nor reducible to its components. [...] If, instead of a creative expression, we speak of an expressive creation, then expression and creation become two sides of the same coin.<sup>1085</sup>

The paradox of expression is a theme that continues to interest Merleau-Ponty, including in his last writings. He treated expression, as Haas puts it, as “an embodied, creative way of arriving at truths and communicating with others; [as] a way of knowing that is consonant with our lives as natural beings in the world.”<sup>1086</sup> Merleau-Ponty worked patiently to uncover the particularities of perceptual experience, of living embodiment, and of intersubjective relations with others. As Haas argues, in the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty refers to this triad as the symbiotic system of “self-others-things,” and in his final essays he calls it simply “the visible.” The “invisible” he calls thinking, language, and knowledge, which he also describes as expressive processes that are rooted in and at the same time go beyond our perceptual life. For Merleau-Ponty, human expressive cognition is rooted in and it is the transformation of lived experience, thus it cannot be reducible to it. They are natural processes that sublimate and signify human embodied life without obscuring it. They are transcending processes of ideality that are not transcendental.<sup>1087</sup>

### 3.5.2. *Between visible and invisible*

The movement of the ideal (invisible) is not more important than the movement of the visible. There is no Platonic hierarchy or separation between thinking (and language) and our bodily relations with the world in Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, Haas points out. Creative new ideas, words, meanings, paradigms, theories, and acquisitions of thought burst into the world as ways of organizing the ideal world. But their artefacts (writings, artworks, images, texts, spoken words) literally become part of the visible and can inspire further transcendent articulations. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, there is a movement towards becoming, but it develops through contingent, creative, culturally and historically grounded transcending acts which themselves leave a sedimental data in the world and thus change it. In other words, there is an irreconcilable difference between the expressive movement of thought and the bodily movement of vision, but not an ontological gulf. They can be seen as “one of inter-dynamic

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<sup>1085</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels, “The Paradox of Expression,” in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty’s Notion of Flesh*, ed. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 91-92.

<sup>1086</sup> Haas, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, 155.

<sup>1087</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

transformation, a non-reductive interweaving of different spheres,” Haas suggests,<sup>1088</sup> also recalling to the importance of open structures of human behaviour in this process:

Nascent perception then is already exposed in the paradoxical place between expression and what is expressed, and our open structures as expressive bodies are the ground of our being in a world together sharing meaning through an ability to gear into the vestiges of expression by taking them up into our own lives.<sup>1089</sup>

Merleau-Ponty’s notion of expression is characterized by a respect for what one knows through the direct experience of life in time. According to Landes, Merleau-Ponty explains the ‘mind’ within the frame of identified structures as the transformation of the entire being into an expressive being, which did not require the attachment of a mental substance to the human body.<sup>1090</sup> It is thanks to these open structures (one might say, the parallelism of thinking and acting, and ‘working together’ in the event of expression) the body participates in a dialectic of expression with the environment and the virtual world.

At this point, before turning to the question of what the dialectic of expression means, it is important to highlight that the significance of bodily movement for invisible things is an important contribution by Merleau-Ponty, filling in the gaps in Mauss’s “Techniques of the Body.” As mentioned in Chapter 1, in this essay, Mauss is mainly concerned with body techniques that are quite active and non-verbal. He does not, for example, talk about talking<sup>1091</sup> and singing, or playing musical instruments, which could certainly be explored as body techniques. The activities of thinking, dreaming, and imagining should also be described as body techniques because, to paraphrase Mauss, “men do not lose their ability to know what to do with their bodies”<sup>1092</sup> while thinking, imagining, or dreaming. It is the bodily nature of these domains, and their relation to visible human activities, discussed more fully by Mauss, that is an important part of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical work.

### 3.5.3. *Dialectics of expression*

Regretting that philosophy lacks “an idea of consciousness and an idea of action which would make an internal communication between them possible,”<sup>1093</sup> Merleau-Ponty suggests considering the mechanisms of the body and consciousness, however that may be conceived as a permanent duration or a center of judgment, to be parallel spheres. In *The Structure of*

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<sup>1088</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>1089</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 73.

<sup>1090</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>1091</sup> Bourdieu defined language as a technique of the body.

<sup>1092</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 77.

<sup>1093</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 164.

*Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty points out that the body's reactions are only understandable and predictable if they are not perceived as muscular contractions within the body, but as actions addressed to a specific environment, whether actual or virtual.<sup>1094</sup>

According to Merleau-Ponty, human life is defined as the manifestation of an “interior” in the “exterior,” and consciousness is nothing more than the projection of a new “milieu” onto the world. This is the uniqueness of humanity in the animal world, in that, in addition to the construction of a stable environment that is characteristic of other organisms and that corresponds to the monotonous assumptions of their needs and instincts, human action does not stop there, but embarks on a “third dialectic” that leads to the emergence of new cycles of behavior.<sup>1095</sup>

It might be asked whether these ideas were also found in Leroi-Gourhan. However, Merleau-Ponty expands this “third dialectic,” which Leroi-Gourhan described in terms of “external memory.” Unlike Leroi-Gourhan, Merleau-Ponty's definition of the human being as a site of expression, does not emphasize the ability to create a second nature – economic, social, or cultural – beyond a biological nature, as a specifically human characteristic, but rather the ability to transcend the structures created in order to create others. According Landes, this movement is what Merleau-Ponty refers to as already visible in every concrete product of human labor.<sup>1096</sup>

Before going to the examination of how this unique characteristic manifests itself in each specific human action, it is useful to cite Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on the ambiguity of human dialectics:

The meaning of human work[...] is the recognition, beyond the present milieu, of a world of things visible for each “I” under a plurality of aspects, the taking possession of an indefinite time and space [...] [The] acts of the human dialectic [...] reveal the same essence: the capacity of orienting oneself in relation to the possible, to the mediate, and not in relation to a limited milieu [...] Thus, the human dialectic is ambiguous: it is first manifested by the social or cultural structures, the appearance of which it brings about and in which it imprisons itself. *But its use-objects and its cultural objects would not be what they are if the activity which brings about their appearance did not also have as its meaning to reject them and to surpass them.* Correlatively, perception, which until now has appeared to us to be the assimilation of consciousness into a cradle of institutions and a narrow circle of human “milieus,” can become, especially by means of art, perception of a “universe.” The knowledge of a truth is substituted for the experience of an immediate reality. “Man is a being who has the

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<sup>1094</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>1095</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>1096</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 73.

power of elevating to the status of objects the centers of resistance and reaction of his milieu [...].”<sup>1097</sup>

In the flow of life (a kind of dynamic eternity), the engagement of human subjects through movement, which is the first experience in that flow of life, distinguishes time, humanizes the environment by honoring one’s own experience and by adapting it for the future, and creates the symbols that communicate with other subjects. Again, it might be said that this is what one reads in Jousse’s anthropology of gesture. Keeping Jousse’s ideas in mind together with Merleau-Ponty’s helps to better understand Merleau-Ponty’s insights. It is also important to note that Merleau-Ponty’s reference to the dialectical nature of human expression and to a “third dialectic” in no way implies a devaluation of human being’s biological nature, and is therefore in full agreement with Mauss’s treatment of human behavior.

As it was mentioned in Chapter 1, in the “Techniques of the Body” Mauss invoked the metaphor of cogwheel in the description of “an enormous biological and physiological apparatus,” which is presupposed by the movement of the body. In addition, he presented the psychological as connecting cogs rather than causes (with some exception in moments of creation and reform).<sup>1098</sup> Merleau-Ponty, who deliberately avoids causal interpretations<sup>1099</sup> when describing the relationships between the physiological, emotional, spiritual, and cultural facts, thinks similarly.<sup>1100</sup> The transcendent character of behavior is not a break with biological nature, just as biological nature is not in any way separate from social nature. Simply put, symbolic behavior or signifying behavior is not a denial of biological nature but an expansion of it.

The use a man is to make of his body is transcendent in relation to that body as a mere biological entity.[...] Feelings and passional conduct are invented like words. Even those which, like paternity, seem to be part and parcel of the human make-up are in reality institutions. It is impossible to superimpose on man a lower layer of behaviour which one chooses to call “natural”, followed by a manufactured cultural or spiritual world. Everything is both manufactured and natural in man, as it were, in the sense that there is not a word, not a form of behaviour which does not owe something to purely biological being—and which at the same time does not elude the simplicity of animal life, and cause forms of vital behaviour to deviate from their pre-ordained direction,

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<sup>1097</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 175-176 (emphasis original). Merleau-Ponty cites Scheler in the end of this quotation (Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Darmstadt: Otto Reichl Verlag, 1928), 47-50).

<sup>1098</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 92.

<sup>1099</sup> On causal explanations, Merleau-Ponty says that “it would be necessary to bring to light the abuse of causal thinking in explanatory theories and at the same time to show positively how the physiological and sociological dependencies which they rightly take into account ought to be conceived.” Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 176.

<sup>1100</sup> For further understanding about how carefully Merleau-Ponty read “Techniques of the Body” and the impact the essay had on him, see Noland, *Agency*, 47-48.

through a sort of leakage and through a genius for ambiguity which might serve to define man.<sup>1101</sup>

According to Merleau-Ponty, movement creates meanings that are transcendent in relation to the anatomical body, that are immanently created through movement, and that can only be understood through movement.

#### 3.5.4. *Creativity of act*

How does the human capacity for the transcendence of structures in order to create new ones, which allow new styles of acting to emerge, manifest itself in every human action?

As Landes explains, Merleau-Ponty understands the “act” as a creative gesture that responds to a situation by re-presenting the past, which is thus paradoxically changed.<sup>1102</sup> Human symbolic behavior, in which thinking is possible, differs from other forms of behavior in that the perspectival variety of choices available to the human being widens the possibilities of behavior:

Thus genuine aptitudes demand that the “stimulus” become efficacious by its internal properties of structure, by its immanent signification; and they demand that the response symbolize along with the stimulus. It is this possibility of varied expressions of a same theme, this “multiplicity of perspective,” which is lacking in animal behavior. It is this which introduces a cognitive conduct and a free conduct. In making possible all substitutions of points of view, it liberates the “stimuli” from the here-and-now relations in which my own point of view involves them and from the functional values which the needs of the species, defined once and for all, assign to them. [...] With symbolic forms, a conduct appears, which expresses the stimulus for itself, which is open to truth and to the proper value of things, which tends to the adequation of the signifying and signified, of the intention and that which it intends. Here behavior no longer has only one signification, it is itself signification.<sup>1103</sup>

The possibility of choice and change approaches allows people to create tools for virtual use that go beyond the pressure of the actual situation, especially to create new ones. The subjective aspect of expression (in the sense that the expression refers to a lived subjective experience) is very much related to perspectival excess. Admittedly, in explaining the differences in behavioral structures, Merleau-Ponty does not provide an explanation of the factors that have led to these differences. However, his constant digression into the reflection on time and his reflection on the impact of the experience of time on human action, especially in the creation of difference, calls to mind the research and conclusions of Leroi-Gourhan on

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<sup>1101</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 220.

<sup>1102</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 66.

<sup>1103</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 122.

the decisive role of memory, which became possible due to changes in the brain caused by changes in movement in human evolution. Thus, I find it very useful to incorporate the Leroi-Gourhan memory factor, which helps to explain the reason why human expression can be so full of the sediment of plurality (both in terms of subjective experience and intersubjectivity) into Merleau-Ponty's given reason of open structures.

The aspect of perspectival heterogeneity is already involved in behavioral learning. As Merleau-Ponty writes,

Learning does not appear to be the addition to old forms of behavior of certain determined connections between such and such stimuli and such and such movements, but rather to be a general alteration of behavior which is manifested in a multitude of actions, the content of which is variable and the significance constant.<sup>1104</sup>

"It is rather a question of a new aptitude for resolving a series of problems of the same form,"<sup>1105</sup> says Merleau-Ponty. Once a behavior is learned, Landes notes, it becomes a general ability to respond to situations that have the same meaning, so it is not a "*real* operation,"<sup>1106</sup> but carries weight in the virtual or in the metastable.<sup>1107</sup>

The theme of habit, already discussed above in the chapter, comes to the fore again. Let one not forget that the body, as Landes puts it, is the site of the metastable and transductive trajectory of human experience.<sup>1108</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, habit is a way of actualizing the world and transforming one's being through the mediation of the body: "Habit expresses our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments."<sup>1109</sup> There is an immediate relationship of meaning between the body and its world. Being in the world is realized as an interplay of spontaneity and coherence, so that expressive embodiment is a profound and compelling truth.

Merleau-Ponty describes the experience of being in metastable equilibrium as a body that sustains the world thanks to an intentional arc that projects around the human being not only in terms of their past and future, but also their physical situation, their ideological situation, and their moral situation:

[...] [T]here is the body as mass of chemical components in interaction, the body as dialectic of living being and its biological milieu, and the body as dialectic of social subject and his group; even all our habits are an impalpable body for the ego of each moment.<sup>1110</sup>

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<sup>1104</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>1105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1106</sup> *Ibid.*, 99 (emphasis original).

<sup>1107</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 66.

<sup>1108</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>1109</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 166.

<sup>1110</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 210.

An intentional arc assures the human being of their presence in all of these relations. Every gesture one learns reshapes the intentionality of this situatedness; that is to say, it influences the body schema. The body schema for Merleau-Ponty is a felt reality, an awareness of one's own body and its power in the world, and each new habit produces a new metastable equilibrium as a reworking and renewal of the body schema.<sup>1111</sup>

In summary, it can be said that the aspect of perspectival heterogeneity is of crucial importance for human creativity. However, it is not some 'added' element, but the nature of human movement. Learning and habit operate within this nature, structuring human acting.

### 3.5.5. *Memory and habit*

Thanks to the many threads of intentionality people are constantly engaging in spontaneous action, and the spontaneous experience that has resulted is as if it has been precipitated in the muscular movements of the body. The aspect of time is very important here – it not only enables a new spontaneity, but also shifts the acquired sedimentation in a different direction than simple repetition. The aspect of time is significant here, because it is an important factor in determining the transformative power of human movement.

As I have just discussed, the source of habit flexibility relates to the unity of perceptual and motor functions. An intentional arc that projects around all the dialectics listed in the Merleau-Ponty quotation in the previous subsection continually opens up new possibilities for spontaneous action. Merleau-Ponty's observation that "all our habits are an impalpable body for the ego of each moment"<sup>1112</sup> refers to the fundamental importance of time for the possibility of expression. Time enables the habit of movement and also enables "the body as the ego of each moment." In this way, the habit formed in time, present in the body's motricity, unleashes new possibilities for action. And since human movement (even at the stage of learning, as mentioned above) has within it a freedom of meaning instability, a freedom of signifying, habit further empowers this human quality. In other words, habit unleashes novelty and creativity.

As Landes explains, "The 'powers of my body adjust to and fit over' the gesture or the trace. I do not repeat the physical gesture, I take up its *sense* in a new gesture, gearing into the trajectory of the many performances of its trace by adding my own *re-performance* to its evolving weight."<sup>1113</sup> Re-performance is made possible by the role of memory in the reopening

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<sup>1111</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 87.

<sup>1112</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, 210.

<sup>1113</sup> Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 92 (emphasis original).

of time, which Merleau-Ponty ascribes to it. The body, linked to habit, does this, Casey argues.<sup>1114</sup>

In a sense, the habit enables the abstract movement discussed earlier in the chapter, as well as enabling all visible and invisible production. Habit can be said to provide the basis for the creative superstructure. As one reads in Merleau-Ponty's psychological lectures, a part of habit is independent of its instrument, and the intellect is capable of responding to new situations, to the whole rather than to the elements, to the overall meaning rather than to the stimuli. Examples of habit transfer demonstrate the flexibility and openness of the habit to new situations.<sup>1115</sup>

I will use the example of a dance given by Merleau-Ponty. The philosopher astutely observes that the formation of a dance habit consists in discovering a specific movement formula by analysis and then replicating it according to ideal contours using previously acquired movements such as walking and running. He points out that before a new dance formula can be created, it must incorporate certain elements of the general motility and it must have "the stamp of movement set upon it."<sup>1116</sup> This scheme presented by Merleau-Ponty, I would contend, applies to all human expressions, regardless of whether a person is more or less involved in conscious mental activities. Human creativity, as in the example of "a specific movement formula" in dance, depends on previously acquired movements. The point concerning mental mediation (analysis and replication) is also extremely important. It is reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's view of the parallelism between acting and thinking and the importance of this process for transformation through movement. Awareness (self-consciousness) manifests itself due to repetition, which never happens as simple repetition. In Merleau-Ponty's view, pure repetition is not conceivable as human action.

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<sup>1114</sup> Casey, "Habitual body," 207. Casey provides a detailed explanation about the relation between body, time and habit: "[...] [H]abit is at once primary and secondary in its relation with body, albeit in different senses. Habit is secondary to body insofar as it represents a particularization of the body's generalizing and sedimenting powers; it particularizes by establishing the special ways the lived body comes to inhabit the world in a regular and repeatable (rather than a purely spontaneous) fashion. Put differently: it gives the special depth of virtuality to a body that, lacking it, would be bound forever to the merely episodic and unrepeated. But habit in turn has a twofold primacy. First of all, it is in more intimate connection with the past than is any other power of human nature. If it is true that the past forms a permanent background of all my action and thought [...], and if, in short, 'I belong to my past' —then habit will have a privileged place in human experience, for it is at once the most pervasive and subtle way in which we are in touch with the past that we bear and that bears us. No wonder then that it can be exemplary of bodily being, which is wholly and yet nonspecifically rooted in the past. The specification begins with habit; and it is furthered by the habitual body memory which habit brings with it. In this way habit takes the lead over the very body which it requires for its own realization." Ibid., 204-205.

<sup>1115</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Child Psychology*, 212.

<sup>1116</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 165.



These ideas of Merleau-Ponty are strongly reminiscent of those of Jousse, discussed in Chapter 2, about gestural Mimisme as a living tool that helps *anthropos* to become a part of the cosmos, as well as to become aware of this becoming. The interacting gesture<sup>1117</sup> is a highly flexible and versatile tool with playful and repetitive qualities. Jousse described *anthropos* as a camera that not only captures but also records gestures.<sup>1118</sup> Thus *anthropos* has a tendency to become aware of their spontaneous mechanisms in order to be able to orient and direct them. Jousse's distinction between memory, which is the "conscious replay of Mimemes" and habits, which are 'letting go' mechanisms that are assembled with the deep mind and allow it to become more profound, is also worth remembering here.

Jousse speaks of gestural interaction becoming automatic, influenced by many repetitions. Constant repetition, according to Jousse, leads to eupraxia, where gestures work even better when they work by themselves. Thousands of years of ethnic tradition also contribute to this process. Through transmission of gestures within them, elements of automatism are forced. On the other hand, they are repositories of gestures that can be revived in new spontaneity. Merleau-Ponty's insights into habit explain Jousse's thoughts on the anthropological mechanisms that prevent human beings' exhaustion from spontaneous reactions to the movements of space (discussed in 2.1.2.4.) and demonstrate the importance of spontaneity itself for a meaningful human existence.

To sum up, habit in Merleau-Ponty's thought is strongly linked to the emergence of novelty and creativity in spontaneous expression. While this connection is found in the work of Mauss and even more so in the work of Jousse,<sup>1119</sup> Merleau-Ponty particularly emphasized the temporal dimension of this mobile mechanics.<sup>1120</sup> Time, as the mobile environment of movement, is effectively incorporated into Merleau-Ponty's movement studies and plays an important role in the transformative.

### 3.5.6. Freedom of expression

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy does not allow one to grasp some underlying cause or key factor of transformation. And even the question itself becomes less feasible in the context of

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<sup>1117</sup> "It is always a vibration that acts another vibration. In the Universe, everything interacts with everything. It has been said, quite rightly, that to consider a phenomenon as separate is to falsify it. Whether we like it or not, we are in the universal cosmological Interaction." Jousse, *L'anthropologie*, 57.

<sup>1118</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>1119</sup> Jousse also placed a big emphasis on temporality.

<sup>1120</sup> As mentioned earlier, Bergson was the one who most influenced Merleau-Ponty in this respect. For his part, Jousse also drew heavily on Bergson's notion of time in his *Anthropology of Gesture*. Jousse, *L'anthropologie*, 362-363.

Merleau-Ponty's ideas. It is because, in some way all human expression is a transformation. Could it be argued that expression is transformation, since as an irreducible act (which transcends structures) it creates the invisible world, which in turn has the potential to transform into the visible?

The question of transformation is hardly possible if one approaches it from the other side, in view of Merleau-Ponty's reflections on time and history, which were briefly discussed in section 3.4.4. If there is no universal time in itself, just as there is no absolute view of history,<sup>1121</sup> no 'real' perspective, then how can one evaluate transformation as such? If there is no fate and no absolutely free action, where do the possibilities of transformation lie?

Here I must return to Merleau-Ponty's critique of Sartre's conception of freedom, mentioned in section 3.4.6.3. Merleau-Ponty, freedom is only meaningful for a being who has relatively stable preferences and projects that can be pursued over time, and habits that help them to manage themselves in the pursuit of these projects. Without these things, freedom is meaningless, reduced to uncertainty and contingency. As Ricoeur argues, for Merleau-Ponty the only concrete and effective freedom is that which takes up some worldly propositions, takes the measure of things, and transforms obstacles into support.<sup>1122</sup> What comes obvious from different passages from Merleau-Ponty, is the creative potential of expression, which comes from the irreducible fate of being "free, to be unable to reduce myself to anything that I experience."<sup>1123</sup> In other words, freedom is a freedom of expression in which the situation of the subjective serves as a means of expression.

In order to bring people back to their nature (which is understood closely to Jousse's, who refers to the gesture as a modality of the active nature of the cosmos in human beings), Merleau-Ponty points to the importance of striving for a truth that is not merely the result of abstract decisions, but becomes a historical truth in the sense of being realized in the relations between human beings and in the relation of human beings to their work.<sup>1124</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, human actions are those that are enriched at their base by a multiplicity of factors and dialectics, including those they have incorporated from the past. However, this does not invalidate the transcendent power of expression (in fact, quite the contrary, as Merleau-Ponty's insights make clear), just as the weight of the past is never the fate of the human being.

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<sup>1121</sup> History itself has no meaning in itself, Merleau-Ponty argues, except that which is given to it by our will. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, 514.

<sup>1122</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Homage to Merleau-Ponty," in *Merleau-Ponty and the Possibilities of Philosophy: Transforming the Tradition* (2009), 20.

<sup>1123</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 419.

<sup>1124</sup> *Ibid.*, 518.

## Summary

The third chapter has analyzed Maurice Merleau-Ponty's approach to movement. In the first two parts of the chapter (in 3.1. and 3.2.) I discussed the main events of the philosopher's life and the intellectual sources for Merleau-Ponty's approach. I have highlighted the influence of Marcel Mauss on Merleau-Ponty, dedicating the third part of the chapter (3.3.) to examining this in detail. Apart from the fact that both thinkers have a similar understanding of society, are attentive to the concreteness of the social environment in which movement takes place, similarly emphasize the necessity of interdisciplinary dialogue, and are critical of the limitations of scientific research methods, they are most closely linked by the method of inquiry that they use in the research of movement, which combines objective analysis with subjective investigation of kinesthetic experience.

This method of inquiry was central to Merleau-Ponty's attempt to reinterpret human consciousness, which was the main goal of the philosopher's research on behaviour (the subject of the fourth part of the chapter, 3.4.). The focus on movement allowed Merleau-Ponty to show the indivisibility of the layers of being – physical, vital, human – and to reveal the mechanics of how visible phenomena relate to invisible phenomena and are totally dependent on the subjectivity of the perceiving body. The development of research into the mechanics of human behavior, describing the links between physiological, emotional, spiritual, and cultural facts, always keeping the idea that the transcendent nature of behaviour as in no way inseparable from biological nature (just as biological nature is in no way inseparable from social nature), is a definite contribution by Merleau-Ponty that complements the work of the authors discussed earlier.

Merleau-Ponty's original contribution to the study of movement is most evident in the discussion of the transformative power of movement in the last part of the chapter (3.5.). Here one can notice Merleau-Ponty's notions of expression, structure, time, and habit operating to reveal the ongoing dialectics involved in human action, which causes the birth of creativity and transcendence – when human biological nature is expanded by expression. In other words, human action embarking on a “third dialectic,” leads to the emergence of new cycles of behavior. Hence, human behavior is always signifying behavior, the manifestation of an “interior” in the “exterior,” and consciousness is the projection of a newness onto the world.

Merleau-Ponty's dominant idea is about acting and thinking to be parallel spheres that define consciousness. The philosopher's most original ideas on movement, meanwhile, are connected with his concepts of habit and time. He showed how habit is formed through the sedimentation of previous activity, and how this is important for the perception and promotion

of novelty in movement. It is more closely linked to the past than any other power of human nature, because it is the most subtle way in which one keeps in touch with the past that one carries and which carries one. Habit is the body's guide, and the body needs it for its realization. It can also be said to be the basis of the creative superstructure: it is through habit that the intellect is able to respond to new situations, to the whole rather than to the elements, to the overall meaning rather than to the stimuli. The source of habit flexibility relates to the inseparability (or, the parallelism) of perceptual and motor functions.

The intentional arc designed around the dialectics of the body enables a new spontaneous creativity, that at the same time retains the symbolic nature. Merleau-Ponty's ideas on abstract movement<sup>1125</sup> leads to the understanding that all states of minds and creative ideas, as well as all moods and emotions, are also characterized by motor intentionality and appear in embodied relationship with the world.

Merleau-Ponty took a close look at the mechanics of the human body in relation to such themes as transcendence and human freedom. Human freedom is freedom of expression, and it is about the possibility to transform a person's situation. The philosopher resents the reduction of freedom to indeterminacy and contingency. Freedom needs the anchoring in the world that habit provides, and without it freedom is meaningless. Habit is important for personal agency, for the experience of self-integrity, for creativity, for opening up and moving towards the new, including the future self.

#### **Chapter 4. The Influence of Mauss and Merleau-Ponty to Contemporary Theology**

The previous three chapters have dealt with philosophical anthropological approaches to movement, focusing on the central question of the transformative aspect in movement. The ideas of Mauss, his disciples and Merleau-Ponty on this question were analyzed. However, the movement-oriented current of French thinkers was not divorced from theology. In Chapter 4, I will introduce two contemporary theologians who work creatively with the ideas of the authors discussed in earlier chapters, namely the French sacramental theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet (4.1.), and the French cultural theorist, historian, and theologian Michel de Certeau (4.2.). In addition to examining the influence of Mauss (and his students) and Merleau-Ponty on the ideas of these theologians in the study of liturgical practice and faith, I

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<sup>1125</sup> The distinction between abstract and concrete movement ("the former occurs in the realm of being or of the actual, the latter [...] in that of the virtual or the non-existent") must not be confused with the distinction between body and consciousness. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 128.

will go on to raise the question of the transformative power of movement. In other words, I will look for what Chauvet and de Certeau, both interested in the themes of the body and movement, have to say on this issue.

The third part of Chapter 4 will summarize the main ideas about movement and its transformative power, and apply them to the church context, taking account in the process of the problems of contemporary society. How can the results of such a movement survey help to rethink faith? What changes in ecclesial practice does it promote?

#### **4.1. Louis-Marie Chauvet's Sacramental Theology**

Louis-Marie Chauvet is considered to be one of the earliest theologians who applied the insights drawn from postmodern philosophy as well as from psychoanalysis<sup>1126</sup> to the themes of the traditional theology.<sup>1127</sup> Born in 1942,<sup>1128</sup> he belongs to a generation of theologians, who were impacted by the encounter between Heidegger's philosophy, French existentialism, and semiotics. He was influenced by Mauss and Merleau-Ponty, and this is why I have chosen this theologian to represent the movement-oriented stream of French thinkers in contemporary theology.

Chauvet sought to situate his theology within the symbolic logic distinct from an onto-theologic. His way of doing this, according to Ambrose, was to reveal the "sacramentality of the Christian faith" as rooted in corporeality, which on its part cannot be grasped apart from the symbolic order.<sup>1129</sup> The way Chauvet describes symbolic order is very similar to Mauss's understanding. This will be one of the main themes on which I will focus in this part of the chapter. Also, I will discuss the relevance of Merleau-Ponty's ideas for Chauvet's theology,

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<sup>1126</sup> For Chauvet's relations with psychoanalysis, see Kateřina Bauer, "The Psychoanalytical Inspiration of Chauvet's Notion of Symbol," *Communio Viatorum* 51.1 (2009): 37-54.

<sup>1127</sup> Glenn P. Ambrose, *The Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet: Overcoming Onto-theology with the Sacramental Tradition* (Farnham, Surrey Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 2.

<sup>1128</sup> Chauvet was born in the town of Chavagnes-en-Paillers (located in the Pays de la Loire region of France). His home-town's tumultuous religious history (with the battles between Reform and Catholic traditions), was, in Glenn P. Ambrose's view, a boon for Chauvet's ecumenical ideas. According to Ambrose, "while Chauvet's theology is strongly grounded in the liturgical and sacramental traditions of the Catholic Church, it is also driven by a rigorous critique of them. [...] Certainly, much of his critique of the tradition is directly traceable to the postmodern influences in his work, but perhaps his place of origin with its traces of the Reform tradition have made a mark on his thought as well." Ambrose, *The Theology*, 2. Chauvet belongs to a generation of clergy who were educated for change after the Second Vatican Council, but who were also familiar with the pre-conciliar ways of teaching. He was ordained a presbyter in 1966 (at the age of 24), even before earning his doctorate at the *Institute Catholic de Paris* (the Catholic Institute of Paris). Throughout his life, Chauvet remained committed to both academic life and the life of the Christian community. From 1978 to nearly the present day, Chauvet was involved in the double duties – teaching at the Institute and pastoral ministry. *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>1129</sup> *Ibid.*

especially in the search for alternatives to onto-theological thinking. Merleau-Ponty is very important author for Chauvet's understanding of the sacramental as inscribed in corporeality.

As I will follow the line of Chauvet's argument in his famous book *Symbol and Sacrament*,<sup>1130</sup> which begins with the critique of onto-theology, the influence of Merleau-Ponty will be discussed first. Although Heidegger is the main author of Chauvet's argument, in Ambrose's view, placing Chauvet's thought in the context of Merleau-Ponty's work, also serves to reinforce Merleau-Ponty's relationship with Heidegger, since, as highlighted in Chapter 3, the philosopher increasingly turned to Heidegger's concepts.<sup>1131</sup>

Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are thinkers who, while belonging to the phenomenological tradition, did not reject ontology despite their critique of metaphysics.<sup>1132</sup> The same could be said about Chauvet. In line with his predecessors, Chauvet can be seen as close to phenomenological ontology. But, even if he is considered as a phenomenologist in his method, Chauvet avoids Husserl's (Heidegger's teacher) ambition to establish a pure and exact science as well as the search for pure objectivity, the methodical aspects rejected by postmodern phenomenologists.<sup>1133</sup> Chauvet's theology in the first place is the theology of practice.<sup>1134</sup>

Chauvet's interest in symbolic practice, the focus on the bodily and movement aspects of it, the use of Mauss and Merleau-Ponty's ideas, are the reasons for introducing the theologian into my research. Immediately after a more in-depth look at Chauvet's theology as opposed to onto-theology with the help of Heidegger, I will focus on the influence of the ideas of Merleau-Ponty and Mauss on Chauvet's thought, highlighting Chauvet's contribution to the theme of the transformative power of movement.

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<sup>1130</sup> Louis Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995).

<sup>1131</sup> Ambrose, *The Theology*, 59.

<sup>1132</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>1133</sup> *Ibid.*, 59. According to Ambrose, Chauvet's theology as postmodern is characterized by two things: a shift from ontological to epistemological concerns, and a rejection of the representational model of knowledge, which is based on the objective mind of the disembodied knower. *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>1134</sup> Liturgy, like most other words which end in "-urgy," Chauvet notes, means practical activity. "Inasmuch as they are rituals, the sacraments are not primarily of the cognitive order, the order of '-logy,' but of the practical order. Of course they do communicate information in the areas of doctrine and ethics; but they do not operate at the discursive level proper to theo-logy." Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 324.

#### 4.1.1. Towards the study of liturgical practices

##### 4.1.1.1. Behind “the unsaid and forgotten”

Heidegger’s method<sup>1135</sup> was to return to philosophical origins and uncover “the unsaid and forgotten” questions about categories of the Western philosophical tradition, such as being and becoming, subject and object. And his main target within this tradition was the allegation that philosophical thought has continually forgotten the difference between Being and beings. As a consequence, Ambrose says, particular beings were understood in a distorted or incomplete manner “as that which is the ‘given’ or what is simply present to us and for us.” This would be a metaphysics of presence with the idea of a perfect, timeless being, and as such is reflected in both philosophical ontology and onto-theology. This is why the temporality in Heidegger’s works has such an importance – it serves as assertion into the discourse concerning Being. It is connected with Heidegger’s statement about the human mode of being as always “there-being” (*Dasein*) – being in particular time and place. Heidegger speaks about the facticity of *Dasein* and its connections with “referential dependence” to other beings.<sup>1136</sup>

Similar ideas by Mauss and Merleau-Ponty, stressing the facticity and relational character of human life, have been discussed in previous chapters. But what Heidegger emphasizes, and what appears in Chauvet’s explanation of why people long so much for a metaphysical interpretation of reality, is the fact that, as Ambrose puts it, “human beings live with the knowledge that they do not have to be and will not always be.” The truth of human existence is its finite transcendence intrinsically linked to death.<sup>1137</sup> In such an openness of being one must maintain oneself.<sup>1138</sup> “The truth of being” for Heidegger is not God, notes Chauvet quoting Heidegger, but it opens to “the essence of the sacred,” in which “the experience of the god and the god’s manifestation arise.”<sup>1139</sup>

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<sup>1135</sup> Despite his “metaphysical style” of thought, which, according to Ambrose, is in itself problematic to interpret.

<sup>1136</sup> Ambrose, *The Theology*, 10-12.

<sup>1137</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>1138</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 60.

<sup>1139</sup> “Now, this sense of the truth of being comes to humans in the simplest and most ordinary occurrences, wherever human open their eyes and ears, unbar their hearts, give themselves to the thought and consideration of a goal, ask for grace and give thanks, that is, wherever the empirical and utilitarian factuality of entities begins to crack open to let these entities appear as the play and gift of being, wherever an attitude of listening to the gift of the presence and sense of human poverty and mortality have lost this taste for the gratuitousness of things, this sense of the basic dimension of things, which inspires human with respect, there they close themselves in against all possibility of a bursting forth of salvation. Perhaps the dominant trait of our stage of the world consists in the failure of our awareness of being uninjured (that is to say, saved).” Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 60.

The invasion of objectification of things by representation, calculation, and planning helps to avoid the “appearance as the play and gift of being.”<sup>1140</sup> In Jousse’s anthropology of gesture, discussed in the Chapter 2, one reads about the processes of algebraosis (*l’algébrose*), the disease of expression,<sup>1141</sup> which, due to human laziness or impotence, belittles the cosmic play in the *anthropos* and turns one into “a kind of robot left to his Mimemes.”<sup>1142</sup> Energy saving becomes a powerlessness due to the disconnection from power. Both Chauvet’s and Heidegger’s explanations sound different – it could be said that the cause of algebraosis is fear and discomfort rather than conservation of the body’s energy, but in a way one can see a similar self-protective motivation.

Heidegger also speaks about the perspective of everydayness as the perspective which conceals the truth of human existence. Such a gaze, Ambrose writes, serves as the foundation of a metaphysics of presence, which, according Heidegger, implies the metaphysical view on the subject, and produces the partial, one-dimensional habits of thinking.<sup>1143</sup> The critique of perspective of everydayness (what Heidegger called the vision of beings as “present-at hand”<sup>1144</sup>) is very important in explaining Chauvet’s motivation for turning to liturgical practices.

#### 4.1.1.2. *Why liturgy?*

Since I have previously dealt with anthropological and philosophical studies of movement, turning on to the significance of liturgical practices may not seem self-evident. The themes of the flesh, expression, and gift, which I will discuss shortly, do not in themselves answer the question of why liturgical practices should be the focus. One might even question whether Chauvet’s aim in using anthropological and philosophical insights is not simply to justify the sacraments, to find a more adequate interpretation of them, and thus to actualize them; after all, the insights of the previous authors can be applied to correct any traditional communal practice. The same applies to Heidegger’s ideas on which Chauvet relies. The requirement to remain in the state of openness with the attitude of “asking for grace and giving thanks”<sup>1145</sup> does not necessarily point to the liturgy.

My proposal here, is to treat Heidegger’s ideas that Chauvet uses in his critique of metaphysics, including Heidegger’s critique of the “presence-at-hand,” as a transition into the

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<sup>1140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1141</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 106.

<sup>1142</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>1143</sup> Ambrose, *The Theology*, 14-15.

<sup>1144</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>1145</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 60.



field of liturgical practices. But since this only partially justifies such a transition (because liturgical practices do not guarantee the absence of the gaze of “everydayness,” or that there is no possibility of openness to the truth of being to be found in everyday actions), Chauvet’s usage of Mauss’s insights concerning the symbolic exchange from “The Gift” can contribute to the justification. The search for the equivalent thankful giving practice can point to the Eucharist.

It is possible with substantial reservations to say that Heidegger helped Chauvet identify the problem, and Mauss together with Merleau-Ponty helped to solve it. Chauvet writes that Heidegger opened a path for theology, especially when it is understood as a theological act inseparable from the being of its performer.<sup>1146</sup> Merleau-Ponty’s role in this is, in fact, no less important, while the emphasis on Mauss’s ideas in Chauvet’s theology is particularly important to prevent liturgical practice from becoming an end in itself.

#### 4.1.2. *The battle against metaphysics*

Drawing on Heidegger, Chauvet states that “metaphysics believes itself to have produced an explanation of being, when in fact it has only ontically reduced being to metaphysics’ representations, utterly forgetting that nothing that exists ‘is’.”<sup>1147</sup> Metaphysics conceives this representation as common property of the entirety of all entities, as “foundation-being,” and thus allows itself to be ruled by the logic of “foundations.” Chauvet explains that this logic of conceiving being necessarily “twins” into a unique *summit*, and refers to a first entity – “the Good or the One” (Plato); the divine (Aristotle); God in God’s very self, absolute entity, “uncreated being” (*ens increatum*) (Aquinas); both “first cause” (*causa prima*) and “ultimate reason (*ultima ratio*) (Leibniz); “beginning” and “end” (*arche* and *telos*) – that cannot be this without being “its own trait” – “*an onto-theo-logic*.”<sup>1148</sup> This kind of thinking justifies

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<sup>1146</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>1147</sup> Chauvet explains: “Metaphysics was born in Greece simultaneously with the forgetting of what Heidegger calls ‘the ontological difference,’ that is, ‘the difference between being and entities.’ We have forgotten that we have *forgotten* now for over twenty-five centuries, so difficult is it – perhaps in some ways irreversible, as we shall explain later – to wrest ourselves away from what seems to present itself as an incontrovertible datum: that is, that entity is ‘that which is,’ and that being is ‘the being the entity is.’

This is because metaphysics ‘considers entities in their entirety, and speaks of Being... (from which springs) a continual confusion between entity and being.’ Being is ‘defined as the *common trait of all entities* which, by the fact, become fundamentally identical due to the presence of this common property within them.’ Being is thus represented as the general and universal ‘something’ or ‘stuff’ which conceals itself beneath entities, which ‘lies on the base’ of each of them (*hypokeimenon*), a permanent ‘subsistent being,’ *sub-stratum*, *sub-jectum*, and finally, as Descartes describes it, *sub-stantia*. On the basis of this confusion, metaphysics identifies being with the type of being of entities (their ‘being-ness’), forgetting the basic ontic-ontological difference in this confusion of ontic and ontological.” Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 26-27 (emphasis original).

<sup>1148</sup> Ibid., 27 (emphasis original).

entity within the totality of being, its foundation (*logos*). Inevitably, Chauvet writes, this brand of logic, far from preceding theology, proceeds from it in a fundamental, and not accidental way, and provides onto-theological interpretation of the relation of being to entities.

The order of the hierarchy (*taxis, ordo*) is a very important feature of such thinking, as is the “technique of explanation of reality by means of ultimate causes,” characterized by the “need for a reassuring plenitude of symptomatic of visceral anthropocentrism: the need to begin with the certitude of the self, with the presence of the self to the self, by which everything else in the world is ultimately to be measured.”<sup>1149</sup> Order and the justification of the reasons for existence are measured by utilitarian logic. This reduction of existence to a closed totality, according to Chauvet, is governed by the fear of difference and death.

The metaphysical need for a foundation “which both explains and justifies” the ground and at the same time reinforces the “logic of the Same,”<sup>1150</sup> according to Chauvet, can be overcome by turning to the concreteness of language and the body, which have been reduced to ‘tools’ in metaphysical thinking.<sup>1151</sup> Onto-theological logic of the same, in which sacraments are controlled by their instrumental and causal evaluation, must be replaced with “a symbolic representation of the Other, where they are appreciated as language acts making possible the unending transformation of subjects into believing subjects.”<sup>1152</sup>

Chauvet, again quoting Heidegger, notes that “metaphysics has always proceeded ‘from a revelation of being,’ but it has remained ‘unaware’ of this revelation.”<sup>1153</sup> Therefore “one must reascend to the very source of its life, that is, to ‘the truth of Being,’ which is its *ignored* ‘foundation.’”<sup>1154</sup> This truth is understood as an event, which Chauvet describes by means of language full of metaphors about physical movement:

For it is precisely from [the] “Play” of being that metaphysics first arose; but the latter has disowned its playful origin by clinging to its representations: the dance of advance and retreat which being carries out, its movement of presence in absence, has been reduced to the presence of an available foundation; originally es-static, temporality has been tamed into the solid permanence of a constant “now”; logical clarity has replaced the blend of light and shadow at the breakthrough of Being. To overcome metaphysics, one must perform this “step backwards,” this jump into the difference, advance by

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<sup>1149</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>1150</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>1151</sup> Ibid., 34, 36. Chauvet sees technology (similar to Heidegger) as “the completion of metaphysical stage of the word, a world viewed as ‘picture’ and ‘representation,’” which unfolded at the beginning of modernity, and from then on, “Being is reduced to a mere ‘capital’ always at the disposal of humankind, to a ‘reservoir of energy,’ ‘entrusted’ to the dominating subjectivity which ‘posits’ (*stellen*) it and manages it for humankind’s own service.” Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 47-48.

<sup>1152</sup> Ibid., 45. The insights of Mauss and Merleau-Ponty were very important in Chauvet’s reflections related to this vision.

<sup>1153</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>1154</sup> Ibid., 48 (emphasis original).

going back towards this original place where metaphysics has its abode, the play of being in which it has been engaged from the very beginning.<sup>1155</sup>

Chauvet speaks about the ‘letting be’ and ‘letting go’ as at the same time the easiest and the most difficult human task, because “it requires us to unmask the false evidence on which rests the eidetic representations of being,” and accepting “the prospect of never reaching an ultimate foundation.” Instead, Chauvet encourages us to orient ourselves in a new direction,

inasmuch as it is possible – starting from the uncomfortable *non-place* of permanent questioning, which both corresponds to and guarantees being – if it is true that human beings are these ‘particular entities who hold themselves open to the opening of being.’ We must give up all ‘calculating thinking,’ all ‘usefulness,’ and learn to think starting with this ecstatic *breach* that a human being is.<sup>1156</sup>

According to Chauvet, the very essence of this task is its incompleteness.

#### 4.1.3. Always mediated reality

The incompleteness of the attainment of the human truth corresponds to the fact that human reality is always mediated. As Chauvet writes,

Reality is never present to us except in a mediated way, which is to say, constructed out of the symbolic network of the culture which fashions us. This symbolic order designates the system of connections between the different elements and levels of a culture (economic, social, political, ideological – ethics, philosophy, religion...), a system forming a coherent whole that allows the social group and individuals to orient themselves in space, find their place in time, and in general situate themselves in the world in a significant way – in short, to find their identity in a world that makes “sense,” [...].<sup>1157</sup>

Therefore, the real as such is by definition *unreachable*. What we perceive of it is what is constructed by our culture and desire, what is filtered through our linguistic lens. But our perception has become so accustomed to this lens and this lens adheres so tightly to our perception that, almost as a reflex, we take the cultural for the natural and our desires for the real.<sup>1158</sup>

The same things that Chauvet applies to the symbolic order can be said of language and the body:

Like the body, language is not an instrument but a *mediation*; it is *in* language that humans as subjects come to be. Humans not preexist language; they are formed in its womb. They do not possess it like an ‘attribute,’ even if of the utmost importance; they are possessed by it. Thus, language does not arise to translate after the fact a human experience that preceded it; it is *constitutive* of any truly *human* experience, that is to say, significant experience.<sup>1159</sup>

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<sup>1155</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>1156</sup> Ibid., 53 (emphasis original).

<sup>1157</sup> Ibid., 84-85.

<sup>1158</sup> Ibid., 86 (emphasis original).

<sup>1159</sup> Ibid., 87 (emphasis original).

In other words, people cannot get a definitive grasp of the meaning of their reality because reality is what one experiences, not what one gets. One is immersed in a meaningful existence by virtue of one's body and by virtue of all the activities of embodied beings who have humanly made sense of the world beforehand. It is because of and only through this embodied activity that one becomes human, or that one emerges in the being of humans. "It is in only in language – itself the voice of Being – that humans come into Being," Chauvet states.<sup>1160</sup>

#### 4.1.4. Merleau-Ponty in Chauvet's theology

The ideas of Merleau-Ponty, in Ambrose's opinion, help to strengthen the Heideggerian tie of Chauvet's theology. However, there are also direct Merleau-Ponty influences on Chauvet's theology, which I will focus on in this section.

The emphasis on the importance of the body is Chauvet's main affinity with Merleau-Ponty's thought. Ambrose also notes that "something very close to Merleau-Ponty's sense of body-consciousness is operative in Chauvet's thought," –and gives an example of Chauvet's avoidance of naïve understandings of the physical body as a bridge "between an immaterial mind or spirit and the material world outside our skin," which would reduce it to an object of a kind of ideal, disembodied mode of consciousness.<sup>1161</sup> Chauvet's statement "Body am I"<sup>1162</sup> echoes Merleau-Ponty's "I am a body."<sup>1163</sup> Chauvet's understanding of sensation and perception is close to that of Merleau-Ponty as well, especially its active, expressive dimension.<sup>1164</sup>

Ambrose also points out that Merleau-Ponty thought that it was impossible to arrive at a 'natural' human condition in relation to culture and the spiritual world, that everything in the human being is both created and natural. Similar thinking, the roots of which go beyond Merleau-Ponty as they were already very evident in Mauss's work, can be found in the writings of Chauvet. However, when Ambrose explains Chauvet's understanding of corporeality, which

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<sup>1160</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>1161</sup> Ambrose, *The Theology*, 61-62.

<sup>1162</sup> Chauvet quotes Nietzsche saying: "Body am I, entirely and completely, and nothing besides." Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 149.

<sup>1163</sup> "I am a body which rises towards the world." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 87.

<sup>1164</sup> Ambrose, *The Theology*, 65. Ambrose explains: "This creative dimension of perception which I have designated as creative response or expression is constitutive with the insight that human subject dwell in a significant world. [...] The human capacity to uniquely and creatively respond to reality-as-such gives rise to a world that is always historically and culturally distinct. This creative response can even be viewed as expression of a particular culture or even one's desire because it is not simply the result of automatic and instinctual behavior." Ibid., 66.

encompasses the biological and symbolic corporeality – ancestral body of tradition, a social body of culture, and a cosmic body of nature – he mentions similarity with Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger,<sup>1165</sup> but not with Mauss. However, as the previous chapter has argued, Merleau-Ponty’s thinking was significantly influenced by Mauss, and this factor needs to be borne in mind in the following presentation of the three interrelated bodies.

I will look more closely at corporeality and expression, two important themes in Chauvet’s theology where Merleau-Ponty’s influence is very evident.

#### 4.1.4.1. Corporeality

“Flesh of the world— Flesh of the body— Being.”<sup>1166</sup> Merleau-Ponty used the concept of flesh to describe the nature of the human being, in which activity has played a very important role revealing the relation between subjectivity and universality. Merleau-Ponty explained these relations as follows:

That means that my body is made of the same flesh as the world (it is a perceived), and moreover that this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world reflects it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world (the felt [senti] at the same time the culmination of subjectivity and the culmination of materiality), they are in a relation of transgression or of overlapping.<sup>1167</sup>

Chauvet on his part speaks about the symbolic order as a set of building blocks, which through human activity, through expression, become meaningful. On the other hand, the meaning is already attributed to these blocks by the earlier users:

It is in the symbolic order that subjects “build” themselves; but they do this only by building the world, something that is possible for them insofar as they have inherited from birth a world already culturally inhabited and socially arranged – in short, a world already spoken.<sup>1168</sup>

Chauvet’s understanding of corporeality is obviously similar to Merleau-Ponty’s, as both authors consider it to be the basis of symbolic structure. Chauvet speaks of the body of culture, tradition, and nature. He uses Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the ‘I-body’, and refers to a unique body that is at the same time related to others (e.g., parents), speaking in its own unique voice, but already spoken by a culture, and belonging to a tradition that is bonded with a world. “The I-body exists only as woven, inhabited, spoken by the ‘triple body of culture, tradition and nature’ (ancestral),” writes Chauvet.<sup>1169</sup>

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<sup>1165</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>1166</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 248.

<sup>1167</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>1168</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 86.

<sup>1169</sup> Ibid., 149-150.

What additional ideas can be found in Chauvet's writings on this topic? Chauvet develops the idea of the rootedness of meanings in the body, and that all meditations take place through the body. In addition to that, he speaks of the body as the arch-symbol of faith:

Any world which seeks to be expressed in a kind of a laborious inscription in a body, a history, a language, a system of signs, a discursive network. Such is the law. The law of mediation. The law of the body.

That is why "revelation" – Christian as well as Jewish – "could become the word of God only by an 'exodus' into the 'body' of writing."<sup>1170</sup> We will show that, to find the Spirit, one must first grasp the Letter. The anthropological is the place of every possible theological.<sup>1171</sup>

Chauvet argues that there is no faith unless it is inscribed in the body. From what has been discussed in the previous chapters, there is no doubt that 'inscription' takes place when the subject is acting in a certain environment. Faith is inscribed in the body from a particular culture and a particular history, in a body of desire, writes Chauvet. "One becomes a Christian only by entering an institution and letting this institution stamp its 'trademark,' its 'character,' on one's body." The sacramental order is what is "always already inscribed" in one's Christian existence. And that is why it is impossible to grasp the faith outside the body, just as it is impossible to avoid the materiality of the church in terms of its institution, its culture, its tradition, assures Chauvet.<sup>1172</sup>

#### 4.1.4.2. *Expression*

Both Merleau-Ponty and Chauvet emphasize the role of expression in their writings. As I showed in the last chapter, Merleau-Ponty resisted the traditional view of the body as a receiver and transmitter of pre-existing meaning. Even before thinking and linguistic expression, the body already has a relationship with the world of meanings. As the medium of material meanings, the body-subject actualizes meanings by actively living.<sup>1173</sup> In Merleau-Ponty's words, "We are doomed to expression."<sup>1174</sup> The concepts of expression in Merleau-Ponty's writings reveals the movement-based and relational identity of subjectivity.

In Chauvet's theology, expression serves as the antidote against the sameness which prevents openness to the needs of the Other. There is no human reality without expression,<sup>1175</sup> assures Chauvet. He leans on Merleau-Ponty in his statement that "there is no thinking 'which

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<sup>1170</sup> Chauvet quotes Stanislas Breton, *Écriture et révélation* (Paris: Cerf, 1979).

<sup>1171</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 151-152.

<sup>1172</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155.

<sup>1173</sup> Corriveau, "Phenomenology, Psychology," 22.

<sup>1174</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 525.

<sup>1175</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 90.

would exist for itself before its expression.”<sup>1176</sup> Chauvet cites E. Ortigues to describe expression as “an act that is for itself its own result. In effect, it produces nothing beyond its own manifestation.”<sup>1177</sup>

Expression is deeply connected with human subjectivity. The “act of presence from the interior into exterior” and back again is very similar to the description I gave in Chapter 1 in relation to kinesthetic feedback. Let us look more closely at how Chauvet talks about this “walking-in-place” of expression, which refers to movement between the inside and outside:

To express oneself is not to give an exterior covering to a human reality already there interiorly, especially not in the sentimental and romantic sense of the “need to express oneself” heard so frequently today... For *there is no human reality, however interior or intimate, except through the mediation of language or quasi-language that gives it a body by expressing it*. Expression, writes E. Ortigues, is “an act that is for itself its own result. In effect, it produces nothing beyond its own manifestation. [...]” Whether the expression be verbal, facial, or gestural, it “indicates an act of presence which acts itself out for itself, as a walking-in-place from the interior into exterior and from the exterior to interiority.” It is “the process by which the differentiation of the interior and the exterior” takes place, but in such a exterior, supposing interiority acquired somewhere,” because the two moments of interiority and exteriority of this process of differentiation “flow into one another: *to exteriorize oneself consists precisely in differentiating oneself interiorly*.” In other words, every “impression” can take form (a human, significant, form) only in the expression that accomplishes it, and every thought “forms itself by expressing itself.”<sup>1178</sup>

What becomes evident from this passage, is that expression causes the differentiation, which is the movement between the exteriority and interiority of expression. This differentiation is exactly where subjectivity comes forward. The subjective differentiation also causes the re-production or the re-making of signification. The signification is done by expression, and its liveliness comes from the differentiation. The differentiation can be imagined as the space in between the present moment and the present moments of the past that one becomes aware due to memory, which on its part enables one to evaluate the present situation in the light of the other ‘presents’ one has already experienced. However, the cause and purpose of this memory and of individual evaluation, comparison, and correction is, as the saying goes, an act that is for itself its own result.

The misunderstanding of the process of expression Chauvet associates with the fact that one confuses the act of expression at the moment it happens with the split – that a retrospective reflection perceives in it afterward – between “an initial, hidden intention and a subsequent, public expression.” One inevitably thinks in terms of cause and effect,

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<sup>1176</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>1177</sup> Ibid., 90. Chauvet cites Edmond Ortigues, “L’expression,” in *Le discours et le symbole*, by Edmond Ortigues (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 2007), 55-65.

<sup>1178</sup> Ibid. (emphasis original).

but such a scheme is not really applicable here. For “the act of authentic expression has neither a finality outside itself nor a hidden motive... The *expressive sign is the very flesh of the intention which is born by taking significant form.*”<sup>1179</sup>

In the quotation Chauvet speaks about a split – that the expression, with its exterior-interior happening, allows for the development of further variations, including reflection. The natural question arises, is retrospective reflection an expression? Chauvet’s assurance that there is no human reality beyond expression confirms that this is the case. But the act of expression “at the moment it happens” is what comes first, and it is the expressive sign itself, before retrospective reflection. It can be said that the retrospective reflection is the development of kinesthetic feedback. Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about the “third dialectic” in the dialectic of expression (3.5.3.) are evidently reflected in Chauvet’s insights on differentiation.

Chauvet gives the example of love and says that “love invents its expression and the expression creates the love.”<sup>1180</sup> Merleau-Ponty’s idea about the visible and invisible phenomena which share the same fleshiness of being is worth recalling, as it points towards the emergence of subjectivity through expression and the signification caused by it, which has this double – interior and exterior – language, as well as other splits and variants of expression. “Every human reality has language for its catalyst,” says Chauvet, who speaks about the other expressions as quasi-languages. All are “necessary mediations of human reality.”<sup>1181</sup> They retain the mediation of symbolic order “that always-already precedes human beings and allows them to become human because they start from a world already humanized before them and passed on to them as a universe of meaning.”<sup>1182</sup>

Chauvet cites Heidegger, saying that Being in the tradition is the being-there in memorial, “memorial-through-in-Being.”<sup>1183</sup> The ideas of Leroi-Gourhan concerning ethnic culture and tradition as the external memory resonates with Heideggerian thought. Tradition gives another scope of memory to be employed in an individual’s contribution that is other than “mere recall understood in the sense of the past that has ‘passed away.’”<sup>1184</sup> Tradition, one can say, provides a means of differentiation for the subjectivity. It is where the creative power of expression comes from. Chauvet attributes the greatest creative potential of human beings to the richness of layers of expression. On the other hand, the richness of the layers of

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<sup>1179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91 (emphasis original). Chauvet cites Antoine Vergote, *Interprétation du langage religieux* (Paris: Seuil, 1974), 207-208.

<sup>1180</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 91.

<sup>1181</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>1182</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>1183</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>1184</sup> *Ibid.*



expression is the content of the subjective experience, that is, one's authenticity as acting beings. Chauvet states that

this is why only "expression" allows the subject to differentiate itself interiorly. The subject is not in the body as the stone in the peach; it is body as the onion is in its layers. "Everything is in the skin," as P. Valery used to say. Selfhood is "skin offered" to otherness (Levinas). "The outside ~~is~~ the inside" (Derrida).<sup>1185</sup>

#### 4.1.5. Mauss in Chauvet's theology

Mauss is a very important author in Chauvet's explanation of the symbolic order. The theologian draws on "The Gift" and Mauss's emphasis on the symbolism of human exchange. Due to their symbolic value, these actions are no longer merely instrumental or utilitarian, but become "acts of recognition that formed alliances and maintained order," a system of "obligatory generosity," that forms solidarity and distributes the wealth of society.<sup>1186</sup> Mauss's notions of symbolic exchange, Ambrose writes, naturally fits with Chauvet's philosophical anthropology. As Mauss has shown, the very subjectivity of the individual derives from participation in symbolic exchange. Chauvet emphasized the symbolic exchange between humanity and God in the emergence of subjectivity. The two parties become actually present in the event of the Eucharist. "Those two engage in the process of exchange inaugurate or reaffirm their subjectivity."<sup>1187</sup>

"Subjectivity is at stake in language and in symbolic exchange,"<sup>1188</sup> explains Timothy Brunk on Chauvet's usage of Mauss. Subjectivity is connected with the relational character of symbolic human activity. The relational character of symbolic mediation becomes the interpretation of relations between human beings and God in Chauvet's theology.<sup>1189</sup> People approach God because it allows them to be who they are. And people are what they do and how they do it. The expression of a relationship with God 'does' a relationship, so to speak. The ethical aspect comes from the expressive aspect of the relationship with God. If a person is not in a relationship of gratitude towards others, towards God, they remain in a metaphysical egocentrism, which reduces their expressive capacities. Accordingly, a self-centered person reduces the honoring of presence of others and thus the solidarity in society.

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<sup>1185</sup> Ibid., 151 (the original form is 'x' crossed out on the word 'is' in the end of citation). Reference to Jacques Derrida, "The Outside ~~is~~ the Inside," in *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 44-65; Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967).

<sup>1186</sup> Ambrose, *The Theology*, 89.

<sup>1187</sup> Timothy M. Brunk, *Liturgy and Life: the Unity of Sacrament and Ethics in the Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 77.

<sup>1188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1189</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 311-312.

Although, as Ambrose reminds, the understanding of the Eucharist as thanks-giving or as a thankful giving is not something new in the Christian tradition, Chauvet's indebtedness to Mauss's insights together with his indebtedness to the classical theological sources<sup>1190</sup> is worthy of recognition. I will go into more detail.

#### 4.1.5.1. *The body and the symbolic network of corporeality*

Chauvet leans on Mauss and "The Gift" mostly in his discussion of relations of thanksgiving (grace) and the ethical dimension of the Eucharist. However, I want to discuss Mauss's influence on Chauvet's understanding of corporeality as well. I would maintain that not only Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, but Mauss as well had a big input into the concept of the "triple body." This assumption is supported not only by the influence of Mauss on Merleau-Ponty discussed in the previous chapter, but also by the fact that Chauvet, when presenting his own conception of corporeality, quotes Mauss's disciple Jousse.<sup>1191</sup> As it was pointed out in Chapter 2, Jousse added the cosmic dimension to the Maussian conjunction of body, society, and tradition. However, the relationship of each embodied action to its cultural and historical setting, as well as the dependence of the body's techniques on tradition, their role in formation of a social idiosyncrasy<sup>1192</sup> was revealed by Jousse's teacher.

In my opinion, Chauvet quotes Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger more in his presentation of corporeality because the place of the mediation of the body in the symbolic system interests him first and foremost as a place of subjective experience:

It is precisely this [threefold] corporeality which religious ritual symbolizes. We are going to verify this in its three dimensions, cosmic, social, and traditional, and then in its individual dimension which is the stage of each person's desire.<sup>1193</sup>

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<sup>1190</sup> Ambrose, *The Theology*, 129.

<sup>1191</sup> Chauvet writes: "[...] [E]ach person's body is structured by the system of values or symbolic network of the group to which each person belongs and which makes up his or her *social and cultural body*. It is equally and simultaneously spoken by an historic *tradition* whose foundation is always more or less mythic and which it is, often unconsciously, a kind of living memory. Finally, it is in permanent dialogue with the universe which, by projection of itself, it 'anthropomorphizes' (the macrocosm becomes something like its own larger living body); and conversely, by introjection of the *universe* – 'intus-susception' as Jousse describes it – it 'cosmorphizes' itself (it becomes a microcosmos), notably in the alternations of day and night, the cycle of seasons, and fundamental opposition of earth-sky, water-fire, mountains-abyssees, light-shadow, and so forth. The I-body exists only as woven, inhabited, spoken by this *triple body* of culture, tradition, and nature. This is what is implied by the concept of *corporeality*: one's own physical body certainly, but as *the place where* the triple body – social, ancestral, and cosmic – which makes up the subject is symbolically joined, in an original manner for each one of the subject as corporeality thus occurs at the juncture of the 'being-in-the-world' [...], 'being-with' [...], and 'historicity'." Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 150 (emphasis original).

<sup>1192</sup> Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 80.

<sup>1193</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 356.

The phenomenological approach helps Chauvet to resist the unifying tendency of metaphysical thinking and thus to raise the significance of the sacraments as operating within the symbolic system. But even so, this goes hand in hand with Mauss's discoveries. For example, Merleau-Ponty emphasized Mauss's pioneering attempt to invest movement with a deep respect for the individual, social reality, and cultural diversity. As noted earlier (3.3.2.), Merleau-Ponty considered that these things were put forward by Mauss in such a way that no one was made impervious to the other.<sup>1194</sup> Chauvet seems to use Mauss's approach, although he does not formally acknowledge it.

#### 4.1.5.2. *The Grace as a task*

The system of obligatory generosity exposed by Mauss in "The Gift," according to Chauvet, showed a completely different way of functioning in society. Chauvet points out that exchanges are based on the participation of a third party who is not yet involved in the giving and receiving, but is expected to be.<sup>1195</sup> In other words, the value of act is not fixed either on gifts or on the participants. One gives without counting, but this gift is obligatory and not possible to refuse. "It has to do first with the desire to be recognized as a subject, not to lose face, not to fall from one's social rank, and consequently to compete for prestige."<sup>1196</sup>

In Chauvet's theology, this theme reads thus:

*It is in giving thanks, in giving back to God God's own Grace, Christ given in sacrament, that we are given back to ourselves, that is, placed or replaced in our status of sons and daughters and thus reconciled. [...] the Eucharist offering of the "firstfruits of creation" is, in the very dependence on God which it attests, "the distinctive mark of freedom": offered as thanksgiving, it shows that "God needs nothing" and awaits only one thing from us, that we "express our gratitude to God."<sup>1197</sup>*

In other words, Chauvet uses Mauss's described gift relations, explained as the triple movement of symbolic exchange (in opposition of double movement of market exchange) as "a schema for understanding Christian sacramental identity."<sup>1198</sup> The grace of the Eucharist is connected with the becoming eucharistic people. It is given to people as a task. "The practice

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<sup>1194</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 116. To return to the earlier discussion of Mauss's approach, as technical, magical, and ritual facts are intervened in the techniques of the body, participation in symbolic action can produce a kinesthetic feedback that relates to all aspects of the being of the person participating in such action, and is therefore open to a certain amount of modelling. Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 82.

<sup>1195</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 101.

<sup>1196</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>1197</sup> *Ibid.*, 311-312 (emphasis original).

<sup>1198</sup> Daniel Franklin Pilario, "'Gift-exchange' in Sacramentology: A Critical Assessment from the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu," *Questions Liturgiques* (1971) 82.1 (2001): 82.

of the twofold command,” Chauvet writes, “with its socio-political implications, is the ‘true sacrifice,’ the most important liturgy” one learns from the Eucharist.<sup>1199</sup>

Chauvet saw liturgical practices as the pedagogy of becoming eucharistic people. As in all human activity, liturgical behavior does not escape its transcendence. What are these transcendences? My suggestion is that it is connected with the ethical side of liturgical pedagogy. The binding task of grace leads to the practices of the response of love, which is first of all manifested by one’s presence in return.<sup>1200</sup>

#### 4.1.6. *Liturgy as practical activity*

Like most other words with in the suffix ‘urgy’, such as ‘dramaturgy’ or ‘metallurgy’, ‘liturgy’ is a *practical activity*. Such is the *fundamental law* of rite.<sup>1201</sup> The basic law of liturgy, Chauvet adds, is “do not say what you are doing, do what you are saying.”<sup>1202</sup> Neither explanations, nor dogmatism, nor moralism are welcome; they are, according to Chauvet, the poison of a rite. The nature of rituals is behavioral. “Rite primarily functions before and beneath the advent of meanings.”<sup>1203</sup> And the symbols in them are not in our total control, because

[...] being a symbolic action and thus not aiming, like technological action, at bringing a transformation of the world, but at working upon the subjects in their relations with God and with one another, the efficacy of rites is never under our control; symbols, by their nature, escape us. But still, their mode of functioning is at least partially regulable.<sup>1204</sup>

In discussing the legitimacy of the ritual agents and the validity of their actions Chauvet draws on Bourdieu, stating that they are linked to the symbolic capital with which they are invested. He quotes Bourdieu, stating that the efficacy of the ritual depends on the belief in it, which exists before it. On the other hand, according Bourdieu, this belief is both the condition and the aim of the ritual. The efficacy is linked to the social acceptability. Moreover, Chauvet draws on Bourdieu again, when he says that “by acting upon the representation of the real” that rites act upon “the real” itself.<sup>1205</sup>

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<sup>1199</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 315.

<sup>1200</sup> “[...] [L]ove invents its expression and expression creates the love.” Ibid., 91. In Chauvet’s explanation of temporality, Ethics is connected with the future of Christ (while Scripture mediates the story of Christ’s past and the Sacraments presents Christ in the present. Thus, “the sacraments speak of the eschatological in-between time.” *Symbol and Sacrament*, 547.

<sup>1201</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>1202</sup> Ibid., 326.

<sup>1203</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>1204</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>1205</sup> Ibid., 348-349.

The religious ritual as social drama (Chauvet uses Victor Turner's expression) is never an individual matter. Their elements are expressions of a group's dominant cultural values. Linked to their capacity to restore the symbolic order of economic, social, political, and ideological values, which on their side provide the identity and cohesion for the group. "The body becomes linked to body through the link of tradition that has become living again in the very act of its transmission." Chauvet cites A.T. Sanon,<sup>1206</sup> and comments on his description of an ethnic initiation in Burkina Faso as an example of the way in which the traditional rites form the communal body:<sup>1207</sup>

The knowledge passed on in the institution is thus a "*knowing how to*," one of the modalities of which is "*knowing how to speak*." The key skill is being able to adjust oneself to others, to the ancestors (and to the gods), to the world, where one thus learns to *find one's place while situating everything else in its place*. This adjustment, the creation of a world of sense, is the *symbolic act of coherence par excellence* where every element, like a piece from a puzzle or fragment from a broken vase, can find its meaningful place in the large cultural pattern inherited from tradition. To be initiated is thus to learn the truth, not with the meaning of intellectual exactitude transmitted by science, but with the meaning of *practical discernment*.<sup>1208</sup>

Chauvet argues about the "pedagogy 'within life itself'" in which "one symbolically does 'with one another and through one another'" and questions the possibility of maintaining the "matters" of life outside this "pedagogy."<sup>1209</sup> The "pedagogy within life itself" is also connected with the emergence of the subject:

To be initiated is truly "*to enter into humanness*" [...],<sup>1210</sup> to come forth into the full humanness proper to a subject. The symbolic efficacy of the initiation resides precisely in the fact that the action of receiving is also, and more importantly, an action of *receiving the self*.<sup>1211</sup>

According to Chauvet, the "secret" of initiation, of the most performative reproduction of a socio-cultural system humankind has ever invented, is an open secret, the "secret of the secret," which lies in the symbolic transition to particular cultural identity that rite effects:

All share the same secret which they cannot say because it is not sayable outside the initiating experience where one learns it through the body and which, however, is so much the source of their life that it establishes among them – in their manner of understanding themselves through some species of tree; through such and such social

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<sup>1206</sup> Anselme Titianma Sanon and René Luneau. *Enraciner l'évangile: Initiations africaines et pédagogie de la foi* (Paris: Cerf, 1982).

<sup>1207</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 359-360.

<sup>1208</sup> *Ibid.*, 361 (emphasis original).

<sup>1209</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>1210</sup> Here, as in the previous quotations, Chauvet quotes Sanon. Anselme Titianma Sanon and René Luneau. *Enraciner l'évangile: Initiations africaines et pédagogie de la foi* (Paris: Cerf, 1982).

<sup>1211</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 362 (emphasis original).

prohibition; through a way of thinking one's place in the group or word, such and such rite – the most fundamental solidarity there can be: that of a cultural identity.<sup>1212</sup>

Chauvet lists the problematic points of Christian initiation as well as the difficulty of providing the stable institutions of initiation “when the entire social body is a state of permanent mutation” in relation to its past, its knowledge, its heritage, but also do not agree that “Christian initiation is irreversibly on the road to extinction.”<sup>1213</sup> On the contrary, Chauvet sees these issues, as well as the tension between criticism and the need of maintaining tradition, as the issues that comes from the gospel itself when it gets in touch with our kind of society, issues that keep the faith “awake and alive.” What must be done, is the search for a new model, where “while taking care to maintain and promote in some respects the pole of attestation and institution, one attempts to join it to the pole of contestation and criticism.”<sup>1214</sup>

If the new model of liturgical activities is the search, this search cannot be done in any other way than through practice, in which a particular community is involved. Chauvet's emphasis on the rite as the producer of the truth of life as practical discernment is very important here. It points towards the participants of the rite as those who get their subjectivity from the institution but at the same time they renew and maintain the institution by their actions. The creative potential comes from the kinesthetic feedback of participants. Thus, the search for new models is inseparable from giving voice to the participants, to the actors.

This proposal would not be alien to Chauvet's theology. He was acutely aware of the role of subjective experience in keeping tradition alive. Although Chauvet's reflections were more concerned with the phenomenology of subjective experience, in his view, the receiving of the self through rite is linked to the collective body and the learning of solidarity.<sup>1215</sup> Thus, in addition to being the antidote to metaphysical thinking, Chauvet's ideas on expression and liturgy can be applied to the renewal of the practices of church life.

#### *4.1.7. Symbol, art, and the vacant place*

Chauvet presents an understanding of the symbolic structure that produces symbols, commenting that “*it is the entire symbolic order to which it belongs (or at least an entire part of it, correlative to the rest) that a symbol evokes.*”<sup>1216</sup> –Simply put, symbols do not function somehow on their own. “It is the primary agent of every subjectivity, for every subject initiates

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<sup>1212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1213</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>1214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1215</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>1216</sup> Ibid., 155 (emphasis original).

itself *within* language.”<sup>1217</sup> Symbol points towards the whole – the entire socio-cultural system, from which it is inseparable. Religious symbols belong to the particular rituals, which on their part are linked to a “coherent network of economic, social, political, and ethical values that we call culture.”<sup>1218</sup>

The symbol is thus *a mediation for mutual recognition between subjects and for their identification within their world*. Further, its intimate bond with the world of subjects is so strong that it ceases to function, *here and now*, as a symbol the moment one steps back and adopts a critical attitude towards it.<sup>1219</sup>

Chauvet understands art in similar way to tradition. Art is the way to get in touch with the truth of human existence:

Such is the “essence of art: the truth of the entity putting itself into effect.” [...] the work of art, like all symbolic work, shows what the truth is: not something already given beforehand to which one only has to adjust oneself with exactitude, but rather a “making-come-into-being” [...], an “advent” [...] which, like a “fugitive glimpse,” gives itself only in simultaneously “holding itself back” in sort of “suspense” to the person who, against every utilitarian tendency, knows how to respect the “vacant place” where it discloses itself [...].<sup>1220</sup>

Art is human expression par excellence. Its effectiveness lies in being the complete opposite of what a metaphysical representation of the world provides. Namely, in “the truth of entity” which metaphysics had forgotten before it stagnated on thoughts about the being.

However, what is the truth of the human being that requires liturgical practice to sustain it?

Chauvet speaks about a breach, through which a subject comes to birth. According to Chauvet’s argumentation, the need for liturgical practices arises as the possibility to remain in the situation of absence caused by the loss of “paradise,” an experience noted by psychoanalysts and linguists. Chauvet reminds of the impossibility to seize the “real,” and that this lies in the attribution of human life to a symbolic order or the mediation of language. But the psychic imagination, driven by the primary narcissism, leads one to believe otherwise. As a result, everyone is overwhelmed by a strong desire for omnipotence and dominion over things, an irresistible need to believe in themselves. Meanwhile,

The truth of the psychic subject, always open to the question of Truth, takes place through mourning: mourning for the imaginary coincidence between the (I) of the enunciation and the “I” of the statement, mourning for the correspondence between the subject and the ideal Self, mourning for the hope of ever recovering original beatitude

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<sup>1217</sup> Ibid., 114 (emphasis original).

<sup>1218</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>1219</sup> Ibid., 116 (emphasis original).

<sup>1220</sup> Ibid., 117.

or (which is the same thing) of ever discovering the complete fullness of meaning. It is precisely in the radical loss of this “paradise” and in the consent to the absence to the Truth emerges.

Traditional wisdom calls the self-important person a liar. [...] Finally, the subject exists only in a permanent becoming, in a *never-finished* process where it has to learn, at its own expense, to be bereaved of its umbilical attachment to the Same, to renounce to win back its lost paradise, its own origin, and the ultimate foundation which would explain its existence. Its task is to consent to be in truth by accepting the difference, the lack-in-being, *not as an inevitable evil but as the very place where its life is lived*.<sup>1221</sup>

The ability to stay in this absence is trained through the pedagogy of liturgy and sacraments, according Chauvet. In short, liturgical practices can be seen as the producers of an “open to the truth of human being” kind of subjectivity, and as an influential part of a “coherent network of economic, social, political, and ethical values”<sup>1222</sup> due to the activities of such subjects, who shape a particular culture. The importance of fostering this kind of culture will be highlighted by another theologian examined in this chapter, Michel de Certeau.

#### 4.1.8. Critique of Chauvet’s theology

Timothy M. Brunk presents the main themes raised by Chauvet’s critics: Chauvet’s use of Heidegger; his use of gift theory; and Chauvet’s reliance upon anthropological categories.<sup>1223</sup> Here I will focus on critical claims connected with Chauvet’s appropriation of anthropology. Besides Jean-Yves Quellec and Yves Labbé’s suggestions that Chauvet’s theology tends to reduce Christian categories to anthropological categories, which leads to “anthropology taking over theology,”<sup>1224</sup> Brunk presents a critique by Daniel Franklin Pilario. Since this author argues that Chauvet ignores Bourdieu’s critique of Mauss’s theory, I will give more attention to this issue.

In his “‘Gift-exchange’ in Sacramentology: A Critical Assessment from the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu,”<sup>1225</sup> Pilario presents the dangers Chauvet’s sacramentology can lead to, if Bourdieu’s critique of “The Gift”<sup>1226</sup> is not taken to account. Pilario notes that Bourdieu’s approach is neither of the subjectivist school nor close to the objectivist thinking. His position was equally distant from the structuralist account as from the phenomenological point of view, as the different way he proposed social analysis could “establish an epistemological break with

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<sup>1221</sup> Ibid., 98 (emphasis original).

<sup>1222</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>1223</sup> Brunk, *Liturgy and Life*, 105. Brunk’s presentation is mainly based on reviews of “Symbol and Sacrament.”

<sup>1224</sup> Brunk, *Liturgy and Life*, 129.

<sup>1225</sup> Daniel Franklin Pilario, “‘Gift-exchange’ in Sacramentology: A Critical Assessment from the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu,” *Questions Liturgiques* (1971) 82.1 (2001): 80-96.

<sup>1226</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “La double vérité du don,” *Méditations pascaliennes* (1997): 229-40.



common sense and everyday representations.”<sup>1227</sup> As it was noted in Chapter 2, Bourdieu sought to reveal the basic principles and structure of human practice.

“What for Chauvet were transactions of different order (i. e., symbolic),” Pilario writes, “are for Bourdieu only different modes of the same domination – economic, political and cultural.”<sup>1228</sup> The author draws attention to Bourdieu’s interpretation of gift-exchange as “gentle” domination and his observation that the economic and material power is exercised most effectively when its interests are misrecognized. The gift exchange is one of the social micro-dynamics of society, which, according to Bourdieu, helps to hide and legitimize it. Pilario quotes Bourdieu saying, “Gift exchange is the paradigm of all operations through which symbolic alchemy produces the reality-denying reality that the collective consciousness aims at a collectively produced, sustained and maintained misrecognition of the ‘objective’ truth.”<sup>1229</sup>

How does this relate to the sacramentality? According Pilario, from Bourdieu perspective,

Chauvet is guilty of “economism”, that is, of restricted definition of economic interest. This abstraction of the “cultural” from the “economic” is the product of an ideological move by an “interested” group (e.g. writers or artists, in our case, anthropologists and theologians, all *cultural producers*) who want to assert an autonomous position – the autonomy of their own cultural or spiritual practice – in contemporary discourse.<sup>1230</sup>

Pilario recalls that Bourdieu saw actions, both material and symbolic, as the realization of unequal power relations.<sup>1231</sup> Chauvet himself warns against the institutional manipulation of ‘grace’ to legitimize oppressive social orders. Despite this, non-concrete critical components were applied to his theological framework.<sup>1232</sup> The same can be said about Chauvet’s uncritical notes about the symbolism of language. Pilario reminds that Bourdieu saw language as an instrument of power. The ritual discourse, connected with the efficacy of words and symbols, are arbitrary social constructions. “As long as these arbitrary social inventions (which enthrone some and marginalize others) continue to be socially misrecognised, that is, as long as there are convergent social conditions that reproduce the same symbolic violence, language and symbols continue to be potent instruments of power.”<sup>1233</sup> Instead of ignoring to the “double

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<sup>1227</sup> Pilario, “‘Gift-exchange’ in Sacramentology,” 83.

<sup>1228</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>1229</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

<sup>1230</sup> *Ibid.*, 89 (emphasis original).

<sup>1231</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>1232</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>1233</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

truth” of symbolic actions, Pilario suggests putting the contradictions forward. Only in this way, can the ideological dangers of mystifying the “inadequate here and now” be avoided.<sup>1234</sup>

To put it simply, Pilario invites Chauvet, who uses anthropological analysis in his theology, to accept its criticism. In other words, to go all the way. There are more critics who feel that Chauvet’s theology seems to be too far removed from an analysis of the human situation, which is where it seems it could be heading. “With Chauvet, the material aspects of faith and knowledge are introduced into theological discourse, yet the material serves to point at a safe place for God beyond human constructions and idols,”<sup>1235</sup> regrets Petra Carlsson Redell.

Following a similar line, in his review on *Symbol and Sacrament*, liberation theologian Gerard Fourez writes that in a work in which such importance is given to the body, the poor in their corporeality were hardly presented. He experienced the absence of the “encounter with the poor, with their bodies, with their sometimes disturbing existence, and the very manner in which they upset our well-organized visions of life and our symbolic systems.”<sup>1236</sup> The main criticism of Chauvet by feminist theologians is the lack of attention to gender issues. The theologian is accused of not paying attention to the reports of his liberation theology colleagues that the oppression in society is reinforced rather than challenged by the church’s liturgical practices. On the other hand, there are opinions in scholarship that even though Chauvet does not directly address the questions of gender roles or sexual differentiation, his theology can be used to respond to the issues.<sup>1237</sup>

It can be summarized that Chauvet’s use of anthropology provoked criticism from different sides. Some questioned the very idea of using anthropological categories in theological thinking and worried that anthropological categories might overshadow theology. The criticism from the other side was that the anthropological approach in Chauvet’s theology did not do its job fully.

### *Summary*

Chauvet expanded on the idea that meanings are rooted in the moving body and that all mediations take place through the body. He also spoke of the body as an arch-symbol of faith. The themes of corporeality and expression, taken from Merleau-Ponty, are very important in

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<sup>1234</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>1235</sup> Petra Carlsson Redell, *Foucault, Art, and Radical Theology: the Mystery of Things* (London: Routledge, 2019), 48.

<sup>1236</sup> Brunk, *Liturgy and Life*, 184.

<sup>1237</sup> Ibid., 193-199.

Chauvet's theology. The same can be said of Mauss's ideas of gift relationships, which in Chauvet's theology is echoed as a purpose of liturgical activity: liturgical practices are seen by the theologian as a pedagogy of becoming a eucharistic people. Chauvet's linking of theology with symbolic logic, as opposed to ontotheo-logic, is based on the ideas of both Merleau-Ponty and Mauss and even Jousse.

In Chauvet's theology, expression serves as an antidote to the metaphysical uniformity that prevents the opening to the need of the Other. There is no human reality without expression, Chauvet argues. Expression causes differentiation, which is the movement between the exteriority and interiority of expression. It is exactly where subjectivity comes forward. The subjective differentiation also causes the re-production or the re-making of signification. Differentiation can be imagined as the space between the present and the past, which one becomes aware of thanks to memory, which in turn allows one to evaluate the present situation by feeling the other 'now's' one has already experienced. However, the cause and purpose of this memory and of individual evaluation, comparison, and correction is an action which is itself its own result.

Retrospective reflection, which perceives the action afterward, must not be confused with the authentic act of expression itself, which, according to Chauvet, has neither external finality nor ulterior motive, and must therefore not be reflected upon in terms of cause and effect. Instead, Chauvet speaks of a split – the external-internal agency of expression allows for the development of further variations, including reflection. These are very important for the theologian's insights into the understanding of movement, further explaining the workings of the 'cogwheels' in the mechanics of a moving body, which was pointed out by Mauss (the author of the metaphor) and was started to be explained by Merleau-Ponty.

Chauvet presented liturgy as a practical activity related to the emergence of the subject. Ritual triggers a symbolic transition to and acceptance of a particular cultural identity, in other words, it is an act of self-acceptance. Moreover, liturgical practices can be seen as the producers of a certain subjectivity that is open to the truth of human existence, namely the human limitation and inability to seize the "real" and to discover the complete fullness of meaning.

#### **4.2. Michel de Certeau's Activity-oriented Approach to Culture and Faith**

Michel Jean Emmanuel de la Barge de Certeau (1925–1986) was a native of Savoie, born in the villa 'Les Fouzes' (rue Marceau, in Chambéry) into the family of the provincial

aristocracy.<sup>1238</sup> At the age of nineteen, in October 1944, de Certeau began his training to become a priest at the major seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Issy-les-Moulineaux, a Paris suburb.<sup>1239</sup> In October 1947, after completing the cycle of philosophical sciences, de Certeau entered his theological studies at the university seminary of Lyon, a seminary which is characterized by continuity with a certain Christian “spiritual resistance,” that of the Christians committed to the Resistance, many of whom were at the beginnings of Vatican II.<sup>1240</sup> Michel de Certeau did not confine himself to theological studies: he began to study Russian and passionately studied Marx’s texts as part of a university research group.<sup>1241</sup>

During these years in Lyon, de Certeau confirmed his commitment to the priesthood. In 1949, he was ordained a sub-deacon.<sup>1242</sup> Although he was clearly fascinated by the spiritual radicalism of the Carthusians during his studies in Lyon, he did not succumb to the “temptation” and finally decided to join the Society of Jesus during the academic year of 1949–1950,<sup>1243</sup> linking this decision to the divine call to China. De Certeau admired the special character of the Jesuit order and particularly valued its combination of activity and contemplation, and openness to modernity.<sup>1244</sup> Taking his vows in 1953, he remained a member of the Society, attached to a community.<sup>1245</sup> Under the supervision of Jean Orcibal, an historian

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<sup>1238</sup> François Dosse, *Michel de Certeau: le marcheur blessé* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2002), 29. Michel de Certeau’s mother was an intellectual with a very lively sensitivity, and she had an enormous influence on Michel. His father, orphaned at birth, conceived his role towards his boys Michel, Jean, and Hubert (de Certeau also had sister Marie-Amélie) in a very rigorous way. The eldest son, Michel, learned early on how to get through the sanctions, quick at tricks and provocations (such as his report on alleged conversion to Muslimism). *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>1239</sup> The seminary was characterized by strict discipline and an ascetic lifestyle. Philosophy was taught for the first two years, followed by three years of theology. Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 35.

<sup>1240</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>1241</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>1242</sup> De Certeau was at the ‘grade’ of sub-deacon when he left the seminary of Lyon in June 1950. His priestly ordination took part in 1956. Luce Giard, “Cherchant Dieu,” *Esprit* 131 (10) (1987): 105.

<sup>1243</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 45. At the end of his adolescence, Luce Giard writes, de Certeau had hesitated between three paths: God, in the guise of the Carthusian monastery, political combat, and physics, where, the author believes, his imaginative intelligence and his analytical rigor would have worked wonders. He was nostalgic for the Carthusian monastery, but his entry into the Society of Jesus led him to join an Order that had had strong and lasting ties with the Carthusians from the beginning. As far as political commitment was concerned, Giard lists some names, which had crystallized (around 1940–1942) his admirations: Gandhi, Jaurès, and Emmanuel Mounier. But the preaching side of Charles Péguy instead of inspiring de Certeau annoyed him. Giard, “Cherchant Dieu,” 108.

<sup>1244</sup> Frijhoff, Willem. “Michel de Certeau (1925–1986),” in *French Historians 1900–2000: New Historical Writing in Twentieth-Century France*, ed. Philip Daileader and Philip Whalen (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 79.

<sup>1245</sup> He always placed a high value on this bond, and not only in the name of friendship, fidelity, or habit. But he did not want to make material or social profit from it. De Certeau was convinced that a life “is not made to be made profitable and placed in the coffers of an eternal bank, but on the contrary to be risked, given, lost at the same time as served.” And later in his life, he refused to play the game of notoriety; he did not want the role offered by a religious institution, nor did he want academic success. Giard, “Cherchant Dieu,” 106–107.

of spirituality (École Pratique des Hautes Études), de Certeau defended his doctoral thesis on Pierre Favre's spiritual diary at the Sorbonne in 1960.<sup>1246</sup>

De Certeau's rapid response to the social events of May 1968, which appeared in the June and October 1968 issues of the journal *Études*,<sup>1247</sup> changed the course of his career, acting as his breakthrough as a public intellectual and cultural critic. In October of that year, his book *La prise de la parole* was published, providing an inspiring critical analysis of the student uprising.<sup>1248</sup> From that time, he was invited to lecture in many cities, to appear on radio programmes, to serve on special commissions whose duty it was to propose a rapid reform of the university system, and to take part in other similar activities in the public sphere. He began to interact with many social circles, joined new intellectual networks, and was frequently interviewed in newspapers and on the radio as he became a well-known French intellectual.

He also met a new generation of younger scholars who became his friends and sometimes co-authors of texts. According to Giard, these were the most creative years of his career. From 1970 onwards, he published book after book: on demons and possession (1970), on historiography (1973, 1975), on the politics of language and social hierarchy (1975), on media, consumption, and everyday life (1980), on mystics (1982). At the same time, he taught regularly in the graduate programmes in various fields of science at various universities.<sup>1249</sup>

De Certeau's life style is described by his biographers<sup>1250</sup> as marked by hospitality, generosity, non-hierarchical communion, and a desire to "always give way to the freedom of

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<sup>1246</sup> Giard, "Cherchant Dieu," 114. Pierre Favre (1506–1546), was a Jesuit priest and theologian, whom Ignatius Loyola had encountered at the University of Paris and who was among the first companions who joined to found the Society of Jesus in 1543. According to Giard, Favre was also one of the first to die from overwork and great poverty, after many exhausting travels, leaving the holy mark on many, both within and outside the Society, through his preaching, his letters and diary. Luce Giard, "Michel de Certeau's Biography: Petite Bibliographie en anglais." [https://www.jesuites.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/certeau\\_biography.pdf?9d7bd4](https://www.jesuites.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/certeau_biography.pdf?9d7bd4) [accessed 23 December 2023].

<sup>1247</sup> De Certeau served regularly on the editorial boards of four Jesuit journals *Études*, *Christus*, *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, and *Recherches de science religieuse* and wrote many articles. In the latter two journals he has published some of his most important articles on historiography and mystical literature. Giard, "Michel de Certeau's Biography."

<sup>1248</sup> Drawing clear parallels with the storming of the Bastille in 1789, de Certeau explained that the student uprising was a moment when those who felt unrepresented by the official institutions spoke up and created their own world. Frijhoff, "Michel de Certeau," 79.

<sup>1249</sup> De Certeau was teaching theology (Catholic University of Paris), anthropology, and psychoanalysis (Université de Paris-Vincennes), then anthropology and history (Université de Paris VII - Jussieu), literature, and a number of other disciplines, at the University of California, College of Arts and Letters (1978–1984). In the autumn of 1984, de Certeau began to teach the historical anthropology of beliefs (16th–18th centuries) at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Giard, "Michel de Certeau's Biography." De Certeau enjoyed travelling, lecturing and teaching. He loved Latin America, which he discovered in 1967 through the networks of Jesuit universities and to which he returned many times.

<sup>1250</sup> De Certeau's biographers were mostly his disciples, who saw his life at close quarters. According to Willem Frijhoff, few French intellectuals of the second half of the 20th century have been as influential in various disciplines as de Certeau. Although his followers were fewer in number than the loyal circle that accompanied

others.”<sup>1251</sup> Attentiveness, respect for otherness, was the source of De Certeau’s constant questioning, including the questioning of faith. He was a hard-working researcher who did not restrict his intellectual freedom in any way.<sup>1252</sup> At the same time, he was constantly personally and publicly engaged in all the struggles for the defence of human rights and the dignity of ordinary people.<sup>1253</sup>

#### 4.2.1. De Certeau’s intellectual legacy

De Certeau’s life was, from the very beginning, nurtured and guided by the experience of the network and institutions to which he was loyal: the Jesuit Order, academia, public culture. It is difficult to imagine his work without this network. According to Frijhoff, this explains why there are several forms of de Certeau’s reception, since each network of colleagues, friends, readers, and scholars has a different emphasis, appropriating de Certeau in its own way, consciously or unconsciously taking into account the debates that take place within that network.<sup>1254</sup> Frijhoff refers to Éric Maigret’s article “Les trois héritages de Michel de Certeau” to indicate de Certeau’s threefold intellectual legacy.<sup>1255</sup>

The first legacy, Frijhoff writes, is linked to the concept of *altérité*. This is the recognition of the other and otherness as the basis for historiography, and thus for the construction or fabrication of the past, an approach that runs counter to the essentialist ideas of identity that prevail in many countries, as well as to the universalist pretensions of world history. The search for the other permeates de Certeau’s works and led him to coin the term *heterology* – the science of the other or discourse on the other. De Certeau’s entire oeuvre is imbued with a critique of normality and the role of established disciplines in determining norms.

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the more famous icons of the same Parisian milieu, such as the literary scholar Roland Barthes, the philosopher Michel Foucault or the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, de Certeau’s friends and readers had a more personal connection with him and a closer relationship with him. A fascinating overview of these relationships can be found in François Dosse’s 650-page book *Michel de Certeau, le marcheur blessé* (2002). This richly documented study, published in December 2001, is the first of its kind. A habilitation thesis defended at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris, it shows that Certeau’s life and work, his networks and connections, as well as his role and his influence are closely intertwined. Frijhoff, “Michel de Certeau,” 82-83.

<sup>1251</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 11.

<sup>1252</sup> Luce Giard, “Introduction to Volume 1: History of a Research Project,” in *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, by Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), xv.

<sup>1253</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 19.

<sup>1254</sup> Frijhoff, “Michel de Certeau,” 83. De Certeau’s involvement in these different networks and debates seems to be the reason for the supposed distinction between the spiritual and secular period in de Certeau’s work, which most authors doubt very much. Philip Sheldrake, “Michel de Certeau: Spirituality and the Practice of Everyday Life,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 12.2 (2012): 207-209.

<sup>1255</sup> Frijhoff, “Michel de Certeau,” 85.

De Certeau's second legacy is the historical nature of the act of faith. As Frijhoff points out, although de Certeau is known internationally mainly as a cultural theorist, he has always called himself a historian of spirituality. This was both his original place in the science of history and the essence of his method.<sup>1256</sup> Believing is not something one does outside the temporal order or social structures; rather, it is the formalized result of practices, such as actions, pronouncements, and beliefs, rooted in a particular situation, which de Certeau calls *formalité des pratiques*.<sup>1257</sup> It can be expressed, in Éric Maigret's words, as "the shift from the noun to the verb (from faith to believing) which is responsible for underlining the abandonment of a modelization of faith."<sup>1258</sup> Although de Certeau diagnosed that the link between institutions, beliefs and practices – a link that has always been one of adaptation and tension – has been definitively broken, and that there is a pluralization of beliefs, faith is not, according to de Certeau, being forced out of the world.<sup>1259</sup> According Maigret, even providing "rather vague hypotheses about the future of the religious, Michel de Certeau expresses a coherent theory of the phenomenon." He links the religious not with beliefs, their modes and content (the creeds), but with behaviors. In this way de Certeau invites us "to study the new manifestations of belief and the current logic of practices, especially popular ones, which are now largely autonomous, without confusing them with the religious or with an ersatz of the religious."<sup>1260</sup>

The third legacy consists of forms of appropriation of everyday life as the basis of culture in the broadest sense. De Certeau calls the cultural practices *arts de faire; faire avec*, or making do.<sup>1261</sup> The everyday experience for de Certeau was the basis for all scientific investigation.

All three of these important areas of de Certeau's intellectual legacy were underpinned by insights favorable to the importance of movement. He was convinced that life, and therefore history, is essentially a practice, an art de faire, which is realized through the acts of appropriation performed by the subject. Both his definition of faith and his definition of culture was active, based on agency. As an institution, de Certeau treated the church as a practical system of action and a discursive utopia, but also as a community that must continually reinvent

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<sup>1256</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>1257</sup> Ibid., 85-86.

<sup>1258</sup> Éric Maigret, "Les trois héritages de Michel de Certeau un projet éclaté d'analyse de la modernité," *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales* Vol. 55. No. 3. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 521.

<sup>1259</sup> Ibid., 520.

<sup>1260</sup> Ibid., 521.

<sup>1261</sup> Frijhoff, "Michel de Certeau," 86.

itself with new forms of fidelity. It is a community of concrete believers who create their own world of faith.<sup>1262</sup> According to Frijhoff, for de Certeau, practice and practical thinking in the broadest sense of the word, “is essentially the ability to distinguish between what does and does not work, what is or is not possible, conceivable, credible, or imaginable, and what does or does not bring satisfaction.”<sup>1263</sup>

These three areas of de Certeau’s intellectual legacy have contributed to the scholar’s accumulative influence. According to Maigret, although de Certeau’s work initially struggled to gain a foothold in the humanities due to its methodological complexity and diversity, a rich body of criticism was produced in the 1970s and after his death, which encompassed a wide range of his work. This criticism is distinguished by its richness and diversity, and also by its dispersion, since it addresses, among other fields, the epistemology of the social sciences, the history of beliefs, mysticism, books, contemporary cultural practices, popular media, new information technologies, and cognition.<sup>1264</sup> *L’invention du quotidien* (The Invention of the Everyday) especially had a considerable impact on the whole of the human sciences by offering<sup>1265</sup> an alternative to Marxism, structuralism, and their intersections, without always breaking with their contributions. According to Maigret, it has had a direct influence on the analysis of contemporary belief, on French empirical history – such as that of the working class studied by Michelle Perrot – and, increasingly, on Anglo-Saxon and Brazilian history, as well as on the field of theology.<sup>1266</sup>

Before moving on to the main aim of this chapter, which is to discuss de Certeau’s insights on movement, especially in the context of faith studies, I will first outline the author’s relationship with his predecessors and contemporaries, who had a profound influence on him, and with whom he engaged in his work. Although de Certeau drew on a wide range of authors from different fields – from psychoanalysis to semiology and linguistics – I will limit myself to the authors already analyzed in the previous chapters, Jousse and Bourdieu, with the addition of Foucault, who was crucial with respect to *The Practice of Everyday Life*, the work that is the most comprehensive regarding de Certeau’s insights on the mechanisms of practice. At the end of the chapter, I will also briefly discuss the echoes of Mauss and Merleau-Ponty in de Certeau’s work on the theme of movement.

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<sup>1262</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>1263</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>1264</sup> Maigret, “Les trois héritages,” 511.

<sup>1265</sup> Along with other major works of the 1980s.

<sup>1266</sup> Maigret, “Les trois héritages,” 529.



#### 4.2.2. *Ideas of influential predecessors and contemporaries in de Certeau's work*

De Certeau's thought was nourished by the contributions of anthropology, history, linguistics, sociology, and was structured from the outset by philosophical foundations. This encompassed Heracleitus, Plato, and especially Aristotle; the early modern period with Hobbes, Descartes, Pascal, Diderot, Rousseau, Kant, and Condillac; the nineteenth century with Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, or Peirce and to later nineteenth century Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Quine; English analytic philosophy and French philosophy with Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, Lyotard, or Derrida – all the periods of the philosophical tradition were made use of.<sup>1267</sup>

Bourdieu and Foucault are much discussed authors, especially in de Certeau's analysis of practices. Jousse, by contrast, is not cited, but, as I will try to show, had an equally significant influence on de Certeau's attentiveness to the expression and importance of movement. The choice to cite or refer to authors of his own generation rather than earlier ones may be related to de Certeau's desire to sound relevant and to be part of the debates of his time. The less cited Jousse (compared to Bourdieu and Foucault) and Mauss (compared to Merleau-Ponty) do not point to a lesser influence on the author, which he perceived and expressed, albeit not in the form of direct or frequent references to their works.

The influence of Mauss and Merleau-Ponty on de Certeau's ideas is not as obvious as that of Jousse and Bourdieu. However, their insights will prove important when one takes a closer look at de Certeau's work. For this reason, I have postponed a discussion of the significance of Mauss's and Merleau-Ponty's ideas for de Certeau in order to place it in the context of de Certeau's approach to movement (4.2.4.).

##### 4.2.2.1. *De Certeau and Jousse*

De Certeau's interest in anthropology, according to François Dosse, goes back a long way. In 1965, he began his doctoral training at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic Institute, starting with a course taught by the Jesuit anthropologist Marcel Jousse (who died in 1961).<sup>1268</sup> Gabrielle Baron, Marcel Jousse's collaborator since 1930, had just published her personal memoirs. De Certeau not only made it the subject of his teaching, but also invited Baron to his seminar in 1965. In the spring of 1966, de Certeau wrote to her saying that it would be interesting to republish Jousse's articles and publish his lectures. Later, he again told Baron how important Jousse was to him: "Jousse's work shines with its own light. Harassed by a

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<sup>1267</sup> Giard, "Introduction to Volume," xxxi.

<sup>1268</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 577.

hundred works, I do not forget what I told you about him and what I owe him.”<sup>1269</sup> Jousse’s attention to the flexible and vital human mechanics, presented as a great fundamental law – human Mimisme – had a profound influence on de Certeau’s thinking, as Dosse reveals:

Jousse’s work represents for him a return to gesture as to the source of verbalization and he resonates with theses which explore the originary: “The analysis of Mimicry and Rhythmicity intends to bring out what is most archaic and most fundamental in him.”<sup>1270</sup> Jousse not only leads on the paths of beginnings, but he takes on another, major interest which is to link the language to the laws of the body and this anthropological perspective joins strongly, by other ways, the project of Certeau.<sup>1271</sup>

Both Jesuits, Jousse and de Certeau, had a sympathetic attitude towards the ordinary people, which was linked to their own rural origins, which gave them the opportunity to grow up surrounded by the creativity of these people. De Certeau writes, “For Jousse, - each small peasant carries within him an experimental knowledge which waits to reveal itself, than an awareness.”<sup>1272</sup> This, analogous to Jousse’s, respect and gratitude for the peasantry or, in de Certeau’s case, for the ordinary man,<sup>1273</sup> is associated with a view from below, from the actor’s perspective. Faith in the world implies faith in the world’s knowability and openness to formations. Only in this way, experienced and lived through human action, does the world have meaning and hope. The authors of meaning and faith are ordinary people.

De Certeau’s writings also include Jousse’s terminology. In *La faiblesse de croire* one can find a chapter “L’homme en prière ‘cet arbre de gestes.’”<sup>1274</sup> Although de Certeau does not quote Jousse in this essay,<sup>1275</sup> his influence is evident. The terminology and expressions alone speak for themselves. It is impossible to understand the full meaning of the expression “le geste est esprit”<sup>1276</sup> (gesture is spirit) without reading Jousse’s *L’anthropologie du Geste* (Anthropology of Gesture).<sup>1277</sup> The notion of the “anthropocosmos,”<sup>1278</sup> which identifies the space arranged by movements and intimate combinations of objects with gestures as a symbolic reality of prayer, is in line with Jousse’s understanding of the unity of the *anthropos* with the

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<sup>1269</sup> Ibid., 578.

<sup>1270</sup> “L’analyse du Mimique et du Rythmique entend faire jaillir en l’homme ce qu’il y a de plus archaïque et de plus fondamental en lui.” Michel de Certeau, “Une anthropologie du geste: Marcel Jousse,” *Études* (1970): 770.

<sup>1271</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 579-580.

<sup>1272</sup> Ibid., 579.

<sup>1273</sup> De Certeau dedicates *The Practice of Everyday Life* to the “ordinary man,” the very ancient “anonymous hero.” Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988), v.

<sup>1274</sup> Michel de Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), 31-40. However, in the *The Practice of Everyday Life* one can find the reference to Rilke when de Certeau talks about “trees of gestures.” De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 102.

<sup>1275</sup> References to Jousse’s work in de Certeau’s researches are extremely rare.

<sup>1276</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 31.

<sup>1277</sup> Marcel Jousse, *L’anthropologie du Geste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).

<sup>1278</sup> Although de Certeau makes a reference to Eliade. De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 37.

cosmos through gesture.<sup>1279</sup> It is the Jousseian approach to gesture as the unity of the physical and the spiritual, as reverberation of cosmos, or the way “to find the Living who inhabits the whole space,”<sup>1280</sup> that is echoed by de Certeau in this essay. As it was discussed in Chapter 2, gesture for Jousse is a quality as well as a way of participating in the cosmos, which is an action, an energy, a constant flow.<sup>1281</sup>

The Jousseian theme of humans as beings in constant flow is echoed in another of de Certeau’s essays, “Une figure énigmatique.” In describing the particularity of religious life, de Certeau states that it consists of two complementary elements: gesture and place. The gesture is to leave (*partir*) and one never ceases in this:

To leave means to break with the siege to move forward, to take one more step to move forward, not to rely on the support of well-guaranteed words to confront them or lead them to a practice, not to confuse faith with solidity of established institutions, to prefer the poverty of travel to the opulence of apologetics or installations.<sup>1282</sup>

According to de Certeau, it is a constant “crossing of the threshold.” Gesture is a way of life, something that is the opposite of stagnation, “something that will have to be constantly redone, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, on other days and in other ways.”<sup>1283</sup> “But this is only possible,” de Certeau warns, “together, in a community practice.”

The departure leads elsewhere, towards the unlimited, infinite space opened up by the experience of faith; but it only has reality in face-to-face contact, in exchange and sharing. The others are our real journeys.<sup>1284</sup>

Thus, in addition to a Jousse-like understanding of gesture as a modality of the active nature of the cosmos, de Certeau’s essays, especially those on the subject of faith, contain references to the mechanisms that enables Mimisme – an “anthropological portage” of gesture.<sup>1285</sup> Even if he does not mention bilateralism, which, according to Jousse, is the law of balance, of equilibrium, de Certeau’s essays contain similar (though less nuanced than his predecessor’s) depictions of human activity. For example, in “L’homme en prière ‘cet arbre de

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<sup>1279</sup> “Therefore, by the anthropological that we can approach the cosmological because it is in the Anthropos alone that the Cosmos reverberates.” Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 49.

<sup>1280</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 34.

<sup>1281</sup> “We can not stop. It is the most tragic thing ever. You are never still. Around you, on you, in you, everything flows. Your heart continues to beat and your blood flows, your breathing works, your gestures which we called ‘images’ continue to flow. Everything flows within you, in spite of you. You cannot stop your thought for a second.” Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 205.

<sup>1282</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 26.

<sup>1283</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>1284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1285</sup> As it was explained in the Second Chapter, Jousse’s *anthropos* is a microcosm that has a macrocosm and replicates the macrocosm. “The Law of Mimisme can only flow in accordance with the human structure.” Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 206.

gestes” he talks about the person praying, who “stands up, raised upwards; [and his/her] body becomes the axis of the world.”<sup>1286</sup> “God is also “inside,” writes de Certeau. “Faithful, the body which deployed towards the sky thus gathers towards its center, like that of the woman on the child which she carries.”<sup>1287</sup> “The hands, too, say the prayer.”<sup>1288</sup> Physical and spiritual presence in space happens through gesture. “It is the human being in prayer, like a tree between heaven and earth.”<sup>1289</sup> It is an experience of grace that dances (“la grâce danse”),<sup>1290</sup> which would be impossible without the presence of the body, or, if one recalls Jousse, without the presence of the body’s mechanisms, such as bilaterism, the fact that the body has two arms, two legs, and so forth.

Rhythmicity, another aspect of gesture vital to Mimisme as emphasized by Jousse,<sup>1291</sup> is also found in de Certeau’s work, especially in the description of tactics, to which I will return later. The same could be said about the phenomena of algebraosis (*l’algébrose*) – the algebrization of mimic gesture described by Jousse.<sup>1292</sup> De Certeau, for his part, speaks of fixation, linking this phenomenon to the temptation to control movement, which leads to paralysis. Speaking about fixation in a Christian context, de Certeau writes,

The illusion is elsewhere. It consists in slowing down this movement, in believing it has become useless or dangerous, in wanting to fix one of these indispensable “passages” and in taking it alone for the truth of which it is only a sign. It denies others the right to mean something during an evolution or a tension. It denies a reciprocity or a symbolism of signs. By shutting itself up in its own testimony, experience contradicts what it claims to bear witness to, namely the “similarity” in “dissimilarity”, union in difference, the movement of charity. Temptation is fixation. Where God is revolutionary, the devil appears fixist.

The true “spiritual” tends to receive, as a signifier, the contradiction which comes to him from others or from events, and which is also revealed to him by the internal paradox of a particular fidelity to the Infinite. Negation thus [...] makes a spiritual “object” of what was a movement. Held up in the net of a group, made into a statue or becoming an ideology, the “letter” of a spirituality (with its psychological, sociological and mental determinations) no longer says what its spirit was.<sup>1293</sup>

The echoes of Jousse’s ideas heard in de Certeau’s writings, appear in the thorough exposition of the problems of contemporary faith, which I intend to discuss in the following subsections.

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<sup>1286</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 32.

<sup>1287</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>1288</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>1289</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>1290</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>1291</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 53.

<sup>1292</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>1293</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 60-61.

In sum, de Certeau was well acquainted with the corporeal mechanisms of Jousse's anthropology of gesture<sup>1294</sup> as well as with its diseases.<sup>1295</sup> The influence of Jousse's anthropology of gesture can be seen in de Certeau's various studies,<sup>1296</sup> especially in his work on believing and its practices. This how he writes about gesture in the essay on prayer:

The gesture is not a localization of the Absolute. But neither is it the simple moment of departure. Already, it is welcome and response, at the same time as desire and expectation. He grasps right now what he still has to look for.<sup>1297</sup>

Gesture as a way of being human in the cosmos, as a search for compatibility with the Absolute and the environment, as a search for meaning, which can never be completed, is very important in de Certeau's thought. This understanding of gesture permeates all his writings, giving attentiveness to all expressions of movement.

#### 4.2.2.2. *De Certeau's critique of Bourdieu and Foucault's theories of practice*

Notwithstanding the fact that the socio-cultural models of Bourdieu and Foucault, associated with the concepts of habitus and discipline, were undoubtedly closely linked to de Certeau's research, the theologian first and foremost uses them in a way that contrasts his own conception of practice with that of his contemporaries.

De Certeau looks at what Bourdieu's analysis has uncovered but not fully grasped, or, at least, did not treat positively: the multiplicity and creativity that characterizes the actions of the weak in their struggles against the strong. The strong for the author are not necessarily individuals, but can be a dominant discourse or a way of life imposed by an elite, an overwhelming technicality that makes people a mirror for its narcissism and excluding them from taking part in any authorship.<sup>1298</sup> De Certeau follows Bourdieu's idea: he makes use of the importance of the hierarchy of power in the theory of practice, but opens up the

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<sup>1294</sup> These mechanisms are listed in Michel de Certeau, "Une anthropologie du geste: Marcel Jousse," *Études* (1970): 770-773.

<sup>1295</sup> Algebrasis, as already noted, is a disease of expression.

<sup>1296</sup> For example, de Certeau, like Jousse, expressed doubts about the education of modern children through writing practices. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 136. De Certeau's work also stresses the importance of the oral cultures as more prominent for the vitality of the human being due to the possibility of listening to the Other who Speaks. *Ibid.*, 137-138.

<sup>1297</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 36.

<sup>1298</sup> "The television viewer cannot write anything on the screen of his set. He has been dislodged from the product; he plays no role in its apparition. He loses his author's rights and becomes, or so it seems, a pure receiver, the mirror of a multiform and narcissistic actor. Pushed to the limit, he would be the image of appliances that no longer need him in order to produce themselves, the reproduction of a 'celibate machine.'" De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 31.

heterogeneity of the enigmatic consumer's actions. He is interested in what consumers do with what they consume, what they absorb, what they get.<sup>1299</sup>

De Certeau praises Bourdieu for his precise, even aesthetic analysis<sup>1300</sup> but also points out his methodological errors.<sup>1301</sup> According to him, not since Mauss has anyone scrutinized practices and their logic so closely.<sup>1302</sup> Nevertheless, Bourdieu's theory is aggressive and full of contrasts. Bourdieu's texts ultimately reduce practice to a mystical reality, the habitus, and thus make it subject to the law of reproduction:

The subtle descriptions of Bearnian or Kabylean tactics suddenly give way to violently imposed truths, as if the complexity so lucidly examined required the brutal counterpoint of a dogmatic reason.<sup>1303</sup>

According to de Certeau, this is like throwing a blanket over tactics.<sup>1304</sup> Bourdieu's theory, as if to put out their fire, confirms their obedience to social and economic rationality. In this way, as if to mourn their death, the tactics are declared unconscious. De Certeau draws an important lesson here: this treatment of tactics opens up their relation to any theory.<sup>1305</sup> The author explains his critique of Bourdieu's analysis:

In fact, this circle moves from a constructed model (the structure) to an assumed reality (the habitus), and from the latter to an interpretation of observed facts (strategies and conjunctures). But what is even more striking than the heterogeneous character of the pieces the theory puts in a circle is the role it assigns to the ethnological "fragments," which are to close the gap in the sociological coherence.<sup>1306</sup>

Invoking the concept of habitus or "through the fetish of the habitus,"<sup>1307</sup> de Certeau states, Bourdieu affirms "the contrary of what he knows—a traditional popular tactic—and this protection (a tribute paid to the authority of reason) gives him the scientific possibility of observing these tactics in carefully circumscribed places."<sup>1308</sup> According to Maigret, Bourdieu, the author of the ambitious and convincing project of theorizing behavior, is reproached by de Certeau for his "learned ignorance" of the intelligent practices of social actors and his deliberate refusal to acknowledge the greater diversity and ethnographic particularities of situations and actions. The fact that time and learning are clearly involved in the analysis in

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<sup>1299</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>1300</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>1301</sup> On the limits of Bourdieu's research, see: Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 453, 486.

<sup>1302</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 59.

<sup>1303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1304</sup> De Certeau's terminology will be explained in 4.2.3.2.

<sup>1305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1306</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>1307</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>1308</sup> Ibid.

order to explain the genesis of practices and their relation to structures prevents habitus theory from being equated with vulgar determinism.<sup>1309</sup> However, as the paraphrase of de Certeau's thought below will make clear, habitus is detrimental.

How to adapt practice to structures while explaining the gaps remaining between them? According to de Certeau, Bourdieu needed an additional category, and as a specialist in the sociology of education, de Certeau found it in the acquisition of knowledge. Discovering the intermediary between the structures that organize it and the "dispositions" it creates, the "genesis" was ready. It refers to the interiorization of structures through learning and the exteriorization of achievements in practice, what Bourdieu calls habitus. This introduces a temporal dimension: "practices (expressing the experience) correspond adequately to situations (manifesting the structure) if, and only if, the structure remains stable for the duration of the process of interiorization/exteriorization; if not, practices lag behind, thus resembling the structure at the preceding point, the point at which it was interiorized by the habitus."

Bourdieu's analysis, de Certeau argues, presents structures as mutable, capable of becoming the principle of social mobility. Meanwhile, achievements do not have their own movement. They are the place where structures are inscribed. Nothing that is not the result of their externality happens in them. As in the traditional image of primitive or peasant societies, nothing moves, there is no history except that inscribed on them by an alien order. The immovability of this memory, according to de Certeau, guarantees for theory that the social and economic system will be faithfully reproduced in practice. The main role in theory is not played by education or training (visible phenomena), but by their expected result – achievements, the habitus. In this way, habitus provides the basis for explaining society's relationship to structures. In order to assume such stability, the basis must remain unverifiable, invisible.<sup>1310</sup>

As for Foucault, de Certeau had as much friendship as admiration for him, and had devoted courses, lectures, and articles to him several times.<sup>1311</sup> In de Certeau's opinion, Foucault wanted to grasp another dimension of discourse, which was revealed to him by chance. This is because Foucault was fond of travelling, of cycling, of noticing the little things and the various "hooks" pointing to something surprising, extraordinary. De Certeau praises Foucault for his precise analytical and at the same time archival work, but he sees the truth about "the games of truth" ("les jeux de vérité") as coming precisely from the paradoxical spots

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<sup>1309</sup> Maigret, "Les trois héritages," 526.

<sup>1310</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 57-58.

<sup>1311</sup> Michel de Certeau, "Le rire de Michel Foucault," *Le débat* 4 (2007): 140. This is commented on by Giard.

that have escaped analytical control and classification. De Certeau deplors “the vibration of awakening” (“la vibration de l’éveil”) in Foucault’s work, which was eventually overcome by precision and ascetic clarity.<sup>1312</sup> In one of the articles devoted to Foucault, “Le rire de Michel Foucault” (“The Laugh of Michel Foucault”) de Certeau also shows the blind spots of Foucault’s own research, arguing that “we ourselves are the field of expression and interpretation of those intellectual practices that function as practices of power.”<sup>1313</sup> His main critique of Foucault, the philosopher who clearly impressed and influenced him, according to Maigret, is Foucault’s idea that individuals and their actions remain under the thumb of panoptic institutions, controlling and disciplining them like prison.<sup>1314</sup>

Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* was published in 1975.<sup>1315</sup> De Certeau treated it as a masterpiece. His term “antidiscipline,” which appeared in de Certeau’s writings in 1980, according to Giard, is certainly the echo of his contemporary.<sup>1316</sup> Although de Certeau provides a more optimistic approach that always sees microresistances, he does not do this without the help of Foucault. As Maigret observes, the dichotomy between strategies and tactics in de Certeau’s works, which will be discussed later, is formulated in a Foucauldian way.<sup>1317</sup>

Against the backdrop of the network of discipline shown by Foucault, de Certeau formulates the urgent need to find out how society as a whole resists being drawn into it. *The Practice of Everyday Life* refers to Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, presenting it as a work in which the author, “instead of analyzing the apparatus exercising power (i.e., the localizable, expansionist, repressive, and legal institutions), Foucault analyzes the mechanisms (*dispositifs*) that have sapped the strength of these institutions and surreptitiously reorganized the functioning of power: ‘miniscule’ technical procedures acting on and with details, redistributing a discursive space in order to make it the means of a generalized ‘discipline’ (*surveillance*).” However, de Certeau finds “a new and different set of problems to be investigated.” Why does this “microphysics of power” again and again favor the apparatus of production, which creates “discipline”? If it is true that the web of discipline is becoming clearer and wider everywhere, de Certeau deems that it is urgent to find out how society as a whole resists being caught up in it, and what popular procedures (“also ‘miniscule’ and quotidian”) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them just to avoid them?

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<sup>1312</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>1313</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>1314</sup> According to Maigret, Foucault’s ideas in his later work came closer to de Certeau’s values. Maigret, “Les trois héritages,” 526.

<sup>1315</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>1316</sup> Giard, “Introduction to Volume,” xx.

<sup>1317</sup> Maigret, “Les trois héritages,” 539.



And finally, what ways of operating on the part of the consumer are the equivalent of the mute processes that organise the determination of the social and economic order?<sup>1318</sup>

Thus, de Certeau, for his part, is interested in these ways of operating, which consist of a series of practices through which consumers re-appropriate the space organized by socio-cultural production methods. The tactical and temporary creativity of groups or individuals, though entangled in networks of discipline, thanks to the procedures and stratagems of consumers, constitutes a network of anti-discipline.<sup>1319</sup>

De Certeau questions the privileged development of the particular series constituted by panoptic apparatus<sup>1320</sup> as well as draws attention to the division, posited by Foucault, between “ideologies” and “procedures,”<sup>1321</sup> pointing out towards infinitesimal procedures that have not been privileged by history, but still work in countless ways to open up established technological networks. De Certeau explains:

A society is thus composed of certain foregrounded practices organizing its normative institutions and of innumerable other practices that remain “minor,” always there but not organizing discourses and preserving the beginnings or remains of different (institutional, scientific) hypotheses for that society or for others. It is in this multifarious and silent “reserve” of procedures that we should look for “consumer” practices having the double characteristic, pointed out by Foucault, of being able to organize both spaces and languages, whether on a minute or a vast scale.<sup>1322</sup>

Without going too far, one can summarize that, as de Certeau argues, it is thanks to Foucault that it has become possible to look at history as a history without heroes and without names, a history that is dispersed, anonymous and yet essential. The object of history also changes: it is no longer directly character-oriented, but action-oriented; it is not dominated by characters, whose silhouette emerges against the backdrop of society, but by the actions that weave and make up the backdrop of the picture. By changing the focus, de Certeau writes, people adjust this background, leaving the foreground images to blend in, and people continue to gaze intently beyond.<sup>1323</sup>

De Certeau drew on Foucault’s work in his aim to capture new forms of behavior as well as possible. At the same time, however, he was also trying to accomplish what he saw as Foucault’s failure to do, which was, in Maigret’s words, “to put an end to deterministic

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<sup>1318</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xiv.

<sup>1319</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

<sup>1320</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>1321</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>1322</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>1323</sup> De Certeau, “Le rire de Michel Foucault,” 145-146.

thinking, which explains the actions of individuals in terms of the structures that create them.”<sup>1324</sup>

Going back to the main theme of this work – movement practices – de Certeau’s critique of Bourdieu and Foucault is precisely a critique of their way of “situat[ing] their enterprise on this edge by articulating a discourse on non-discursive practices.”<sup>1325</sup> In de Certeau’s opinion,

Nevertheless, however distant they may be from each other, the two bodies of work seem to be constructed by means of the same procedures. The same operational schema can be observed in both, in spite of the difference in the materials used, the problematics involved, and the perspectives opened up. We seem to have here two variants of a “way of making” the theory of practices. Like a way of cooking, this “way” can be exercised in different circumstances and with heterogeneous interests; it has its tricks of the trade and its good or bad players; it also allows one to score points. Using the imperatives that punctuate the steps in a recipe, we could say that this theorizing operation consists of two moments: first, cut out; then turn over. First an “ethnological” isolation; then a logical inversion.<sup>1326</sup>

De Certeau continues, “Granted that Foucault is interested in the effect of his procedures on a system, and Bourdieu, in the ‘single principle’ of which his strategies are the effect, both nonetheless play the same trick when they transform practices isolated as aphasic and secret into the keystone of their theory, when they make of that nocturnal population the mirror in which the decisive element of their explanatory discourse shines forth.”<sup>1327</sup>

De Certeau’s critique of Bourdieu and Foucault was aimed at opening up an alternative approach to practice.

#### *4.2.3. De Certeau’s approach to practice*

In light of the discussion of de Certeau’s critique of Bourdieu and Foucault’s theories of practice, the question arises as to whether it is possible to have an alternative theory of practice which, instead of using the discovered practices to validate its theoretical framework, is directed (through their discovery) towards their liberation and preservation? In other words, is it possible to avoid practice becoming an instrument of the theory of practice, or, conversely, to avoid reducing the practice to a mirroring of explanatory discourse? In this section I aim to find out what such a theory might look like and how it would work.

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<sup>1324</sup> Maigret, “Les trois héritages,” 526.

<sup>1325</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 61.

<sup>1326</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>1327</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

#### 4.2.3.1. Research focus and methods

The main research interest of de Certeau lies in the ways of operating of consumers, of contemporary marginals, whose ranks have long ceased to be limited to minority groups, but are now a massive phenomenon; that is to say, he is interested in the cultural activities of non-producers of culture.<sup>1328</sup> In the introduction of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, which will be the main work of de Certeau discussed in the section, the author explains his intentions:

The purpose of this work is to make explicit the systems of operational combination (les combinatoires d'operations) which also compose a "culture," and to bring to light the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society (a status that does not mean that they are either passive or docile) is concealed by the euphemistic term "consumers." Everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others.<sup>1329</sup>

The heroic ordinary man<sup>1330</sup> or woman is the author of the "mechanisms (dispositifs) that have sapped the strength of [the] institutions and surreptitiously reorganized the functioning of power," previously analysed by Foucault.<sup>1331</sup> De Certeau, who seeks to "determine the procedures, bases, effects, and possibilities" of the collective action by which "users make (bricolent) innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules,"<sup>1332</sup> gazes with respect at the authors of these transformations. His concern about how society resists being brought into disciplinary networks interprets the very notion of transformation, which is extremely important for my research. Transformation is a creative practice of resistance to the realities of disciplining, which may not even have its own language or signs, but which creates pathways for actors in "the jungle of functionalist rationality," in the "technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space."<sup>1333</sup> De Certeau's research draws on the scholarly literature in the fields of sociology, anthropology (in which Mauss figures prominently), history, ethnomethodology, sociolinguistics, semiotics and philosophy, as well as on the description of the chosen practices itself.<sup>1334</sup> First, a descriptive study was carried out covering the practices listed in the quotation below:

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<sup>1328</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>1329</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>1330</sup> De Certeau dedicates his book to the "ordinary man", very ancient "anonymous hero." Ibid., v. De Certeau's hero should not be confused with Freud's ordinary man, who "renders a service to Freud's discourse, that of figuring in it as a principle of totalization and as a principle of plausibility. This principle permits Freud to say, 'It is true of all' and 'It is the reality of history.' The ordinary man functions here in the same way as the God of former times." *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 4.

<sup>1331</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>1332</sup> Ibid., xiii-xiv.

<sup>1333</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>1334</sup> Ibid., xv-xvi.

The first, more descriptive in nature, has concerned certain ways of making that were selected according to their value for the strategy of the analysis, and with a view to obtaining fairly differentiated variants: readers' practices, practices related to urban spaces, utilizations of everyday rituals, re-uses and functions of the memory through the "authorities" that make possible (or permit) every-day practices, etc. In addition, two related investigations have tried to trace the intricate forms of the operations proper to the recomposition of a space (the Croix-Rousse quarter in Lyons) by familial practices, on the one hand, and on the other, to the tactics of the art of cooking, which simultaneously organizes a network of relations, poetic ways of "making do" (bricolage), and a re-use of marketing structures.<sup>1335</sup>

In searching for the logic of these operations ("multiform and fragmentary, relative to situations and details, insinuated into and concealed within devices whose mode of usage they constitute, and thus lacking their own ideologies or institutions") de Certeau embraces the whole tradition of thinking, "from the Greeks to Durkheim," which "has sought to describe with precision the complex (and not at all simple or 'impoverished') rules that could account for these operations."<sup>1336</sup> Mauss definitely is listed among the most important thinkers who have contributed most to the search for a logic of practice.<sup>1337</sup>

De Certeau's approach, which is characterized by a "refutation of the commonplace theses on the passivity of consumers and mass behavior,"<sup>1338</sup> extends to popular culture as "they present themselves essentially as 'arts of making' this or that, i.e., as combinatory or utilizing modes of consumption." In de Certeau's opinion, these practices "bring into play a 'popular' ratio, a way of thinking invested in a way of acting, an art of combination which cannot be dissociated from an art of using."<sup>1339</sup>

During his research career, de Certeau organized several experimental research groups on cultural practices.<sup>1340</sup> The focus on concrete life was the most important unchanging criterion in a very open and evolving research environment.

#### 4.2.3.2. De Certeau's terminology

De Certeau describes the signifying practices of consumers as trajectories: "the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor

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<sup>1335</sup> Ibid., xv.

<sup>1336</sup> Ibid., xv.

<sup>1337</sup> "First, sociologists, anthropologists, and indeed historians (from E. Goffman to P. Bourdieu, from Mauss to M. Detienne, from J. Boissevain to E. O. Laumann) have elaborated a theory of such practices, mixtures of rituals and makeshifts (bricolages), manipulations of spaces, operators of net-works." De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xv-xvi.

<sup>1338</sup> Giard, "Introduction to volume," xxix.

<sup>1339</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xv.

<sup>1340</sup> For the three "circles of interlocution" ("cercles d'interlocution"), see Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 450-451.

captured by the systems in which they develop.”<sup>1341</sup> Statistical investigation, driven by the power to divide,<sup>1342</sup> which results in discovering “only the homogenous,” are incapable of mapping trajectories. Even if the term ‘trajectory’ implies movement, de Certeau invokes the distinction between tactics and strategy, his key concepts, in order to avoid the transcription of trajectories into a “a plane projection, a flattening out,” to which one can reduce movement.<sup>1343</sup> What does the distinction reveal?

Let us first look at the concepts of strategy according to de Certeau’s explanation:

I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment.” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clienteles,” “targets,” or “objects” of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.<sup>1344</sup>

The place of tactics, in contrast to strategy, is with the other. Tactics, which cannot on a spatial or institutional localization, as well as on “a border-line [distinguish] the other as a visible totality”, can “[insinuate themselves] into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.” Tactic “has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances.” If the “proper” is the victory of space over time, then the absence of it makes tactics time-dependent. Tactics are always on the lookout for opportunities to be seized “on the wing”:

Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into “opportunities.” The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. This is achieved in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements (thus, in the supermarket, the housewife confronts heterogeneous and mobile data—what she has in the refrigerator, the tastes, appetites, and moods of her guests, the best buys and their possible combinations with what she already has on hand at home, etc.); the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is “seized.”<sup>1345</sup>

Despite the fact that tactics have no proper place, there is a continuity and permanence in these ways of operating – “they go much further back, to the immemorial intelligence

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<sup>1341</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xviii.

<sup>1342</sup> According to de Certeau, statistics counts only “what is used, not the ways of using.” *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 35.

<sup>1343</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii, 35.

<sup>1344</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

<sup>1345</sup> *Ibid.* One can read more about strategies and tactics on pages 35-36.

displayed in the tricks and imitations of plants and fishes.”<sup>1346</sup> De Certeau lists clever tricks, as well as knowing how to get away with things, “hunter’s cunning,” manoeuvres, and polymorphic simulations as the types of tactical “victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong.’”<sup>1347</sup>

It is important to note that by “strong,” de Certeau is not referring only to a social hierarchy, but more to general repressive circumstances. “Strong” refers to repressive force, “whether the strength be that of powerful people or the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.”<sup>1348</sup> “Weak” or “weakness” in de Certeau’s writings about faith, refers to the “genuine,” the true. But this has nothing to do with the essence (according Frijhoff, “for Certeau, there are no essences; everything is becoming, history, agency, including the discursive”<sup>1349</sup>) but to the reality, in which creative “ways of operating” appear. Also, the word ‘weak’ also implies an awareness of the dominant discourse about this reality that ‘makes’ it ‘weak’.

In other words, the distinction between strategies and tactics leads to the possibility of avoiding the risk of ideological blind spots. The escaping these blind spots helps to notice the plurality and creativity of practice as well as ways of resisting an oppressive system. This is crucial for understanding culture – in de Certeau’s opinion, “culture articulates conflicts and alternately legitimizes, displaces, or controls the superior force.” Culture develops in an atmosphere of tension and even violence, providing symbolic balances, compatibility agreements, and compromises that are either more, or less, temporary. Thus, according to de Certeau, “the tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices.”<sup>1350</sup>

This political dimension is present in de Certeau’s understanding of practice right from the beginning. In provided specification of what he means by the term ‘ways of operating’, de Certeau provides the example of writing:

Just as in literature one differentiates “styles” or ways of writing, one can distinguish “ways of operating”—ways of walking, reading, producing, speaking, etc. These styles of action intervene in a field which regulates them at a first level [...], but they introduce into it a way of turning it to their advantage that obeys other rules and constitutes something like a second level interwoven into the first [...]. These “ways of operating” are similar to “instructions for use,” and they create a certain play in the machine through a stratification of different and interfering kinds of functioning.<sup>1351</sup>

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<sup>1346</sup> Ibid., xix-xx.

<sup>1347</sup> Ibid., xix.

<sup>1348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1349</sup> Frijhoff, “Michel de Certeau,” 86.

<sup>1350</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xvii.

<sup>1351</sup> Ibid., 34.

De Certeau deliberately chooses the word “uses” with all its problematic ambiguity, explaining that “even though the word most often designates stereo-typed procedures accepted and reproduced by a group, its ‘ways and customs’,” it helps to recognize “in these ‘uses’ ‘actions’ (in the military sense of the word) that [they] have their own formality and inventiveness and that [they] discreetly organize the multiform labor of consumption.”<sup>1352</sup> In other words, de Certeau does not believe in treating “uses” as procedures that are fully accepted and reproduced by a group. Accepting such a treatment would prevent the answers to the questions that de Certeau is most interested in: - “What do [consumers] make of what they ‘absorb,’ receive, and pay for? What do they do with it?”<sup>1353</sup>

Undoubtedly, as de Certeau writes, “power relationships define the networks in which they [operations] are inscribed and delimit the circumstances from which they can profit.”<sup>1354</sup> However, within those networks, what remains for a consumer – the “indeterminate trajectories” traced by users (that can appear meaningless, since “they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move”<sup>1355</sup>) – are substantial and worth exploring. To ignore them is to ignore the resistance, which is more than a resistance that only mirrors a system of oppression.

So, what does resistance look like that is not just a mirroring of a system of oppression?

#### 4.2.3.3. *Narrating, reading, and walking*

De Certeau analyzes everyday practices in relation to tactics:

Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping, and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the “weak” within the order established by the “strong,” an art of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf, hunter’s tricks, manoeuvrable, polymorph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries.<sup>1356</sup>

However, the practices which receive most of de Certeau’s attention, are narrating, reading, and walking. These are practices that very clearly reflect the freedom of consumers, as well the dependence of such practices on consumers’ activity. In addition, they can be seen

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<sup>1352</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>1353</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>1354</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>1355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1356</sup> Ibid., 40.

as exemplary practices, and the consumers' ways of operating identified in them can be noticed in other practices as well.<sup>1357</sup>

De Certeau describes strategies as the ability of the "strong" to "own" a place, whether that is geographical, economic, monitoring or discursive (he talks about "the power of knowledge by this ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces," the power which "produces itself in and through this knowledge"<sup>1358</sup>):

As in management, every "strategic" rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its "own" place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an "environment." A Cartesian attitude, if you wish: it is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other. It is also the typical attitude of modern science, politics, and military strategy.<sup>1359</sup>

Tactics, on the contrary, with neither the base nor the means, poaches in the territory of the strong, creating surprises, making use "of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers."<sup>1360</sup> "The space of a tactic is the space of the other."<sup>1361</sup>

Narrating, reading, and walking in the city are exemplary practices of how it is possible to use things which one does not "own." It is worth noting that according to de Certeau, the expansion of technocratic rationality leads to an increasingly totalitarian system, where the "strategic" model is undergoing a transformation. By definition, de Certeau writes, it used to be based on a definition of "proper" that was different from everything else, but now that "proper" has become the whole.<sup>1362</sup> In other words, such a system no longer has authors or owners, persons to whom one turns, in relation to whom one lives. In this way, the attentiveness to tactical behavior becomes attentiveness to human behavior itself, which is characterized by creativity and multiplicity, as well as by the fact that it seeks to re-create the environment in spite of increasing constraints.<sup>1363</sup> "The transformation of a given equilibrium into another," de

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<sup>1357</sup> Also, what they have in common, their truth, lies in the very practical mode. "They say exactly what they do," writes de Certeau. "They constitute an act which they intend to mean. There is no need to add a gloss that knows what they express without knowing it, nor to wonder what they are the metaphor of. They form a network of operations whose formal rules and clever 'coups' are outlined by an enormous cast of characters." *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 80.

<sup>1358</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>1359</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1360</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>1361</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1362</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>1363</sup> "One would thus have a proliferation of aleatory and indeterminable manipulations within an immense framework of socioeconomic constraints and securities: myriads of almost invisible movements, playing on the more and more refined texture of a place that is even, continuous, and constitutes a proper place for all people." De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 40-41.



Certeau reminds, “one characterizes art.”<sup>1364</sup> Practices analyzed through their ways of operating makes life habitable for human beings.

For example, de Certeau states that conversation serves as “a provisional and collective effect of competence in the art of manipulating ‘commonplaces’ and the inevitability of events in such a way as to make them ‘habitable.’”<sup>1365</sup> Stories on their side “provide the decorative container of a narrativity for everyday practices.”<sup>1366</sup> “Something in narration escapes the order of what it is sufficient or necessary to know, and, in its characteristics, concerns the style of tactics.”<sup>1367</sup>

To sum up, de Certeau’s interest in the actions that remain possible for the weak is in ways of resisting stagnation and fixation. This resistance is not detected in any other way than through the focus on the “battles or games between the strong and the weak.”<sup>1368</sup> The phenomenon of kinesthetic resistance found in Mauss, seems to have been developed by de Certeau not only at the individual level but also at the collective level.

#### 4.2.3.4. *The actual order of things*

The tactics or actions of the weak, even when inspired by kinesthetic resistance, do not seek to immediately destroy the strategies of the strong. On the contrary, their creativity goes beyond the straight opposition, as “the actual order of things is precisely what ‘popular’ tactics turn to their own ends, without any illusion that it will change any time soon.”<sup>1369</sup> Without having their own place (“*un lieu propre*”), tactics do not have the visibility of their activities in the panoptic machinery,<sup>1370</sup> and by employing the temporal means (such as the “right point in time” and memory), they mediate even the spatial transformations.<sup>1371</sup> Spaces made of communication and conversations, the “in-between” spaces, resist the tendency to turn them into established places, or the tendency of “transformation of the void into a plenitude.”<sup>1372</sup>

Rather than concentrating on the trace left behind, de Certeau delves into the very practice that left that trace.<sup>1373</sup> This is quite a difficult task, because the actual order of things – the practice of real, ordinary people – is constantly masked. De Certeau, who admires Jousse,

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<sup>1364</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>1365</sup> Ibid., xxii.

<sup>1366</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>1367</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>1368</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>1369</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>1370</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>1371</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>1372</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>1373</sup> Ibid., 97.

also carefully observes the actors under the influence of active forces. Only he does this not by tracking movement on a cosmic scale, but, for example, by observing the possibilities of movement in a city founded by utopian and urbanist discourse. From this he draws several conclusions relating to the masking of real actors' practices.

First of all, the rational organization, which concerns the production of its own space (*un espace propre*), demands the repression of "all the physical, mental and political pollutions that would compromise it."<sup>1374</sup> Second, the rational organization uses the flattened view<sup>1375</sup> as a way of avoiding those pollutants: "univocal scientific strategies, made possible by the flattening out of all the data in a plane projection, must replace the tactics of users who take advantage of 'opportunities' and who, through these trap-events, these lapses in visibility, reproduce the opacities of history everywhere."<sup>1376</sup> And finally, de Certeau identifies the creation of a universal and anonymous subject, "which is the city itself," as a way of assigning to it all the functions and predicates that were previously dispersed and assigned to a number of different real subjects, such as groups, associations, or individuals.

The city for de Certeau, is not an anonymous subject, but what its inhabitants do.<sup>1377</sup> In this sense, pedestrian movement is one of the real systems whose existence really makes a city. However, reduced to the status of pollutions, the tactics of everyday life, in other words, "a way of being in the world," are in danger of becoming something "to be forgotten."<sup>1378</sup> The downgraded status of tactics is caused by "a contradiction between the collective mode of administration and an individual mode of reappropriation," which marks the present conjuncture.<sup>1379</sup> De Certeau strongly believes that "spatial practices in fact secretly structure the determining conditions of social life,"<sup>1380</sup> and this is the reason for his research interest in the actual order of things.

#### 4.2.3.5. *Culture in plurality (Culture au pluriel)*

De Certeau was interested in understanding how social practices and cultural discourses are linked and mutually shaped at all levels, from the highest to the lowest. According to the researcher, those who do not have a clear voice or representation in modern society, which is

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<sup>1374</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>1375</sup> "The operation of walking, wandering, or 'window shopping,' that is, the activity of passers-by, is transformed into points that draw a totalizing and reversible line on the map." *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 97.

<sup>1376</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>1377</sup> One can recall Mauss's insights into societies as behaviors.

<sup>1378</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 97.

<sup>1379</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>1380</sup> Ibid.

made up of formal institutions and formal networks, are heard through unofficial channels, which must be worked out by cultural theorists.<sup>1381</sup> Therefore, de Certeau is considered worldwide as one of the leading theorists of cultural dynamics. He was an expert of both historical and actual practice in many diverse domains of culture.

De Certeau's concept of culture is broad. It is characterized by attention to the aspects of hybridization, of cultural syncretism in their subjectified forms and know-how. This decanonization of culture, according to Dosse, escapes relativism insofar as it maintains a certain number of identifiable criteria to distinguish what falls within the cultural practice to be valued:

1. These cultural practices must indeed emanate from the individuals themselves.
2. They must become a resource for subjectivation.
3. They must carry a know-how that allows them to escape control devices, thus being part of a broader process of emancipation.

Ultimately, what defines culture, according to de Certeau, is the cultural operation itself, the act of doing, the practice, which can be defined as a trajectory related to the places that determine the conditions of its possibility, but most of all related to the desire to live, the existential drive, the 'madness to be'.<sup>1382</sup> The derivation of cultural practice from individuals themselves, and its connection to the resources of subjectivation and practical experience which allows escaping the means of control and thus becoming part of a broader process of emancipation, is a very important contribution of de Certeau to the theory of culture. The emphasis on emancipation helps to evaluate the cultural practices both in the abstract and in the very concrete.

One example of this abstract evaluation of cultural practices is de Certeau's juxtaposition of narratives and rumors. Narrative as opposed to rumor "belongs to the art of making a coup."<sup>1383</sup> Narrative is a journey through history, a spatial practice that falls into the realm of tactics.<sup>1384</sup> It creates a fictional space that is distanced from reality, and thus can compete with it. "Stories diversify, rumors totalize."<sup>1385</sup> It is "because of the process of dissemination that they open up; stories differ from rumors in that the latter are always injunctions, initiators and results of a levelling of space, creators of common movements that

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<sup>1381</sup> Frijhoff, "Michel de Certeau," 87.

<sup>1382</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 455-456.

<sup>1383</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 79.

<sup>1384</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>1385</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

reinforce an order by adding an activity of making people believe things to that of making people do things,”<sup>1386</sup> de Certeau explains.

In terms of specific projects, the period when de Certeau became the essential source of inspiration for the cultural policy conducted by the French government in the 1970s needs to be raised.<sup>1387</sup> De Certeau’s articles, later collected in *La culture au pluriel* (1974) already noted the great social variety of cultural experiences, without any concern for the hierarchization of practices. These contributions inspired the methodology of the first surveys on the practices of the French people carried out by the Ministry of Culture during the years of the 1970s. De Certeau’s ambition, Maigret notes, beyond a very precise documentation of new forms of behavior, is to establish a fundamental break with the determinist thinking that explains the actions of individuals by the structures that repress them.<sup>1388</sup> The researches he led and carried out helped to identify inequalities in access to cultural education facilities between different groups.<sup>1389</sup>

The other famous research funded by the Ministry of the Environment and Living Environment, was published in 1000 exemplars in typewritten form. In 1983, de Certeau and Luce Giard co-authored the report “L’ordinaire de la communication.”<sup>1390</sup> De Certeau, together with Giard and other researchers, were interested in the real networks of communication and pedagogy which the elitist and abstract notion of culture tended to consider irrelevant. For them, they were interesting because they were places where operations were mixed and ways of doing things collided and juxtaposed: “Here is invented and practiced a way of reprocessing the socio-cultural environment, of appropriating its materials and making use of them as one pleases, at the end of a series of transactions/translations/operations of transit and transfer.”<sup>1391</sup>

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<sup>1386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1387</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 445.

<sup>1388</sup> Maigret, “Les trois héritages,” 526. Most importantly, however, de Certeau provided an innovative approach to culture that was very different from his contemporaries. For example, it differed from Baudrillard’s exclusively elitist conception of culture, which was in stark contrast to de Certeau’s desire to grasp the authenticity of culture right down to the smallest details of everyday life. The difference between the two thinkers, according to Dosse, was first and foremost in posture – de Certeau was a man who listens to the other, whether the other is in the cabinet of ministers or a casual visitor to cultural events. Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 465.

<sup>1389</sup> De Certeau was also involved in assessing the situation of specific cultural sites and projects. In August 1983, for example, de Certeau was invited to analyze the activities of the Beaubourg Centre at the request of its president Jean Maheu. (The Centre for Creative Exchange which claimed to be a response to the crisis that hit the country in 1968. The project for the Center Beaubourg was announced in December 1969 by its initiator, President Georges Pompidou, who intended to monitor its implementation personally.) Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 463-465.

<sup>1390</sup> Ibid., 459-460.

<sup>1391</sup> Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, “L’ordinaire de la communication,” *Réseaux. Communication-Technologie-Société* 1.3 (1983): 10.

Scientific attention to networks, according to de Certeau and Giard, has taught more about the ways in which knowledge is acquired and transmitted than all well-intentioned didactic projects imprisoned by their theoretical assumptions. However, this requires that one stops stigmatizing common practice and seeks to understand the theory of practice and the ways in which theoretical and practical knowledge circulates, which can make “work culture” visible with the aim of “helping it to identify itself.” The cultural offerings of the major institutions will thus be able to move closer to real cultural and communication practices.<sup>1392</sup> Moreover, the report strongly reflects de Certeau’s preference for people’s ability to use things that have already been created (cultural heritage) to build their human dignity through a variety of creative expressions. In this, and not in the preservation of culture, de Certeau sees beauty and meaning and the direction of cultural policy.<sup>1393</sup>

The study of cultural practices led Certeau to take an interest in the city. Although he was not associated with geographic and urban circles, he was passionate about spatial issues. His contribution in this field undoubtedly made him best known in the United States, where his reflections about the possibility of “seeing Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center”<sup>1394</sup> have become the source of many studies. Inspired by the heights of New York, de Certeau shows a confrontation between voyeurs and walkers, which (besides other important insights<sup>1395</sup>) metaphorizes the break established in the social sciences, and absolutized in the 1970s between scholarly competence and common competence.<sup>1396</sup> This break between the scopic, the disembodied and therefore illusory knowledge, and embodied participation can also serve as a picture for very different approaches to culture. The approach to culture as culture in plural must descend right to the environment where people’s movements take place.

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<sup>1392</sup> Ibid., 10. Some important points noted in this report are: the characterization of the social group in terms of its way(s) of dealing with the environment, and in terms of its main communication strategies and communication systems; the importance of local animation centers; the importance of biological ties (ethnic and family) for social adaptation; the importance of the cultural intermediaries - anonymous communication heroes, modest guardians of the well-being of micro-environment, and initiators of “change in small doses” - to culture. Ibid., 6, 7, 8, 11.

<sup>1393</sup> For example, de Certeau and Giard note the following about the situation in cities: “By its own movement, the economy of the restoration tends to separate from the places their practitioners. [...] Thus, the technical administrations are very interested in buildings, but very little in the inhabitants [...]. But heritage does not only concern specialists, it is also the business of the city’s practitioners, their right to create, their autonomy to be respected. The inhabitants, especially the underprivileged ones, do not only have, within the framework of the laws, a right to the occupation of the places; they also have right to their aesthetics. One systematically denigrates their taste, by privileging that of the technicians, while carrying to the praise ‘folk art,’ but only in a remote past or muted in object of curiosity.” Ibid., 22.

<sup>1394</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 91.

<sup>1395</sup> One can find them here: Charles Lock, “Michel de Certeau: Walking the Via Negativa,” *Paragraph* 22.2 (1999): 184-198.

<sup>1396</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 473.

#### 4.2.4. *Focus on movement*

Choosing as his objects of study all possible cultural practices, from mystical manifestations to reading habits and the most banal everyday actions,<sup>1397</sup> de Certeau remained attentive to the phenomenon of movement within them. His insights into movement draw on the legacy of Mauss, Merleau-Ponty, and especially Jousse. In this subsection, I will therefore, discuss some aspects of de Certeau's conception of movement that are directly related to the ideas of his predecessors.

##### 4.2.4.1. *Space (espace) versus place (lieu)*

In explaining the opposition between space and place, de Certeau recalls Merleau-Ponty's distinction between geometrical space and anthropological space.<sup>1398</sup> De Certeau makes his distinction between space and place, where place refers to any kind of order in which elements are distributed in a co-existent relationship. It implies a sign of stability. Place is governed by the law of the proper place, and thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same place.<sup>1399</sup>

Meanwhile, space is made up of the intersections of mobile elements. It is, de Certeau explains, in a sense governed by the ensemble of movements deployed in it. It exists when vectors of direction, velocity, and time variables are taken into account. Space emerges as an effect caused by operations that orient it, determine its location in time, and make it act in a polyvalent unity of conflicting programmes or contractual proximities. Unlike place, it does not have "the univocity or stability of a 'proper.'"<sup>1400</sup> "In short," states de Certeau, "space is a practiced place. Thus, the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs."<sup>1401</sup>

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<sup>1397</sup> Frijhoff, "Michel de Certeau," 88.

<sup>1398</sup> "Merleau-Ponty distinguished a 'geometrical' space ('a homogeneous and isotropic spatiality,' analogous to our 'place') from another 'spatiality' which he called an 'anthropological space.' This distinction depended on a distinct problematic, which sought to distinguish from 'geometrical' univocity the experience of an 'outside' given in the form of space, and for which 'space is existential' and 'existence is spatial.' This experience is a relation to the world; in dreams and in perception, and because it probably precedes their differentiation, it expresses 'the same essential structure of our being as a being situated in relationship to a milieu'—being situated by a desire, indissociable from a 'direction of existence' and implanted in the space of a landscape. From this point of view 'there are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences.' The perspective is determined by a "phenomenology" of existing in the world." De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117-118. I have discussed this phenomenon in terms of bodily space (3.4.3.).

<sup>1399</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>1400</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1401</sup> *Ibid.*

A comparison with reading, which de Certeau treated as an active act of appropriation (or an act of “assimilating,” but not in the sense of “becoming similar to,” but in a sense of making it one’s own, “appropriating or reappropriating it”<sup>1402</sup>) is important here. What is significant in reading, as in other practices, is the possibilities it offers for the free movement of thought, which is always embodied. This issue needs to be explained in Jousse’s terms, which I will do shortly, but for now will clarify with the help of Merleau-Ponty. Anthropological space or, in de Certeau’s terms, space (which is the opposite of ‘place’) as a practiced space is ‘measured’ by movement, and this value is not attributed only to visible spaces. For example, his insights into narratives show this very clearly:

Tales and legends [...] are deployed, like games, in a space outside of and isolated from daily competition, that of the past, the marvelous, the original. In that space can thus be revealed, dressed as gods or heroes, the models of good or bad ruses that can be used every day. Moves, not truths, are recounted.<sup>1403</sup>

Thus, all cultural practices can be seen as potential producers of the space for the human movement that resist the process of “machining” bodies in order “to make them spell out an order.”<sup>1404</sup> The daily practices, according to de Certeau, articulate spatial experience. And, returning to Merleau-Ponty, it can be said that anthropological or bodily space, in other words a space that is handled according to the regularities of “direction of existence” in the world, consists of units that “cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation.”<sup>1405</sup> In other words, “an innumerable collection of singularities” of human movement is the factor which “spatializes” all forms of human existence.

#### *4.2.4.2. The qualitative nature of action*

In this section I will discuss the commonality between the approaches of de Certeau and Mauss to movement in terms of kinaesthetic resistance and the qualitative nature of movement.

As explained in Chapter 1, the purpose of kinesthetic evaluative feedback is to correct, modify, restore a body technique so that it would remain or become effective and legitimate in a given society. The possibilities for modifying body technique are endless, as transformations can take place in many different directions.<sup>1406</sup> Kinesthetic resistance is a form of kinesthetic

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<sup>1402</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>1403</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>1404</sup> Ibid., 148. As will be explained later, de Certeau’s attitude towards religion is of a very similar sort.

<sup>1405</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>1406</sup> Moreover, attention to the kinesthetic feedback itself can also modify body technique in specific ways.

feedback that protects a person's ability to stay in confrontation with the social order and expectations. In showing how "spatialization" or humanization of the environment take place through its "appropriation or reappropriation"<sup>1407</sup> through movement, de Certeau shows the picture of kinesthetic resistance. In summary, the phenomena of kinesthetic resistance that Mauss discovered at the individual level, de Certeau discovered at the collective level.

However, these levels of kinesthetic resistance must be linked. As mentioned in previous chapters, the creativity of individuals ensures the strength and flexibility of the social fabric. In the light of de Certeau's insight that the dominant discourse often, through technicality, can turn people into a mirror of its own narcissism, the word 'social' becomes questionable. Indeed, the question of kinesthetic resistance in Mauss's work arises in the context of social pressure. How do de Certeau's and Mauss's ideas fit together in addressing the question about the possibility of resistance in an anti-anthropological<sup>1408</sup> space?

De Certeau shows that technological development does not eliminate human resistance and creativity, but that it needs to be sought by means other than those available from the dominant science or discourse and, above all, once it is recognized, it needs to be supported or joined. As discussed very briefly in the section on de Certeau's cultural policy, methods of recognition must be oriented towards movement and action in order to grasp the real situation of the group. De Certeau and Giard wrote in "L'ordinaire de la communication" that

the future and the present, depend on an archaeology of gestures, objects, words, images, forms and symbols, repertory with multiple entries from which is composed the landscape of the communication, invent the proposals of the innovation.<sup>1409</sup>

The recommendation to focus on human expression goes hand in hand with Mauss's ideas. While the situation is changing, the focus must remain the same. Mauss emphasized behavior as a fundamental manifestation of society, stressing its qualitative aspects as an integral part of their symbolic value. De Certeau builds on Mauss to speak of the "return of a sociopolitical ethics into an economic system."<sup>1410</sup> He shows how the once traditional ceremonial distribution of wealth and property to affirm social status persists within another type of economic system, which regulates exchanges according to the code of generalized equivalence constituted by money, rather by the "obligation to give." In other words, the qualitative aspect of action is still there, but its assessment changes depending on the dominant discourse:

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<sup>1407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1408</sup> To recall de Certeau's use of Merleau-Ponty's term from the previous subchapter.

<sup>1409</sup> De Certeau and Giard, "L'ordinaire de la communication," 18.

<sup>1410</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 27.



It survives in our economy, though on its margins or in its interstices. It is even developing, although held to be illegitimate, within the modern market economy. Because of this, the politics of the “gift” also becomes a diversionary tactic. In the same way, the loss that was voluntary in a gift economy is transformed into a transgression in a profit economy: it appears as an excess (a waste), a challenge (a rejection of profit), or a crime (an attack on property).<sup>1411</sup>

According to de Certeau, the politics of the gift has become a diversionary tactic in the modern market economy. The same can be said of many other practices that have retained their social symbolism (dance, for example). And the continued efforts to reduce them to individual, quantifiable benefits, which in turn translate into labour productivity and economic growth, does not remove their threat as tactics potentially offering actions of diversion.

De Certeau’s thinking on the qualitative nature of action is similar to that of Mauss. He adds to his predecessor’s insights with important remarks concerning the technically controlled environment. Individual movers in such an environment find neither an author nor a name. The individual’s inclination towards the other, characterized by tactile perception and a kinesthetic style of assimilation, which is the basis of sociality, echoes in the void and is lost in the voiceless environment. But, according to de Certeau, there is a way out; all one has to do is to look for sociality where it is alive, where real people move with their lives. No matter how many, recalling Jousse’s insights, products of algebraosis (*l’algébrose*) human beings have made, total paralysis is impossible. De Certeau showed that movement takes place around them, on them, between them, and in the voids. Accordingly, the focus must be on human beings and their movements, not on the objects and manifestations of fixation.

#### 4.2.4.3. Users

De Certeau’s respectful attentiveness to the actions of ordinary people is linked to his trust in the mechanisms of human movement. But there is another possible explanation for de Certeau’s sympathy for those who use rather than create culture. This explanation is not directly related to de Certeau’s ideas; rather, it is a juxtaposition of de Certeau’s approach and Jousse’s ideas.

I want to draw attention to thinking about consumers or users and their movements. If one recalls Jousse’s ideas, all people are modelers in a gestural relationship with cosmic gestures, that is, changes and rhythms. Through gestures, with the help of one’s receptor mechanisms, one makes sense of and constructs what one calls the invisible world. However, Jousse points out that it can only be constructed from received things whose ethno-verbal

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<sup>1411</sup> Ibid., 27.

expression is necessarily more or less “algebraic.” From this point of view, all human beings are replicators of gestures and, in a sense, users not creators. To view the actions of users and non-creators of culture as valuable, as fully human, and as creative expressions is therefore a consistent position of de Certeau, in line with Jousse’s ideas. The spiritual aspect of Jousse’s anthropology of gesture and its echoes in de Certeau’s work are discussed in the next subsection below.

#### *4.2.5. De Certeau about religious life*

In this subsection, I will examine de Certeau’s approach to religious life, which, like his approach to culture, is based on agency.

##### *4.2.5.1. Faith and action*

De Certeau’s reflections on faith are related to his perception of the relationship between discourse and practice, or faith and action. In his search for an answer to the question “what desire or what need leads us to make our bodies the emblems of an identifying law?,”<sup>1412</sup> de Certeau points towards “the credibility of a discourse . . . [as that which] first makes believers act in accord with it.”<sup>1413</sup>

So, “to make people believe is to make them act.” Discourse “produces practitioners.” Discourse has to be “inscribed” into reality, and the only way to do that is for it to become human action, because human action is reality:

But by a curious circularity, the ability to make people act—to write and to machine bodies—is precisely what makes people believe. Because the law is already applied with and on bodies, “incarnated” in physical practices, it can accredit itself and make people believe that it speaks in the name of the “real.” It makes itself believable by saying: “This text has been dictated for you by Reality itself.” People believe what they assume to be real, but this “reality” is assigned to a discourse by a belief that gives it a body inscribed by the law. The law requires an accumulation of corporeal capital in advance in order to make itself believed and practiced. It is thus inscribed because of what has already been inscribed: the witnesses, martyrs, or examples that make it credible to others.<sup>1414</sup>

In other words, credibility, according to de Certeau, is a quality attributed to the discourse articulated by bodies. “Give me your body and I will give you meaning, I will make you a name and a word in my discourse;” this invites law or the normative discourse, and promises a dynamic transformation of living beings into signs, providing the means in

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<sup>1412</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 148.

<sup>1413</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1414</sup> *Ibid.*

discourse to transform oneself into a unit of meaning, an identity, “to finally pass from this opaque and dispersed flesh, from this exorbitant and troubled life, to the limpidness of a word, to become a fragment of language, a single name, that can be read and quoted by others.”<sup>1415</sup>

De Certeau’s reflections on faith must therefore be understood, I suggest, as a search for a language about what remains when one resists to fall into the trap of the law or normative discourse. Resistance to “pass from this opaque and dispersed flesh, from this exorbitant and troubled life,” means first of all to embrace one’s own experience of the body and one’s own history, which will inevitably be lacking in the sense of meaning and coherence that a normative discourse can provide. So, these things – the acceptance of one’s own corporeality and the lack or the wound that opens up when the cover of discourse or law is lifted – are the first things about faith I will address.

#### 4.2.5.2. *Body and the wound*

As Frijhoff summarizes,

It is the painful experience of broken identity that makes it possible to recognize the other. And it is there that Certeau locates the existential *blessure* (wound), the other key term for his experience of life.<sup>1416</sup>

Before going into de Certeau’s reflections on bodily experience and faith, it is good to explain Frijhoff’s quotation a little further. The bodily experience is not in itself, or at least not always, a wound or a lack, but it is how a person feels it in relation to the reducing narrative of discourse, the impact of which is proportional to its pervasiveness in the society through the people who act. It can be said to be kinesthetic feedback with a comparative effect.

Faith, in de Certeau’s thought, is the opposite of normative law or discourse. Instead of turning human bodies into actors in its own theatre, faith makes everyone’s authentic experience a possibility of conversation with the Other, with God. The possibility of hearing the voice of the Other is inseparable from being a body in other words, from gesture as a way of being in the world. The line of thought here is as follows: on the one hand, the encounter between the human being and God “is always located on the lands of man, at the crossroads of his body and his soul.”<sup>1417</sup> De Certeau’s emphasis on the importance of the body in spiritual practices, as well as his statement “le geste est esprit” (“gesture is spirit”) have already been discussed above.

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<sup>1415</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>1416</sup> Frijhoff, “Michel de Certeau,” 88.

<sup>1417</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 149.

On the other hand, de Certeau treats God's very incarnation, the foundation of Christianity, as God's coming to earth, to human experience, and withdrawing, giving way to the fulfilment of different experiences in existence (which does not need any other foundation or meaning, beside the being itself in this openness). In other words, God has made room for humanity. This room is not indicated by some externally imposed discourse; it is not the "proper" place, "for religious life does not receive its justification from outside. It has no reason to be of social utility."<sup>1418</sup> By faith, one follows the path of God's incarnation, which leads to the assumption of human existence ("a question of existing, that is to say of finding oneself"<sup>1419</sup>) and the renunciation of human fixations that give identity and power, for the sake of intimacy with the Creator of being, the great being, the source of life, life itself.

De Certeau, even in his writings on faith, has undoubtedly remained an active campaigner for not overlooking the ways of being human in the world.<sup>1420</sup> What he said to Jean-Marie Benoist, Dosse writes, is very explicit on this point when he speaks of the Christian theme of the incarnation, of God made man:

If there is a need to seek God somewhere, it is not in a paradise, in a nebula or in an exteriority in relation to history, but on the contrary in the daily life of the human relationship or of the technical task, or of chance or of encounters between desire and pain. This is where there is a relationship to God.<sup>1421</sup>

From the totality of de Certeau's ideas about faith it can be said that the author shows faith as linked to the search for God "where the human question is."<sup>1422</sup> "The human question" is always there as long as human beings exist. Such a faith refuses to regard the inadequacy of religious signs as the absence of God.

After discussing the relationship between faith and bodily existence, the question of organized religion arises. At this point, I need to discuss two of de Certeau's important categories in relation to religious life: gesture and place.

#### 4.2.5.3. *Gesture and place (lieu)*

De Certeau writes in his essay "Une figure énigmatique":<sup>1423</sup>

In its particularity, religious life comprises, I believe, two complementary elements. On the one hand, it is a gesture; on the other hand, it is a place. The gesture is to leave, and

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<sup>1418</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 25.

<sup>1419</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>1420</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 97.

<sup>1421</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 462.

<sup>1422</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 56.

<sup>1423</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-28.

we're never done. The place is a community practice, an active sharing, the establishment of a "doing together", and this too is always to be repeated.<sup>1424</sup>

To fully understand these lines it is necessary to turn again to Jousse – to his understanding of geste and Mimisme, also to his ideas about the processes of becoming aware and of transmission which both require gesticulation. Thousands of years of ethnic traditions contribute to the transmission process, which does not avoid elements of automatism.

In line with Jousse's ideas, in writing about faith, de Certeau consistently focuses on the ways of being of people, rather than on the traces left by their activities, which in turn can remove from the field of vision the ways of being or practices themselves. He demonstrates that faith must not be associated or identified either with doctrinal conformity, or social benefit or merit, but instead be defined only by "the act of believing" itself.<sup>1425</sup> However, the act of faith has both individual and collective expressions, and the concepts of gesture and place denote them.

In De Certeau's reflections on religious life, gesture signifies departure:

To leave means to break with the siege to begin to move forward, to take one more step to move forward, not to rely on the support of well-guaranteed words to confront them or lead them to a practice, not to confuse faith with so the solidity of established institutions, preferring the poverty of travel to the opulence of apologetics or installations. Today, the promise of "vows" is a gesture of departure; it consists in crossing a threshold, and in taking this very gesture as a way of life, as something that will have to be constantly redone, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, on other days and in other ways.<sup>1426</sup>

The gesture of departure is a constant presence in motion, in the sense of embracing being rather than its trace, and constantly abandoning the trace, with the aim of approaching the otherness of the present being (both in terms of its mutability in time and in terms of its relation to the other).<sup>1427</sup> "But this is only possible together, in a community practice," warns de Certeau. It is because "the departure leads elsewhere, towards the unlimited, infinite space opened up by the experience of faith; but it only has reality in face-to-face contact, in exchange

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<sup>1424</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>1425</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>1426</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>1427</sup> "This does not even exclude the possibility that we find in our experience a movement toward what could not in any event be present to us in the original and whose irremediable absence would thus count among our originating experiences," – writes de Certeau in "Du corps à l'écriture, un transit chrétien" and quotes Merleau-Ponty saying "We are interrogating our experience precisely in order to know how it opens us to what is not ourselves." *La Faiblesse de croire*, 287. Original quotation is from: Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 159.

and sharing.”<sup>1428</sup> De Certeau expounds the necessity of returning the gesture to “the community practice [which] consists in doing this truth together and in banking on the act of believing.”

How does it work? The gesture of departure leads elsewhere, writes de Certeau, and “each departure changes, expands, renews this place, which nevertheless remains the reference and the challenge of a truth that does not belong to anyone in particular.” In other words, “community is ultimately the rule of all gestures.” These gestures may at first seem to threaten the community, but only until it recognizes its own ‘law’, which is a relationship.<sup>1429</sup> This is why “there is no longer any place here for the individualism which grants to a single man the privilege of defining the truth by becoming the owner, the hermit or the tyrant of the group.” There is no religious truth, which can be capitalized. “It can only be shared,”<sup>1430</sup> says de Certeau.

Sharing is an act of faith because of the incarnation of the Divine and the provision of a place for humanity, as already discussed. It should not be forgotten that there is no external motivation for faith, and therefore for the act of faith. This means that sharing has no other purpose than to meet the other – to hear the other, to give to the other, to be with the other (“the others are our real journeys”<sup>1431</sup>). The meaning here is as follows: sharing is giving room for the other. The place of this practice is the community.

#### 4.2.5.4. *A cleavage*

From what has been discussed so far about faith according to de Certeau, it seems that faith should be able to cope with the challenge of this present time, which is the focus of this subsection. De Certeau associates a problem with discourse and identifies it as a cleavage that occurs between what is said, but is not real, and what is lived, but can no longer be said.<sup>1432</sup> De Certeau illustrates this problem with the story of Job, which exposes the emptiness of knowledge: what is said is good, but what is its relation to my situation?<sup>1433</sup>

In the past, the church, according to de Certeau, “organised the soil,” where one had the social and cultural guarantee to live in the field of truth. Even if the identity of place, of soil, was not really a fundamental Christian experience (since the institution is only what gives social objectivity to the faith), it was in this soil that people discovered the possibilities and the necessity of their actions. But now, according to de Certeau, like a great ruin from which stones

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<sup>1428</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 27.

<sup>1429</sup> “[...] relationship is the law, in the life of the group as well as in the experience of faith.” Ibid., 27.

<sup>1430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1432</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 454.

<sup>1433</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 55.

are taken to build other buildings, Christianity has become for societies a treasure trove of vocabulary, symbols, signs, and other practices. Each one uses it in one's own way, without the ecclesiastical authority being able to manage its distribution or define its meaning value as it sees fit. Society relies on this to construct religious subjects in the big media theatre or to create a convincing and shared discourse on "values."<sup>1434</sup>

For a long time people assumed that the reserves of belief were limitless. All one had to do was to create islands of rationality in the ocean of credulity, isolate and secure the fragile conquests made by critical thinking. The rest, considered inexhaustible, was supposed to be transportable toward other objects and other ends, just as waterfalls are harnessed by hydroelectric plants.<sup>1435</sup>

De Certeau convincingly describes the processes of dismantling and the use of religious "stones" for other purposes, which leads to a situation where "believing is being exhausted." "Or at least," he notes, "it takes refuge in the areas of the media and leisure activities. It goes on vacation; but even then it does not cease to be an object captured and processed by advertising, commerce, and fashion."<sup>1436</sup> In other words, religious 'values' feed discourses that want to force people to act according to their will. The reason why de Certeau is so interested in analyzing the composition of belief is related to the issue that "people want to produce it artificially."<sup>1437</sup> However, in doing this, through the transportation of "the energy of belief by moving it about,"<sup>1438</sup> they leave aside the essential, unusable axis of faith, which is "an invisible alterity hidden behind signs," on which faith rests.<sup>1439</sup>

What follows is that even if exhausted, with beliefs "scattered in every direction,"<sup>1440</sup> seemingly having nothing to do with 'real' (what the discourse, pressed by Christian 'values', points to), the act of faith will continue journeys toward the alterity. Faith makes room for the presence of the human being, for their existence. This is a condition for departure gestures, for the ability of taking risk, which, according de Certeau, characterizes the religious person.<sup>1441</sup> Gestures of departure, which together with a community of sharing comprise religious life, do not need stable soil. They can happen even in the situation of cleavage. Or, perhaps, returning

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<sup>1434</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>1435</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 178.

<sup>1436</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>1437</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>1438</sup> "What was not transportable, or not yet transported, into the new areas of progress appeared as 'superstition'; what could be used by the reigning order was accorded the status of a 'conviction.'" Ibid., 178-179.

<sup>1439</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>1440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1441</sup> "A religious person, like a poet who struggles and plays with words out of necessity, takes risks." De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 25.

to a place of sharing, they can even give birth to new signs – words and new adequate expressions – for the community of believers.<sup>1442</sup>

### *Summary*

The focus on practice as an art of doing is an integral feature of all de Certeau's research. In formulating an alternative theory of practice in relation to Bourdieu and Foucault, the author drew on the insights of Mauss, Jousse, and Merleau-Ponty. However, de Certeau's interests go beyond traditional or normative practices, which were more typical of the authors discussed in the previous chapters. De Certeau lived in situation, which he identified as the disintegration of "total" institutions, the autonomization of secular practices, and itineraries of meaning. According to Maigret, de Certeau saw socio-political problems within the broader issue of a structurally secular world. He exposed that contemporary societies are characterized by an individualism that is hostile to norms, constantly seeking meaning in the various spaces open to behaviors and thoughts.<sup>1443</sup> He observed the movement of people with sympathy and trust, capturing their creativity in a space that is becoming increasingly homogeneous due to the expansion of technocratic rationality.

De Certeau's foresight, inherent in his complex approach outlined above, helped him to formulate a very clear position on the issue of transformative power. Transformation, according to de Certeau, is a creative practice of resistance to disciplinary realities, an act of resistance to stasis and fixation. In other words, modes of subjectivization in the modern world are inseparable from emancipation, which in turn is related to kinesthetic appropriation.

Not surprisingly, not only de Certeau's definition of culture, but also his approach to religious life is based on agency. Thus, as with other cultural practices, the significance of religious practices depends on the extent to which they have space for free human movement, for different kinds of reflection, creativity, wonder. In other words, it depends on how much room there is for otherness, both in terms of the quality of existence and in terms of the multiplicity of different people.

An act of faith, in de Certeau's view, must not become universally legible. It has no other motivation than the existential necessity. The act of faith is characterized by the risk of leaving, of not attaching oneself to the trace of existence, and by the activity of sharing. De

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<sup>1442</sup> As Frijhoff writes, in Certeau's view, the church as an institution "is a practical framework for action and a discursive utopia, but also a community that must continually reinvent itself in new forms of loyalty; it is a community of concrete believers who forge their own world of faith." Frijhoff, "Michel de Certeau," 87.

<sup>1443</sup> Maigret, "Les trois héritages," 525.



Certeau's ideas not only provide a basis for not associating dechristianization with the disappearance of faith, but also for grasping the manifestations of contemporary faith.

### **4.3. The Transformative Power of Movement and its Significance for Church Life**

In the previous chapters, in search of the traces of the dialogue between Mauss and Merleau-Ponty, I have worked my way through the very vibrant tradition of French thinkers. These are Mauss's direct disciples or indirect followers, who shaped their approach to phenomena by paying attention to movement. In stressing the significance of Merleau-Ponty, I have drawn attention to the importance of the ideas of this stream for philosophy, which in turn has had a major influence on contemporary theology in the French context. The theologians Chauvet and de Certeau, introduced in the first sections of this chapter, have developed the ideas of their predecessors into a liturgical context and developed methodologies for research of cultural practices in the contemporary world.

In line with the main question and purpose of this research, this final part of the chapter will apply the ideas of Mauss, Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, Bourdieu, and Merleau-Ponty on the role of movement in the life of the faithful specifically to the Christian tradition and ecclesial life, where the insights of the theologians Chauvet and de Certeau – who have already applied the ideas of their predecessors to the ecclesial context – will help to orient my reflections without avoiding the problems of the contemporary ecclesial situation.

It will be recalled that most of the authors examined in the previous chapters were more interested in religious life, that is, in the phenomena specific to the different religious traditions. In this part of the chapter, I will relate their thoughts to the Christian tradition and show how their philosophical ideas can enrich the theme of the transforming power of movement applied to the context of church life. When I refer to church life or the life of Christian communities, I refer to the communal practices and phenomena common to all traditional branches of Christianity. Although I am speaking about specifically Christian ecclesial issues, I will mostly use de Certeau's term 'faith', with the same intention as the author to shift the focus away from the institutional heritage to the actual movement of the faithful. This will allow the question to be raised about the essence of faith and its role in contemporary society.

In order to achieve the goal of showing how the philosophical insights on movement can be applied to the context of church life, I will begin with a brief summary of the main themes contributed by the seven authors, which relates to both the theme of the transformative power of movement and the theme of the life of Christian communities (4.3.1.). Then I will

focus on the questions listed below, which in turn will help to see the applicability of the insights of these authors as anthropologists, philosophers,<sup>1444</sup> and theologians, to the life of church.

The first question I will answer (in 4.3.1.2.) is how ecclesial practices relate to the development of the ‘self’ and what role movement plays within it. Drawing on Mauss’s research, I will show how states of mind as well as the perception of ‘self’ depend on the specific body techniques of a given culture. Building on Mauss’s assertion that metaphysical self-understanding, possibly influenced by Christian practice, is still prevalent today, I will look at the phenomenon of metaphysical thinking, and ask what insights and solutions are offered by contemporary theologians like Chauvet and de Certeau. However, the question of the relativity of the ‘self’ and the change under the influence of physical activity is only the beginning and will be followed by a discussion of the role of movement in collective life, immediately attempting to apply the conclusions to the highly problematic current situation of the church described by de Certeau.

In the second subsection (4.3.2.) I will deal with the theme of the transforming power of movement in the context of the church’s life, in the light of contemporary issues. Starting from the more general question of why physical activity in religious practices is related to a person’s openness to the world, I will explore the potential of ecclesial practices for spiritual renewal. On the other hand, what are the dangers of an uncritical emphasis on movement in the light of de Certeau’s analysis of the contemporary situation of the church and the productivity-oriented society?

The question of the relation of physicality and spirituality will be approached from the different problematic angles. This will be followed by a discussion of the mutual and fundamental relationship between movement and faith. What is the gesture of faith per se? Finally, how is it possible to deal with faith and practice in a situation of the church where there is a gap between faith and practice?

In the third subsection (4.3.3.), I will make concrete suggestions as to how the church can benefit from the insights of the interdisciplinary dialogue represented by Mauss and Merleau-Ponty and their followers on the theme of transformative movement. What can these insights lead to in terms of changes in thinking and practice? I will conclude with a summary of why it is important to focus on the transformative power of movement. Where does the transformative power of movement lie, and how does one experience it? How can focusing on

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<sup>1444</sup> Bourdieu is sometimes described as a social philosopher.

it change the relationship to oneself, to the world, to issues of Christian morality? I will conclude the chapter by suggesting that thinking that is attentive to movement can be useful for ecumenical and even interreligious dialogue.

#### *4.3.1. The transformative power of movement and ecclesial practice*

This section presents a summary of the main themes concerning movement as addressed by the seven authors and how they relate to the theme of the transformative power of movement and the life of Christian communities. Doing so is important in identifying where their insights are irrefutable and can be used to further highlight the importance of movement in an ecclesial context. The presentation of the summary of ideas will bring to the surface the topic of the emergence of subjectivity, which will stimulate further discussion on the relationship between the perception of ‘self’, movement, and ecclesial practices.

##### *4.3.1.1. The main themes on the subject of movement*

To summarize the contribution of Mauss, Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, de Certeau, Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty, and Chauvet<sup>1445</sup> discussed in this work to the study of movement is not an easy task. For clarity, I will touch only on a few main themes, with the qualification that the highlighting of each author’s most important contribution to the study of movement may overshadow other important aspects of their research. I will present each author’s ideas one by one, referring to the summaries and answering the question posed in the introductory section about its relation to both the theme of the transformative power of movement and the theme of the life of Christian communities.

##### *4.3.1.1.1. The indivisibility of the action*

As was discussed in Chapter 1, by using the concept of *l’homme total*, Mauss opened up a new way of looking at the interaction between the human body, mind, and soul, a way that proved the inseparability of individual and collective life. Accordingly, in “Techniques of the Body,” Mauss proposes a threefold consideration of movement or action. The three elements – the social element, the psychological element, and the biological element – condition action. In addition, other factors – technical, magical, ritual – intervene in the consideration. Mauss also highlighted the inseparability of the symbolic and the practically effective. “There is no pure action,” was Mauss’s assertion. The notion of techniques of the body, as well as the

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<sup>1445</sup> In this subsection, the authors are not presented in the same order as in the previous chapters, but rather following a thematic logic.

conception of *l'homme total*, made it possible to explain this 'impurity', or in other words, to understand very complex phenomena without detaching them from their various effectiveness in social life.

Mauss derives the transformative power of movement from the phenomenon of kinesthetic feedback that takes place at the boundary between the individual and society, between the body and the world, between real life and imaginary life. Mauss saw the reactions of upliftment, laughter, and relaxation as embodied outcomes of practices with transformative potential. He therefore saw games as part of aesthetics. The transformative power of aesthetic activity is its relationship to the 'whole' – the social system in which it occurs and its relationship to other social facts. According to Mauss, every creative activity in relation to the whole is art. From this point of view, all activity that seeks a relationship with the whole is clearly transformative. An activity that is an end in itself is more open to a variety of possible symbolic connections. The more connections, the more possibilities for meaning and transformation. This is a key insight into the meaning of ecclesial practice: it must be an end in itself, and its strength lies in its plurality of symbols and meanings.

How might Mauss's insights on movement be applicable to the ecclesial context? First of all, Mauss's treatment of bodily techniques allows one to see that spiritual states and actions are not divorced from human biology, nor from tradition, history, and social context. Humanity – physical and social (which are also inseparable) – is the nourisher of spirituality, not the destroyer. The same could be said in reverse. Secondly, Mauss's point about the indistinguishability of the symbolic and the effective is very important. It reminds that ecclesial life must not be divorced from what improves people's lives, both in the broad sense and in concrete terms. This insight also opens the way for courageous change – ecclesial practices must change to remain valid or become valid once more. The third thing that Mauss's insights call for is to be attentive to the experience of the individual. The psychological element, as one of three constitutive elements of the action, is extremely important; it provides vital information for the continuity of the body's techniques, which means, for the maintenance of their effectiveness. Finally, Mauss highlighted the inseparability of individual and collective life. It has two sides; there is not one without the other. This reminds that there is no church without individual believers who, through their actions, (re)create the church. This (re)creation, the transformation of the micro-level, must be seen as positive. Focusing on whether people can be, act, express themselves is very important. Creation or recreation is happening and will happen in any case, and only a positive attitude can lead changes in a creative and building direction, rather than to a degradation of human involvement, which in turn will increasingly

empty ecclesial practices from the content that is conducive to human well-being. Focusing on tradition often avoids the domination of individuals, but on the other side, tradition only survives thanks to actors who are faithful to it, who feel and reflect on it. Accordingly, the plurality of feelings and reflections around a tradition can strengthen the field of creative action and serve as a guardian of human well-being. Attention to the experience of individuality goes hand in hand with respect for diversity.

The “total” approach to movement, the emphasis on the indivisibility of action, is related to another of Mauss’s insights, to which I will return later, the moral basis of every movement.

In conclusion, it should be noted that a critical attitude towards the scientific methods of studying practice through ‘purification’ (cutting out, isolating practice from its environment) can be found in the other authors we have studied, first in Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu, and later in de Certeau. It can be argued that all the authors studied had a similar multidisciplinary orientation towards the movement of the body as Mauss, although their methodological sophistication undoubtedly differed.

#### 4.3.1.1.2. *Movement as unity with the cosmos*

Jousse, a disciple of Mauss, goes beyond the significance of human movement in the socio-cultural world. He analyzed the gesture anthropologically, first of all as the response of *anthropos* to cosmic laws, giving it a spiritual meaning. However, this more global approach does not diminish the significance of the movement itself. For Jousse, gesture is the core of the vitality of *anthropos* in the world and the only way in which one perceives the reality of life. By introducing a universal understanding of gesture into his science of anthropology, Jousse opens the door to a harmony between theology and anthropology that is inconceivable without an emphasis on the fundamental importance of the human body and bodily actions.

In his own writings, Jousse often reflects on ecclesial practices, much of which, in order to maintain focus on movement study, I have not been able to discuss. In answering the question of how the author’s insights apply to an ecclesial context, I will therefore similarly limit the discussion to insights on movement from *The Anthropology of Gesture*.

“Indeed, this All, objective and exterior, is essentially energy. This energy is not diffuse and static, but primarily and dynamically crystallized in universal and cosmological Interactions.”<sup>1446</sup> The essential element of the Cosmos, according to Jousse, is an Action

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<sup>1446</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 46.

which acts on another Action. This he called Triphasism – the three-phase interaction of cosmological energy. Gesture, according to Jousse, is a modality of the active nature of the Cosmos, a way of participating in the cosmos, which is an action, an energy, a continuous flow. Humans are beings in constant movement.<sup>1447</sup> Through gestural Mimisme, the human being discovers the whole universe within themselves: as a microcosm that has a macrocosm and replicates the macrocosm, and perceives it through this replay, *anthropos* participates in cosmic triphasic interactions. Therefore, in order to approach the cosmos and the spiritual, humans must not distance themselves from but on the contrary, focus on the mechanics of gesture of *anthropos*, which, according to Jousse, are rhythmicity, bilateralism, and formalism. “Therefore, by the anthropological that we can approach the cosmological because it is in the Anthropos alone that the Cosmos reverberates,”<sup>1448</sup> states Jousse. Human beings have no other spiritual essence than the gesture: “The Gesture is the Human being.”<sup>1449</sup> In other words, the vitality of both individual people and spiritual traditions depends on an awareness of human beings’ connection to the cosmos through movement. What a rare insight in an ecclesial context!

According to Jousse, the mechanisms of human gesture are the source of all human knowledge and creativity. Creativity is human transformational destiny as well as existential demand. Thus, to fulfil this demand, people must avoid algebraosis, the disease of human expression that manifests itself in the symptoms of gestural degradation. Spontaneity and creativity in movement could be antidotes to this disease. Also, an acceptance of one’s own gestural human nature, which means realizing that the individual is not the primary source of her own creativity, but rather the receiver and creative re-player of cosmic and social interaction.

As it was said in Chapter 2, Jousse suggested that the whole science of anthropology should be revised, not according to the dead canon of vanished civilizations, not according to current streams of thinking, but according to Life and to the cultural traditions that are still faithful to gesture.<sup>1450</sup> The same could be said about educational and ecclesial practices. Jousse’s studies of the oral culture of Palestine could provide more detailed answers as to what it would be important to take into account in terms of the specific application of these ideas to a church context. For the purposes of this study, a few general remarks are in order:

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<sup>1447</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>1448</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>1449</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>1450</sup> Ibid., 83.

- a. The perception of God should include movement as the most important (humanly perceived) feature of human beings' relationship with God at work in the cosmos.
- b. The church's practice should help to foster this understanding. This could include the proper interpretation of biblical passages and traditions. But the primary focus should be on the practices themselves, which organize the life of the faithful according to the multiple rhythms of the body, with an emphasis on their intertwining with individual body and with the universal intelligent cosmos (whose *intus*, according to Jousse, is expressed in human gestures).
- c. The rhythms of the church's practices must be open to spontaneity and creative interventions, understood as transformative efforts to make human life in the broadest sense more comfortable, more beautiful, better.

Finally, I would contend that there is no reason why ecclesial practices (if they take into account the anthropology of the gesture) could not become a cradle for new creative impulses, which will later develop into strong human vitality-enhancing gatherings. If spirituality is understood and interpreted gesturally, the church context is no better place for it. Movement as unity with the cosmos, Jousse's key insight, can be fully discovered in the context of ecclesial practices, since these practices are in one way or another linked to the interpretation of human movement in relation to cosmic power.

#### *4.3.1.1.3. The role of movement in becoming human*

Jousse's analysis of the mechanisms of human gesture, such as bilateralism, and the overthrow of the brain's hypertrophied position (the brain was given its rightful place as the "switch" of awareness<sup>1451</sup>), are in line with Leroi-Gourhan's ideas on the role of movement in human evolution. As Leroi-Gourhan puts it, human evolution "did not begin with the brain but with the feet."<sup>1452</sup> His concept of the operational chain, which emerged in the context of technology (an area that Leroi-Gourhan fruitfully developed following Mauss), reveals the role of movement in human evolution. Just to reiterate, Leroi-Gourhan extended the approach to movement with a historical and biological dimension.

The other important contribution of Leroi-Gourhan, which is related to the theme of transformation through movement, is his insights into aesthetics and ethnic community. The transmission of gestures has shaped humanity through the evolutionary process, forming the

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<sup>1451</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>1452</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 229.

individual body together with its external extension, the social body. To put it in another way, the development of the body and the brain, is inseparable from the formation of the external memory within the ethnic group. And aesthetics, according to Leroi-Gourhan, is the intellectualization of the sensations that arise in movement. The freedom of individual expression, which Leroi-Gourhan associates with the field of aesthetics, is the source of collective practices. The development of individuality requires the collective resources of diversity. Individual creativity departs and returns to the (ethnic) community. Customs are constantly renewed creations, supplemented by innovations that are born in the face of biological challenge.

Humanity is fundamentally characterized by a symbolically organized culture in which art and religion have played an important role. Symbolically organized culture was where groups and individuals had both food and freedom to behave, and could find a balance between security and freedom. These findings in turn contributed to the continuity and renewal of society. Leroi-Gourhan sees religion and art as complementary, highly adjacent fields with slightly different proportions of individual freedom and community belonging.

In order to apply his insights in an ecclesial context, it is necessary to take into account not only Leroi-Gourhan's insights on the importance of religion for the creativity of the individual, which may be favorable to the church, but also the contemporary state of the art-religion divide, to which he draws attention. This separation was due to the technical rationalization of time and space, a process distinct from the humanization or socialization of time and space and the previously organized aesthetic and religious spheres that provided individuals with symbolic resources. These insights further deepen the understanding of the ideal closeness of relations between church practices and the spheres of culture and aesthetics. Their common goal is the nurturing of humanity by symbolically preserving and renewing the resources of the pluralism of human experience. Accordingly, the role of ecclesial practices for such a purpose must be emphasized. What practices should receive attention?

In the sphere of individual life, collective survival is founded upon renewal, explains Leroi-Gourhan, but "the individual derives his or her sense of belonging to a system from symbols flexible enough for each age group to recognize itself in its uniqueness."<sup>1453</sup> Thus, the flexibility of symbols and meanings is a condition for the expression of uniqueness of individuals and at the same time for the survival of the symbolic system.

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<sup>1453</sup> Ibid., 357.



The realm of aesthetics certainly contributes to preserving the flexibility of symbols. This is why the sensitive approach to aesthetics in church must be learned. Aesthetics is not something added to what exists on its own, but the moral “coloring”<sup>1454</sup> of things, because it expresses the individual experiencing of things. It is the sphere for transformation. In a way, aesthetics brings new radiance to the things already gone. Without this unique (personal) touch things cannot live again. It is true with church phenomena.

Another related area to religion is that of ethnic culture. A suggestion arising from Leroi-Gourhan’s research would be for the church not to compete, but rather integrate local cultural traditions in its practices (thus becoming the guardian of ethnic culture). Accordingly, trends in the church that destroy ethnically unique aesthetics should be viewed critically, with an awareness of the dangers of their levelling effect.

In summary, it can be said that attention to aesthetics, to the flexibility of symbols, and to the practices themselves (because it is not easy to reduce the practice to a strict definition) can keep church life alive and allow individuals to recognize themselves in it and bring the necessary contributions and changes to it. The aspect of ethnicity can contribute to this process. Sensory and biological (movement based) ground of aesthetics and religion must not be forgotten.

#### *4.3.1.1.4. Movement as an antidote to technocratic rationality*

De Certeau explains in detail the phenomenon that worried Leroi-Gourhan. According to the latter, in a mechanized environment, where groups of people are organized directly through technology, the symbolism of human experience is becoming more and more meaningless, as the collective practices that used to be the custodians of these symbols disappear. Drawing on Bourdieu’s work, but avoiding his methodological mistakes,<sup>1455</sup> de Certeau focuses on the new practices in which the creativity of contemporary non-creators of culture manifests. To put it differently, de Certeau shows that people do not lose their freedom and creativity, nor their collective practices, even when their environment changes radically. But to perceive this, one needs to free oneself from technologized ways of seeing. One of the antidotes of the expansion of technocratic rationality, is the focusing on the actor and their gestures, both in the pursuit of actual research and in the quest for personal freedom.

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<sup>1454</sup> I refer to Mauss’s statement, that “art serves for everything and colour everything.” Mauss, “Sociology: Its Divisions,” 46.

<sup>1455</sup> Such as “fetishization” of the habitus. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 60.

The transformative power of movement de Certeau associates with the ability to resist disciplinary networks. Transformation in his view is a creative practice of resistance, which may not have its own language or signs, to the realities of disciplining. These practices create pathways for actors in the “technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space.”<sup>1456</sup>

While de Certeau has provided many important insights into the situation of the church (to which I shall return in the next subsection), his cultural research is limited to secular consumer practices. Thus, placing de Certeau’s ideas in an ecclesial context makes it possible to follow the traces of the creative pathways of believers. This allows to draw attention to practices that take place also outside or on the margins of religious institutions. It is important to do so, especially if one takes into account the critical assessment of the situation of the church already discussed in the part of the chapter dedicated to the theologian (4.2.). If the institutions of the church no longer provide enough practices (or, enough existentially important practices) that organize people’s lives in a meaningful way, one needs to look at where that organizing actually takes place.

In other words, research needs to free itself not only from technologized ways of seeing, but also from church, institutional-centric approaches to the lives of believers. I suggest that such an approach, attentive to the real movement of people, would have a positive effect on the institutions themselves. Church institutions would be able to notice and then take more account of the real needs of the faithful.

#### *4.3.1.1.5. Movement reveals social hierarchies*

Bourdieu pointed out that the actor’s actions must be analyzed in relation to habitus in relation to the field and capital. In other words, Bourdieu added the aspect of social hierarchy to the study of movement. Through movement, the actors recognize the social structures and at the same time become aware of their place in it. Actors’ movements lead to the bodily “naturalization” of the social order. This “naturalization” is manifested in practice when people pursue their strategic goals.

Bourdieu derived transformative possibilities from the violation of the integrity of habitus and the field. The integrity of habitus and field relations is the basis for the reproduction of the social order, and their incompatibility is associated with possible change. In other words, transformative possibilities arise when there is an incompatibility between the habitus and the field, leading to innovation, crises, and structural change. However, habitus, as a product of

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<sup>1456</sup> Ibid., xviii.

the collective, operates strategically without much consciousness, out of inertia. And this partly explains why Bourdieu theoretically defends, but actually has very little faith in, the human capacity for transformation inspired by habitus.

Bourdieu's analysis of symbolic systems – religion, art, language – is also very important. Although Bourdieu attributes religion, like habitus, to the “naturalizers” of the customary or dominant order of power, as in the case of habitus, the mismatch of symbolic systems with the field can lead to changes in both the individual and society. Bourdieu's remarks on religion as a “naturalizer” of the dominant order of power are very important to take into account when bringing the scholar's insights into the ecclesial context. According to Bourdieu, the most concrete contribution of the church (and religion in general) to the preservation of the symbolic order is through the establishment of a correspondence between the cosmological hierarchy and the social or ecclesial hierarchy. A hierarchical way of thinking is imposed which “naturalizes” the relations of order, recognizing the existence of privileged points in cosmic space just as much as in political space.<sup>1457</sup>

With the contemporary situation of the church (where the church is contributing less and less to the real organization of people's daily lives, as de Certeau has shown), the use of disembodied ‘truths’ and ‘values’ for political purposes is on the rise. Bourdieu's statement, that the church “makes the political order submit to this by the mere fact of the unification of the different orders”<sup>1458</sup> is not relevant in the contemporary situation. In many cases the opposite happens – it is the political forces which make communities of believers submit to their ideological interpretations of ‘Christian values’. Unlike religious professionals, who, according to Bourdieu, had to hide their political interests (because this was the key to the symbolic efficacy they could use in the class struggle), political professionals boldly make use of their ‘Christian affiliation’, thus giving their ideas a ‘social body’ – mobilizing actors for their political agenda. The unification of the political and symbolic orders and the role of religion in it is an important topic (although I cannot devote much attention to it because of the direction of my research) that Bourdieu's insights can shed light on.

The question is whether Bourdieu's insights can lead to a vision of how churches might resist political unification and where the resources for resistance lie. Following my proposition in Chapter 2, I maintain that one can view Christian faith practices as a meta-habit and the church as a meta-agent in social space. At the beginning of this section, it was pointed out that

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<sup>1457</sup> Bourdieu, “Genesis and Structure,” 32-33.

<sup>1458</sup> Ibid.

the mismatch between habitus and field creates transformative opportunities. What does this mean for the church?

A ‘meta’ approach can help the church to understand the importance of focusing on the practice of faith, rather than identifying with ‘religious wars’ fueled by political forces. In other words, the practice of faith must examine and evaluate the dominant social order as well as political powers (not the other way around) and, if necessary, challenge them. I will make a number of further comments on this topic.

In more than one place in the New Testament, one reads that the practice of faith provides a deep, contextual understanding of what is good, in other words, helps to distinguish between right and wrong.<sup>1459</sup> In the previous chapters I introduced the concept of kinesthetic feedback, which is relevant here. Accordingly, one could talk about a meta-kinesthetic feedback that follows the actions of believers as they (as a Christian community) act in the world. Even if the prefix ‘meta’ refers to a system that symbolizes and cosmologically interprets the social order, it does not mean that the symbolization does not follow the same principles that structure the habitus and the field dependence. It is precisely the detachment of symbolization from practice that has led to the sad situation of the church today (so clearly described by de Certeau). So, in short, in order for religious symbolism to serve the betterment of human life on earth, and not to be exploited by the interests of the powerful, believers need to go back to the practices of faith.

A focus on practice will ultimately allow the church to perceive itself as an actor in the world, rather than a guardian and “naturalizer” of social order. This should lead, out of concern for the well-being of believers and all people, to the giving up of claims to be the hierarchical (both in terms of ways of thinking and structure) order of the world. By realizing itself as an actor and discovering itself in action, the church will also recognize tensions with the dominant class order, which will undoubtedly lead to changes in both church practices and social space.

Taking individual experience into account is crucial in this process. Recalling Bourdieu’s analysis of the phenomenon of the prophet, it can be assumed that faith practices can contribute to the symbolization of a previously unexpressed human experience. Prophets are individuals who find themselves in controversial situations because of their dispositions and social status. As those who have been dominated and who express the concerns of those in

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<sup>1459</sup> John 7:17, Hebrews 5:15. Michael David Coogan, et al. (eds.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2010).

similar positions of subordination, they find actions that essentially give a voice to those who did not have one before, thus enabling social transformation.

#### 4.3.1.1.6. *Mobility is not a handmaid of consciousness*

Merleau-Ponty contributes to the study of movement by formulating the mechanisms of a newly interpreted consciousness (I-body). For Merleau-Ponty, mobility is not, as he puts it, “a handmaid of consciousness,”<sup>1460</sup> for the body is not merely a receiver and transmitter of meaning. On the contrary, by moving, the body communicates with the material and meaningful world even before thinking and linguistic expression as their condition. One does not embody meaning, one does not even express it, but one acts it, one becomes it through movement, thus movement is a link with material meanings before reflection. Conversely, as Merleau-Ponty says, “it is by communicating with the world that we communicate beyond all doubt with ourselves.”<sup>1461</sup> This communication with oneself (which is communication with the world) is what Merleau-Ponty wanted to show as a new approach to human consciousness.

In addition to these not new ideas applied to a new subject, Merleau-Ponty also provided original insights into the transformative aspect of movement. Merleau-Ponty spoke of expression as transformation from within. For him, it was the concrete act of existence accepting itself and transforming its actual situation. And although Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy does not allow one to grasp any underlying cause or main agent of transformation, it does emphasize the harmonious parallelism of understanding and action as what constitutes the mechanics of a meaningful existence, namely, expression. Transformation seeks freedom. The philosopher understood freedom as freedom of expression, in which the subjective situation serves as the means of expression. Merleau-Ponty’s descriptive focus on embodied experience is linked not only to the avoidance of scientific objectivity, but also to the liberation that can only be achieved through awareness of one’s situation.

Drawing on the parallelism between action and understanding, Merleau-Ponty also reveals the role of movement in many “invisible” modes of human expression (such as faith, imagination, etc.). These ideas (which I have identified as Merleau-Ponty’s most important contribution to the study of movement<sup>1462</sup>) are worth transferring to an ecclesial context

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<sup>1460</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 161.

<sup>1461</sup> *Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>1462</sup> As I have tried to expose earlier, the interpretation of consciousness as a transformative action arising from one’s awareness of one’s situation was already present in Mauss’s approach to movement. However, the significance of bodily movement for “invisible” phenomena is an important contribution by Merleau-Ponty, filling in the gaps in Mauss’s “Technique of the Body.” As mentioned in the first chapter, Mauss’s analysis was limited to body techniques that are quite active and non-verbal.

because they express the mechanics of the dependence between religious ideas and the living body. I will look at how Merleau-Ponty articulates the mechanisms of a newly interpreted consciousness and ask how these insights can benefit the church.

Merleau-Ponty treated both the invisible (that of ideal world) and visible phenomena, as an irreducible intertwining of different spheres, stimulating transformations. Creative new ideas, words, meanings, paradigms, theories, and ways of thinking burst into the world as ways of organizing the ideal world. But their artefacts (writings, artworks, images, texts, spoken words) literally become part of the visible world and can inspire further transcendental articulations. In other words, according to Merleau-Ponty, the movement towards becoming develops through creative, culturally, and historically grounded transcending acts that themselves leave sedimentary data in the world and thus change it.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the expressions of individuals play a central role in this transformative movement because they are based on motor intentionality and involves a direct embodied relationship with the world. As discussed in Chapter 3, human subjects, through movement, engage in the flow of life and humanize the environment by adapting it to the future – distinguishing time, creating symbols to communicate with other subjects. According to Merleau-Ponty, human life is defined as the manifestation of the “interior” in the “exterior,” and consciousness is nothing more than the projection of a new environment onto the world.

Merleau-Ponty’s insights underline once again that individual experience must be given high priority in communities of faith. On the other hand, the church can make a fruitful contribution to individual expression by providing meaningful (analytical, symbolic, visionary) means. The faith community can also contribute to providing the tools that enable people to make choices and change their attitudes and thus not be constrained by the pressures of the reality of the situation, which is essential for creativity. The church, in other words, can contribute to improving the conditions for expression by providing more freedom for expression, which in turn will lead to an improvement in the human condition, to an increase in real freedom. The church’s artefacts and practices must therefore be used for this purpose and oriented towards it. In short, they must serve as inspiration for the transcending expressions of the faithful.

The theologians I have analyzed in this work would share this view. Merleau-Ponty’s insights are thus in line with the anthropological and theological ideas already discussed, that individual creativity (understood as the improvement of the conditions of life, the multiplication of freedom) is crucial not only for the survival of faith communities but also for the survival of the human species in general. Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of consciousness,

based on the parallelism between action and thought, helps us understand the nature of invisible phenomena, including faith.

#### 4.3.1.1.7. *Movement and liturgy*

Sacramental theologian Chauvet actively pursues the theme of expression. He applies Merleau-Ponty's themes of corporeality and expression to the liturgical context. Attentiveness to embodied experience is essential for the theologian. Corporeality, according to Chauvet, is the very mediation where faith takes on flesh and makes real the truth that inhabits it. The sacramentality of the Christian faith, rooted in corporeality, cannot be understood apart from the symbolic order. The theologian's understanding of the symbolic order is very similar to that of Mauss.

Chauvet reveals the depth of embodied faith (which cannot be experienced otherwise than in the matrix of the "triple body of culture, tradition and nature" [ancestral])<sup>1463</sup> through a critique of metaphysics. Awareness of one's situation is present in Chauvet's liturgical approach. Although it lacks sociological analysis, it fosters an openness of consciousness to reality and God's presence in it.

By emphasizing the fundamental law of liturgy – the practical character of activity – Chauvet asserts that liturgy primarily functions before and beneath the advent of meanings.<sup>1464</sup> Explanations, dogmatism, and moralism are seen as the poison of the rite. The behavioral nature of rituals allows them to impact subjects in their relationship with God and each other. This is because, on the one hand, the effectiveness of the liturgy, like all symbolic activity, "is never under our control; symbols, by their nature, escape us," and on the other hand, "their mode of functioning is at least partially regulable."<sup>1465</sup>

How does liturgy relate to the transformative power of movement? The transformative element of action, which in the case of technological action is aimed "at bringing a transformation of the world,"<sup>1466</sup> is directed in the liturgy towards the transformation of the subject's interpersonal relationships and relationship with God. The liturgy can be said to make it possible to transform the subject's relationship to their being in the world by transforming the relationships inherent in this being (which in turn are a reflection of the subject's relationship to being).

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<sup>1463</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 149-150.

<sup>1464</sup> *Ibid.*, 324, 326-327.

<sup>1465</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>1466</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Chauvet, the human capacity to respond uniquely and creatively to reality-as-such creates a world with all its historical and cultural diversity. I will recap how the theologian interprets this process and where the role of liturgy can be seen. His insights deepen the understanding of Leroi-Gourhan's research on the importance of the interface between the individual and the religious or ethnic community.

The human creative response to reality is neither automatic nor instinctive. It is an expression of human desire for a particular culture.<sup>1467</sup> It should be remembered that the expression, according to Chauvet, produces differentiation, which is a movement between the externality and the internality of expression (and which I have referred to in this study as kinesthetic feedback, underlining its dependence on action). It is in this differentiation that subjectivity emerges. Subjective differentiation also leads to the overproduction or re-creation of signification. One could argue that signification is carried out through expression, and its liveliness comes from differentiation.

Accordingly, liturgy can be understood as a practice of training and cultivating subjectivity. Here, the agency of individuals is freed from their purposefulness and effectiveness in the world. In an environment saturated with symbols and multiple meanings, special attention can be focused on the differentiation (or kinesthetic feedback) that 'gives birth' to the subject.<sup>1468</sup> This subject will acquire (specific to a particular culture) interpretative direction for their differentiation and will be able to contribute their unique expression to the continuity of the human world (which is always historical and cultural). Chauvet considered art to be the human expression par excellence.

The theologian wrote directly for the ecclesial context, so there is no need to specifically try to apply his insights. I will end by simply urging churches to keep in mind the important role that their practices play in the emergence of subjectivity, of expression, and hence in the continuity of people's cultural worlds.

#### *4.3.1.2. Movement and ecclesial practice in the perception of 'self'*

The summation of seven authors' insights into the transformative power of movement brought the theme of the emergence of subjectivity to the surface. In this section I will draw on Mauss's insights to address the question of how interpretations of subjectivity are related to movement and ritual practices, and what tendencies in the perception of the 'self' they produce. How contemporary theology deals with the product of the Christian church – a self-

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<sup>1467</sup> Ambrose, *The Theology*, 66.

<sup>1468</sup> In a sense, the testimonies of believers about 'new birth' have a scientific basis.



understanding with metaphysical features – will be the next question, for which I will draw on the insights of theologian Chauvet, whose sacramental theology, as it was highlighted earlier (in 4.1.), served as a remedy against metaphysical thinking. The ideas of two French Jesuits, Jousse and de Certeau, will also be applied in my considerations. I will conclude with a discussion as to how ideas about the importance of movement can be applied in finding harmonious relationship between the self and the social body in the context of the contemporary church situation.

#### 4.3.1.2.1. *Transition from moving ‘self’ to ‘moral person’*

“[...] [T]here has never existed a human being who has not been aware, not only of his body, but also at the same time of his individuality, both spiritual and physical,”<sup>1469</sup> says Mauss. In this section, drawing on Mauss and other scholars inspired by Mauss’s research, I will use the concept of ‘self’ understood as person’s awareness of a unique identity, in other words, an awareness of spiritual and physical individuality.

The differences between the terms ‘self’, ‘individual’, and ‘person’ lie in the disciplinary approach. Both ‘individual’ and ‘person’ are concepts that refer to collective representations of a phenomenon, where the term ‘individual’ is associated with human research conducted by physiologists and psychologists, and the human being as a ‘person’ is studied by sociologists and social anthropologists in the field of complex social relations. The notion of ‘self’, in Mauss’s understanding – the self-conscious unity of mind and body – is more associated with the latter field,<sup>1470</sup> which allows for attentiveness to empirical reality. However, it should be borne in mind that Mauss treated corporeality (like human psychology) as inseparable from the social factors that shape it.

Awareness of the self, of spiritual and bodily individuality, according to Mauss is a common feature of all humans. Although this perception is characterized by a different interpretation of human structure, as well as a different interpretation of the degree of distinction from the cosmos surrounding the person, which varies according to a particular culture, the view upon the person as agent is obviously implicit. Here it is worth citing Charles Taylor, who summarized in his essay “The Person,” written as a discussion with Mauss, a general philosophical consideration

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<sup>1469</sup> Marcel Mauss, “A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self,” in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed. Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3.

<sup>1470</sup> Jean S. La Fontaine, “Person and Individual: Some Anthropological Reflections,” in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (1985): 125.

that to be a person in the full sense you have to be an agent with a sense of yourself as an agent, a being which can thus make plans for your life, one who also holds values in virtue of which different such plans seem better or worse, and who is capable of choosing between them.<sup>1471</sup>

Taylor sets out the attitude towards the person as a self-interpreting animal, emphasizing the fact that activity relates to a consciousness that is understood as a transformation of the significances one lives by, whereas “an agent is a being to whom things matter.”<sup>1472</sup>

The importance of movement in triggering a reflection that follows the movement and influences its future quality (what I have called kinesthetic feedback) is evident in the sense of the perception of self. The question is, how might church practices shape this perception?

Here I would like to refer to Mauss’s study, based on the evolutionary method-based investigation “A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self.”<sup>1473</sup> In the study, Mauss draws attention to the point that the perception of self before modern times was much more related to clan and relatives (dead and alive), to the events or stages of life, to the environment, and especially to the role played in ritual drama (which was not only aesthetic but also religious – a mythological, cosmic event, social, and personal at the same time).<sup>1474</sup> Mauss revealed the transition from the notion of persona as “a man clad in a condition,” to the notion of the human “person,” understood as the true nature of the individual.<sup>1475</sup> The devaluation of the activity of individuals in the socioreligious world progressed not only because of the division of labor, but also, at least in the Western world, because of the power of the Christian church, which perceived the religious power of the “moral person.” According to Mauss, the modern conception of human being with the features of a metaphysical being is still Christian.

Thus, according to Mauss, the Christian church has somehow contributed to a change in self-perception, which has been marked by a decline in activity in the cosmic drama in physical terms. The author only mentions this, without making any cause-effect links.

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<sup>1471</sup> Charles Taylor, “The Person,” in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (1985), 257.

<sup>1472</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>1473</sup> Mauss’s essay was given as the Huxley Memorial Lecture in 1938, and first appeared under the title “Une Catégorie de l’Esprit Humain: La Notion de Personne, Celle de ‘Moi’” in *the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 68 (1938). Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (eds.), *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (1985), viii.

<sup>1474</sup> Mauss, “A Category of the Human Mind,” 8.

<sup>1475</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 17.

However, his observation encourages one to reflect on the changes that have taken place, drawing on the insights of Jousse and de Certeau on movement.

Mauss's example of the masks of religious ritual<sup>1476</sup> can serve as a vivid metaphor that also brings Jousse's ideas back into the discussion of changes in self-perception. A role in a religious drama which is "at the same time [...] cosmic, mythological, social and personal,"<sup>1477</sup> as well as their masks and colors, can be permanent or temporary. The mask conceals the actor in the sense that it marks the boundary between the cosmic social action and the personal body of the experiencer, but in no way becomes the essence of the actor. But the performance is a way of being, and the mask is the artefact which traces the activity. The essence of an actor is the performance, the gesture itself. It is quite wrong and unhealthy to think that the role (and the mask that signifies the role, helping the person to focus on the kinesthetic feedback in a specific way) is a "place of its own" (recalling de Certeau's ideas) to develop the personal view upon the world. Being part of the world is the healthy destiny of human beings. According to Jousse, the human being does not know what their essence will be, because there is no preconceived self, but a constant movement that contributes to the complexity of the world, thanks to the modulations caused by the diversity of bodies and experiences.<sup>1478</sup> Here one can hear echoes of not only Jousse's but also Van Gennep's ideas (briefly discussed in Chapter 1) about movement as an essential power of the cosmos, as well as the importance of the sanctification and re-sanctification of boundaries through ritual practice for the possibility of human and social life as well as its meaningfulness.

Thus, the metaphysical perception of the self can be imagined, in part, as just such a relation to the world, from a "place of its own" as opposed to being part of the cosmic drama. Place versus role signifies a plethora of historical social and cultural changes in which there is a pronounced decrease of the active agency of cosmic significance in self-perception.

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<sup>1476</sup> "In such societies each role was in daily life the locus of different rights, duties, titles and kinship names within the clan, and was on ceremonial occasions vividly exemplified by different masks or body paint. No general rules applied to 'roles' as such apart from the clan, nor were they thought to bear an inner conscience. A revolution then occurred in ancient Rome, when the 'role' - the 'mask' or persona - was made the locus of general rights and duties as a legal 'person' and a citizen of the state. To this more abstract 'person' was later added the notion of an inner conscience and inner life, chiefly through Christianity. And this notion of person, now bearing both a conscience and a civic identity, became the foundation of modern political, social and legal institutions." Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes eds., *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (1985), vii-viii.

<sup>1477</sup> Mauss, "A Category of the Human Mind," 8.

<sup>1478</sup> Denis Cerlet, "Marcel Jousse: à la croisée de l'anthropologie et des neurosciences, le rythme des corps," *Parcours anthropologiques* 9 (2014): 35.

Mauss deeply believed there are techniques of the body at the bottom of all mystical states,<sup>1479</sup> in other words, that one's actions form one's mental and spiritual states. The metaphysical perception of self, which, according to Mauss, is still dominant, is no exception. It is caused by specific techniques of the body, specific ways of life. (In this case, Mauss, before Foucault, saw the disciplining influence of the Christian church.)

I have already discussed earlier in the chapter what metaphysical thinking is according to Chauvet. In the next section, I will explore the alternative worldview that the theologian Chauvet and Jesuits Jousse and de Certeau can offer, which would be more conducive to the agile nature of human beings.

#### 4.3.1.2.2. *Overcoming the disease of fixation*

Chauvet (drawing on Heidegger) described the metaphysical tradition as one of “increasing forgetfulness of being” (which forgets that being is “the being the entity is,” and that the entity is “that which is”).<sup>1480</sup> Self-defense, the desire to remain intact and thus uninjured, in other words, ‘saved’ from being in the world (which is the failure of human awareness) are the possible motives for metaphysical thinking. But the openness of being is the state in which one must maintain oneself. The invisible God is a God who acts in the world, whom people as agents, can meet. One does not need to follow the techniques of the body which sustain the forgetfulness of being in order to experience encounter with God. According to Chauvet, a person build themselves by building a world that is talking to persons.<sup>1481</sup> The I – body, as the irreducible site of faith, exists only as woven, inhabited, spoken by the triple body of culture, tradition, and nature.<sup>1482</sup> (And here one sees no inconsistencies with the dialogue drawn by Leroi-Gourhan between the body and the social body as an extension of the anatomical body.<sup>1483</sup>) Thus “faith [...] cannot be lived outside the body, outside the group, outside tradition.”<sup>1484</sup> Liturgical activities are understood as the putting of self at the disposal of the Other in the world in the church's mediation,<sup>1485</sup> where the whole church is understood

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<sup>1479</sup> Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 93.

<sup>1480</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 51, 26.

<sup>1481</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>1482</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>1483</sup> The creative dialogue between matter and the actor also describes all the “doings,” in Leroi-Gourhan's opinion.

<sup>1484</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 376.

<sup>1485</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

as the “active subject of the liturgy.”<sup>1486</sup> In short, Chauvet sees liturgical practice as a cure for the metaphysical oblivion of one’s being.

However, there is a more positive explanation of metaphysics in the works of the authors examined in this study, which is not opposed to the openness of being. For Jousse, for example, the concrete reality brought to consciousness is the path and the basis for the highest metaphysics.<sup>1487</sup> In addition, he set out that there is no other way to the knowledge of metaphysical than through the modus of gesture. For Jousse, metaphysics, like intellectual abstraction, is not opposed to the concreteness of things – for him it was a gesture of extraction. Metaphysics is not to be confused with algebraosis, whose danger Jousse saw as arising when one loses one’s attachment to things, and is primarily is the disease of concretism.<sup>1488</sup>

Accordingly, focusing on the things and people as if they were static, unchanging objects, separating them or oneself from the cosmic process, is, in de Certeau’s term, a danger of fixation: “La tentation est fixation.”<sup>1489</sup> Even spiritual movements turn into spiritual “objects.” Both thinkers, Jousse and de Certeau, attach an understanding of spirituality inextricably to human life, in which movement is the anthropological basis of the unity of human being and the cosmos. According to de Certeau, faith knows where to find God, where the human question is.<sup>1490</sup> As long as one is alive, this issue does not lose its relevance, even if religious signs become inadequate. The gesture is the “living tool” that brings one closer to life itself.<sup>1491</sup> Potentially, the gesture can help to renew all spheres of life, not excluding the metaphysics. However, it is a prerequisite not to consider this living tool as one’s own property. Rather, it is a reason, a way of becoming self, whose nature is always dialogical with respect to otherness.

#### 4.3.1.3. Ecclesial practices as trainers for openness to otherness

How is the dialogical perception of self nurtured through collective practices? In this section, I return to the question of the relationship between the self-body and the social body, turning the discussion towards the role of church practices in it, without bypassing the contemporary situation of the church.

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<sup>1486</sup> Ibid., 415. Chauvet is citing Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity* (Westminster, MA: The Newman Press, 1965), 176.

<sup>1487</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 11-12.

<sup>1488</sup> Ibid., 109-111.

<sup>1489</sup> “The temptation is fixation.” De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 60.

<sup>1490</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>1491</sup> Jousse, *L’anthropologie*, 50.

Mauss revealed the role of movement in the fabric of society. He managed to do this in such a way that the emphasis on the role of movement in cultural integration did not overshadow the movement as a complex social-biological-psychological phenomenon.<sup>1492</sup> Mauss's student Leroi-Gourhan applied ideas about movement to the history of human evolution, stating that "the brain was not the cause of developments in locomotory adaptation but their beneficiary." "This is why," Leroi-Gourhan states, "locomotion will be considered here as the determining factor of biological evolution, just as [...] it will be seen as the determining factor of modern social evolution."<sup>1493</sup> In other words, human evolution, which is the result of changes in movement, firstly, was a collective process and, secondly, this social evolution is not complete but ongoing and dependent on movement, as it has been in the past and the present and will be in the future.

Leroi-Gourhan's insights into how the evolving human body has enabled memory and language are consistent with Jousse's anthropology of gesture. The most important factors in the mechanics of human gesture, according to Jousse, are rhythmicity, bilateralism, and formalism. These factors underpin all human activity – artistic, religious, cultural, social. As one can see, the relationship between the mechanisms of the human body and collective practices is very close. Practices, the logical implications of gestures (according to Jousse), 'assemble' their logic in active communication. There is no other way and no other goal. Thus, the mediation of gestural mechanisms, as well as the communication process based on them, should not be seen as a means for the production of logic. In a sense, it is the production of life, of selves who will live in the future. Considering the importance of the mechanisms of the individual body for the functioning of the social body, and the significance of the vitality of the practices of this body<sup>1494</sup> for future human evolution, it is necessary to raise the question of the potential of ecclesiastical practices for the preservation of the process of human communication.

Both Mauss and Leroi-Gourhan emphasized the importance of individual creativity in action, whose manifestation, on the other hand, requires a sociocultural soil – tradition or ethnic affiliation. The sphere of religion is seen by Leroi-Gourhan and Mauss as associated with this soil. Seemingly, liturgical or other ecclesial practices as the embodied live participation within "the triple body of culture, tradition, and nature," could serve as inspirers of human creativity.

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<sup>1492</sup> Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction," 6.

<sup>1493</sup> Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 26.

<sup>1494</sup> De Certeau's definition of the body fits here. For him, the body is a social unit made up of networks of practices, ideologies and frames of reference, boundaries (initiations and exclusions), behaviors, etc. De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 299-300.

However, this is not an uncomplicated issue, especially if one considers the contemporary state of religious institutions. De Certeau has thoroughly analyzed the contemporary situation of both religious institutions and individual creativity. I will briefly discuss this.

In the past, the church, according to de Certeau, “organised the soil” that gave social and cultural objectivity to faith, and it was in this soil that people discovered the possibility and necessity of their actions. But now, he maintains, Christianity has become a treasure trove of vocabulary, symbols, signs, and other practices.<sup>1495</sup> It is used by everyone in their own way, the energy of faith is transferred to other spheres, and in the end religion becomes instrumentalized. The gap between belief and practice is a specific spring, the brokenness of which enables the “floating” of meanings that become pre-proportionate to all desires, which in turn are also disconnected from and excluded from any social practices.<sup>1496</sup> The unity of faith and practice is replaced by ethics and the language of commitment. Eventually, this mutates into an ideology that is available for all purposes, especially political ones (because it must make people act).<sup>1497</sup>

De Certeau’s profound insights into how religion is purposely translated into capitalist wealth<sup>1498</sup> at the same time point to the fact that the essentials of faith remain unusable. As was already noted, the site of faith is the human question, the human situation. Moreover, the thinker showed the vitality of human creativity, of people still enjoying oases suitable for humanity in a rationally techno-globalized world. De Certeau essentially argues that faith remains the guardian of resistance to the destruction of human creativity. Although de Certeau does not indicate exactly where such a belief can be found in current times, a few of his insights can provide guidance for such a search.

De Certeau argues that the distinctive feature of the slavish discourse to truth, which characterizes current faith, is that it no longer creates or empowers freedom and initiatives. It only holds and sells, also selling itself.<sup>1499</sup> This is the exact opposite to faith experience, which is fully involved in the questions that people have about their history and perception, and speaks the language of culture.<sup>1500</sup> Of course, the discourse of truth also uses the language of culture, but it uses it instrumentally, to turn the living language of culture into its dead mummy. A living faith rather asks the question, “What you tell me is true, but... what does it have to do

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<sup>1495</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>1496</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>1497</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>1498</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-119.

<sup>1499</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>1500</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

with my situation?,” as de Certeau sees in Job, whose faithfulness to the truth is nurtured by true faith in God.<sup>1501</sup> In other words, a living faith lives only in the human situation and culture and works to transform them into a flowering garden rather than mummify. One has no other access to the truth than through one’s life, one’s life journey that includes history, perception, language. Faith creates and empowers freedom and initiatives.

Just as the Absolute has no localization,<sup>1502</sup> so faith lacks it as well. However, faith has gestural elements that are deeply connected to both the self-body and the social body. The elements of religious life identified by de Certeau – gesture and place – both refer to people. As it was explained earlier (in 4.2.5.3.), the gesture speaks of a personal journey (the mechanics of the body are also important here), while the place speaks about the community, the communal practices of active sharing and solidary action.<sup>1503</sup> As the two elements of religious life are inseparable, the otherness and the active encounter with the other must be seen as an element of paramount importance in the cultivation of faith. No new perspective, no development is possible without departure from what is achieved, a kind of self-abandonment. Ecclesial life should therefore be seen as a set of practices which train and guard such openings towards the others. It is also a set of practices that guides an opening to the otherness of existence as a constant process of change.

#### 4.3.2. *Movement and faith*

In order to explore more deeply the relationship between movement and faith, I will embark on a rather complex journey. The questions addressed in this section relate not only to the research of movement presented in the previous chapters, but also to the challenges of contemporary church life.

As a practitioner and theoretician of movement, working in the field of Christian mission, I cannot ignore a certain tendency in the life of believers where the practice of physical activity – walking, running, dancing, and so forth – is seen as an alternative to the ecclesial practice of spiritual renewal (for example, jogging as prayer<sup>1504</sup>). This tendency reflects people’s commendable efforts to improve their lives and their knowledge of the impact of movement on this. Meanwhile, it may also reflect the inadequacy of church institutions to meet people’s needs, or perhaps a changed, much more self-centred approach to spirituality.

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<sup>1501</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>1502</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>1503</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>1504</sup> Gustavo Morello, “Nobody Prays Alone: The Practice of Prayer Among Catholics in Three Latin American Cities,” *International Journal of Latin American Religions* 5.2 (2021): 267, 276.



However, this tendency is not something found only in the Christian milieu, but extends to the wider world influenced by secularization processes.<sup>1505</sup>

So, building on the suggestion made in the last section to see ecclesial practices as trainers of opening the self to otherness, I will make a comparative assessment that will focus on the following questions related to the tendency briefly presented above. The questions as they arise from each other will help to clarify what makes the Christian faith and the physical activity it governs unique.

1. How does physical activity in general contribute to the openness of the self to otherness, that is to ego reduction? (4.3.2.1.)
2. Can physical practice itself be seen as a spiritual exercise? (4.3.2.2.)
3. How does the emphasis on the importance of physical activity for spiritual development fit with a society that promotes productivity and efficiency? And what alternative can faith communities offer? (4.3.2.3.)
4. What is the place and direction of physical activity in church practice? (4.3.2.4.)
5. What are the signs of the vitality of faith and how does it relate to creativity? (4.3.2.5.)
6. Where should we look for faith, considering the situation of the church – the gap between faith and practice? (4.3.2.6.)

In order to answer these questions, I will give a brief overview of how these issues are found and interpreted in sports research, since it is in this field that the relationship between physical practices and spirituality is mainly discussed. A comparative approach will allow to better identify common processes and raise questions about the nature of physical activity in Christian practice in terms of its purpose, its direction, its uniqueness. The ideas of de Certeau, Jousse, and Mauss will also be used to seek answers to how the interdependence of faith and bodily movement should be perceived in communities of faith. De Certeau's critical insights into the state of society and the church will be crucial in analyzing the relation of movement and faith in the contemporary world.

As for the relationship between physical activity and religious practices, this topic, as I have already mentioned, is mostly reflected in the recent increased interest in the relationship

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<sup>1505</sup> The tendency to separate spiritual practices (such as prayer) from the religious system to which they used to belong is not unique to contemporary Christianity. Eastern spiritual systems and religious traditions suffer even more from this, as they have a much greater emphasis on physical practices that may be separated from their traditional home and used for other purposes.

between religion and sports.<sup>1506</sup> Sports and religion are treated as two separate spheres, but the influence of the latter, although limited to the private lives of athletes, is increasingly visible in the scientific literature. In this context, a new account of spirituality emerges, already as a separation of the idea of spirituality from the structures of meaning that have held it for centuries, especially from the framework of official religion.<sup>1507</sup> A new narrative of spirituality is formed in opposition to an understanding of religion, and the main distinguishing features, according to Simon Robinson, are the transcendence of social institutions and the doctrinal constraints they impose, in favour of a personal search for a meaningful life.<sup>1508</sup> However, while there is a lack of theological reflection in this area, there are theologians who present an alternative theological narrative on the subject<sup>1509</sup> and oppose the presentation of the Christian faith as too narrow for the aspirations of modern people.

Thus, when I use the term ‘spirituality’, I will have this discussion in mind, but I will not use the term only in the new sense that refers to detachment of spirituality from a religious institution. When discussing specifically Christian ecclesiastical issues, I will use de Certeau’s term ‘faith’. By using this concept, de Certeau also wanted to divert attention from institutional heritage, but he did not question the need of the institution of the church in general. His aim was to draw attention to the real life of the faithful, to which an institutionally centered approach often remains indifferent.

#### 4.3.2.1. *Physical activity and ego reduction*

It is in the area of sports and spirituality that one can find discussions about the relationship between physical activity and human openness to the world. David Hugh Kendall Brown in his article “Seeking Spirituality Through Physicality in Schools: Learning from ‘Eastern Movement Forms’”<sup>1510</sup> has drawn attention to the role of physical practice itself in

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<sup>1506</sup> A review of scientific literature can be found in Young-Eun Noh and Syazana Shahdan, “A Systematic Review of Religion/Spirituality and Sport: A Psychological Perspective,” *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 46 (2020): article 101603. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1469029219300615> [accessed 20 September 2023]; Nick J. Watson and Mark Nesti, “The Role of Spirituality in Sport Psychology Consulting: An Analysis and Integrative Review of Literature,” *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 17.3 (2005): 228-239. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10413200591010102> [accessed 20 September 2023].

<sup>1507</sup> Jim Parry, Mark Nesti, Simon Robinson and Nick Watson, *Sport and Spirituality: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2007), xiii.

<sup>1508</sup> Simon Robinson, “Spirituality: A Working Definition,” in *Sport and Spirituality* (2007), 34. In his articles, Ivo Jirásek actively contrasts religiosity with spirituality and proposes “the non-religious concept of spirituality”. Ivo Jirásek, “Verticality as Non-Religious Spirituality,” *Implicit Religion* 16.2 (2013): 194; Ivo Jirásek, “Religion, Spirituality, and Sport: From Religio Athletae toward Spiritus Athletae,” *Quest* 67.3 (2015): 290-299.

<sup>1509</sup> Jim Parry, et al., *Sport and Spirituality: An Introduction* (2007), 2, 59, 59-115.

<sup>1510</sup> David Hugh Kendall Brown, “Seeking Spirituality through Physicality in Schools: Learning from ‘Eastern Movement Forms’,” *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 18.1 (2013): 30-45.

developing spirituality. He brings insights into how practices such as martial arts contribute to the mastery (diminishing) of the ego, which is a key to greater openness to others and the world:

[...] [T]he construction of self, as a discrete, separate entity in the world, gives rise to ego and emotion which colour our view of the ‘really real’ world, thereby limiting our potential for spiritual growth otherwise available through connecting more fully with what we ‘really’ are, our environment and other sentient beings. Ego, in particular, gives rise to a fear for the self in confronting failure, harm, ageing and death thereby preventing action/living ‘in the moment’.<sup>1511</sup>

The author explains that the confrontation with death reveals the ego – that part of one that grasps and holds on, that tries to crystallize the flow of life and divide it into separate entities. Fear is the cause of this attitude, and death brings forth this fear. When one faces death, one can look at fear and deal with it.<sup>1512</sup>

Combining these ideas with the ideas about kinesthetic feedback from Chapter 1, it can be said that ego is the kinesthetic feedback covered by emotions of fear of death, and because of this fear (as it happens in situations when one feels the pain<sup>1513</sup>) ego dominates, obscuring the view of the whole, becoming a substitute for it. Such kinesthetic feedbacks turns the actor’s actions in the direction of self-preservation, which means an exaggerated focus on what is happening to one, on one’s thoughts and sensations. The whole world starts to be seen from this position of insecurity. Self-centeredness as the dominant mode of kinesthetic feedback promotes a relevant to itself physical posture in relation to the ongoing movement processes in the world. The whole event of life is experienced as a danger that confirms a preconceived, dominant fear. The ego deals with it as if this derives from “the place of its own,”<sup>1514</sup> like a host, and deals with it sometimes as it would with an enemy.

It cannot be said that Christianity does not have its own ways of dealing with this fear of death, generating ego. In a sense, Christianity takes a positive approach to death, stressing that human existence should not be taken for granted, which leads to a relationship of gratitude with the other. Openness to existence called for by the philosophers and theologians examined in this work, especially Merleau-Ponty, Chauvet, and de Certeau, has an aspect of facing death. Mortality is the essence of being human. Faith that dwells in the human question is inseparable from the question of death. However, the fundamental difference between Christian religious or liturgical practices and sports, such as martial arts, lies in the degree of activity (measured

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<sup>1511</sup> Ibid., 37. Brown is citing Peter Payne, *Martial Arts: The Spiritual Dimension* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), 30.

<sup>1512</sup> Ibid. Especially, the quotation from Payne.

<sup>1513</sup> Olivier Clément, “Life in the Body,” *The Ecumenical Review* 33.2 (1981): 130.

<sup>1514</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 36.

by the actor's activity in practice) of the way by which the ego and the emotions associated with fear are transcended in order to experience what is beyond.<sup>1515</sup>

Through physical practices,<sup>1516</sup> Brown notes, people are encouraged "to recognise/feel/realise" their ego and emotional states when they arise, and once they are recognized, they can be encouraged to dissociate from them.<sup>1517</sup> Why are forms of physical movement so necessary for de-identification practices? According to the practitioners cited by Brown, it is because physical practice helps to achieve such awareness not just "in our heads. The transformation has to involve the whole person – 'It has to be our flesh, our bones, ourself.'"<sup>1518</sup>

Another way of saying this is that physical practice, with its physical demands, in a way frees the actor from the habit of acting according to the dictates of the ego, creating perhaps a stronger, new, more relevantly felt kinesthetic feedback, in which the ego itself is made possible for evaluation. The very directness of the physical activity experience can enhance the novelty of kinesthetic feedback.

The mechanics of this renewal is as follows. As mentioned in the introduction, attention to the direct experience of movement involves a focus on interoceptive, proprioceptive, exteroceptive, and kinesthetic experiences.<sup>1519</sup> Concentration on the internal bodily sensation, the perception of internal elements of the body (interoception), on the bodily sense of position and orientation (proprioception), on the sensation of movement (kinesthesia), on the perception of external environmental factors (exteroception), on the spatiality of the body (to which interoceptive and exteroceptive processes lead), already reduces the focus on the ego as a separate element of the universe. And with constant training, such attentiveness develops a habit. If one remembers Merleau-Ponty's ideas, habit frees the intellect.<sup>1520</sup> In the constantly repeated direct practice of movement, the freed intellect, which has to focus on movement and the experience of it, will be directed to the consolidation and signification of the person's state. Thanks to the focus on interoception, proprioception, kinesthesia, exteroception, the movement will improve, but also the person's 'openness' through the movement will improve as well, and

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<sup>1515</sup> A serious comparison is quite impossible given the aspiration of Christian teaching that the believer's whole life should be an offering to God, and the various expressions of this, including martyrdom.

<sup>1516</sup> Brown mainly talks about Chi Kung, Yoga, Tai Chi, Karate, Aikidō and sitting meditation.

<sup>1517</sup> Brown, "Seeking spirituality," 37-38. Brown is citing Charlotte Joko Beck, *Everyday Zen: Love and Work* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 30

<sup>1518</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>1519</sup> See footnote 10.

<sup>1520</sup> Habit, according to Merleau-Ponty, is a producer of abstract movement and the basis of a creative superstructure, habit enables the intellect to respond in a new way.

also metaphors or other ways of signifying will appear that will be associated and maintain that ‘open’ state, even after the movement practice has ended.

In Chauvet’s terms this can also be rephrased as follows: the direct experience of movement trains dedication to the authentic act of expression instead of identifying ‘self’ with a retrospective reflection that perceives the action afterwards. (The ‘metaphysical’ ego, experienced as if at a distance from the world, has to do with retrospective reflection.) In the authentic act of expression, reflection takes place, but, according to Chauvet, it has neither an external finitude nor an ulterior motive, thus it is impossible to evaluate it in the logic of cause and effect. Expression has a split – the external-internal agency of expression allows for the development of further variants, including reflection.<sup>1521</sup> But this reflection will not be distant from the expression, it will not drown expression in the retrospective, but it will feed the vitality of the expression.

In summary, the direct experience of physical practice promotes the novelty of kinetic feedback, which in turn contributes to changing of the body-self. The metaphor given by Brown (in Murphy and White’s words) can serve as an example of how the new kinesthetic feedback ‘produced’ by physical practice affects old habits of self. The metaphor also talks about how they can be recognized and consciously regulated by the act of choosing “to ‘practice’ rather than ‘think about practice.’”<sup>1522</sup>

In an old religious metaphor, the act of meditation is compared to the ringing of bell, in which the afterglow of the experience is like the dying sound. It is crucial to hit the bell again (meditate) before the ringing (the afterglow) stops. By practicing at regular intervals the insight and calm of mediation are maintained and amplified. Gradually those qualities become second nature.<sup>1523</sup>

The ringing of the bells produces an afterglow, just as techniques of the body produces kinesthetic feedback (I used the metaphor of an echo in Chapter 1). What it says is that the experience of physical practice, organized in a certain way, changes the consciousness of the actor, which on its part changes the stance towards others, towards otherness, changes the way one acts in relation to others and the world. This reaffirms the insights of Chapter 1 concerning the dependence of states of consciousness on the techniques of the body. I intend to turn the question “whether/how it works” towards ecclesial practice after first examining proposals to treat physical practices as spiritual exercises.

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<sup>1521</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 91.

<sup>1522</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>1523</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 4.3.2.2. *Physical practice as spiritual exercise*

As has been shown, physical activity, particularly focusing on the direct experience of movement, is strongly associated with ego reduction. But is this the ultimate goal of the practice of faith? At this point, it would be valuable to examine the line of argument of those who say that physical practice is in itself a spiritual exercise. What would be the response to this from Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, Merleau-Ponty, Chauvet and de Certeau?

For example, Brown believes so strongly in the importance of physical movement for spirituality that he claims, “Therefore, whether partaking in Aikidō or skateboarding, as a physical practice, it can be conceived of as *spiritual* exercise.”<sup>1524</sup> The author attributes the importance of physical practices to the development of spirituality, which is not directly linked to a particular religion. As a proponent of a non-religious spirituality,<sup>1525</sup> he argues that the spiritual exercises developed by Eastern religious traditions, which sought to unite mind, body, and universe through movement in order to achieve enlightenment, can and should be used to achieve spirituality in a broader sense, meaning self-cultivating purposes. Brown quotes Ashforth and Vaidyanath to illustrate a process in which “what were once means to an end may become ends in themselves.”<sup>1526</sup> In other words, the physical practice, the means, becomes an end in itself.

These observations are, at first sight, in line with de Certeau’s approach – a call to see practices as a manifestation of people’s (residual) creativity, faith, and freedom. However, de Certeau’s gaze does not stop there and does not dismiss the question of faith as no longer relevant. Yes, the religious system and institution may no longer correspond to the original spiritual movement, the spiritual signs may no longer be adequate, but faith remains because believers refuse to identify the inadequacy of spiritual “objects” with the absence of God.<sup>1527</sup>

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<sup>1524</sup> Ibid., 34 (emphasis original).

<sup>1525</sup> The quotation below seems to sum up the arguments of proponents of non-religious spirituality, a position that is widely represented in research on sports and spirituality. Here Brown presents Wouter J. Hanegraaf’s discussion of the necessity of organized religion: “‘Spiritualities’ and ‘religions’ might be roughly characterized as the individual and institutional poles within the general domain of ‘religion’. A religion without spiritualities is impossible to imagine. But ... the reverse – a spirituality without a religion – is quite possible in principle. Spiritualities can emerge on the basis of an existing religion, but they can very well do without.” Brown, “Seeking Spirituality,” 33.

<sup>1526</sup> “The distinction here is important to reiterate, because while these activities may contain fragments of religio-spiritual allegiances to established beliefs systems (as mentioned above) in a secular context, an entire art itself or particular physical practices they contain (such as a Karate kata, Yoga asana or Tai Chi form) can and do seem to take on a spiritual significance (become sacralised) in their own right.” Ibid., 35.

<sup>1527</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 56, 61.

De Certeau's attitude towards faith is witnessed by Dosse: even if the air of faith seems obsolete, one cannot conclude that it would be better to breathe without air.<sup>1528</sup>

The anthropologists Jousse and Leroi-Gourhan, philosopher Merleau-Ponty and theologians Chauvet and de Certeau, examined in this study, have attached great importance to the human need to find coherence, unity, and a role for oneself not only in relation to the social body but also to the cosmos. Certainly, the journey of discovery of this unity is an end in itself, but it cannot be said that one or another way of travelling (even if it is extremely revealing), or a section of the journey, is already a journey itself. From the point of view of the thinkers I have examined in earlier chapters, there is no distinction between ends and means in this journey. The categories of gesture and body/flesh imply a material unity between the physical body, the external social body, and the cosmic body; it is a material unity in its essence, which is movement. This is the reason why the experience of movement can be experienced as an experience of spirituality<sup>1529</sup> (not requiring a particular religious attitude or knowledge), which is anthropological in origin. This reveals the anthropological, movement-rooted origin of spiritual states.

The question then is, what is the journey of Christian faith about and is it still necessary in the contemporary world?

#### 4.3.2.3. *The active faith and the cult of activity*

The situation of Christian religious institutions has already been discussed in the context of de Certeau's ideas. The question of faith – what it is and where to look for it – was also touched upon. What remains to be discovered is what the role of ecclesial practices is in a society focused on personal spiritual development, often through physical practices, and what are the features of active faith.

I want to stress that I am not in any way skeptical, let alone negative, about personal spiritual development efforts, emphasized by the proponents of non-religious spirituality. But I want to confront this question with the Western discourse of the production of practitioners revealed by de Certeau, with the imperative of “there's always something to do.”<sup>1530</sup> This Western discourse, which “cleans out of its streets and houses everything that is parasitic on the rationality of work,” has given birth to intolerance of unproductive action, meaninglessness,

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<sup>1528</sup> Dosse, *Michel de Certeau*, 580. Chauvet on his part argued (see 4.1.4.1.) that it is impossible to grasp faith outside the body, just as it is impossible to avoid the materiality of the church in terms of its institution, its culture, its tradition.

<sup>1529</sup> Or at least that part of religious experience associated with the gesture of departure.

<sup>1530</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 148. This discourse in a way denies death, which is relevant to the topic at hand.

and death.<sup>1531</sup> Focusing on what is visible, what brings benefits, the productivist logic implied, creates a situation where what is profoundly human remains impossible to express.

Meanwhile faith, according to de Certeau, is based on an invisible otherness hidden behind signs.<sup>1532</sup> The location of faith is the possibility of not being:

In fact, all through my life, I can ultimately only believe in my death, if “believing” designates a relation to the other that pre-cedes me and is constantly occurring. There is nothing so “other” as my death, the index of all alterity. But there is also nothing that makes clearer the place from which I can say my desire for the other; nothing that makes clearer my gratitude for being received—without having any guarantee or goods to offer—into the powerless language of my expectation of the other; nothing therefore defines more exactly than my death what speaking is.<sup>1533</sup>

De Certeau’s thoughts question the possibility of the question of death in its entirety in a productivity-oriented society. But faith seems to be an oasis in this unidimensionality. The ‘cleansing’ of spirituality from the useless waste of religious traditions can also be seen as a feature of a society that is intolerant of anything that does not increase productivity.

Jousse’s insights into the faith of Palestinian origin, which relies on the invisible and therefore approaches the gestural nature of the world in a special way and, through its oral culture, helps people to remain sensitive to their own situation (physical and cosmic), must also be recalled here. According to Jousse, the strength and uniqueness of Christianity lies in its style. Where would a focus on Christianity as a style lead? I suggest that it is faithful to Jousse’s ideas to say that it teaches one to focus on the invisible agent acting behind all visible movements; then on what is very human activity in relation to the invisible agent; and finally, on oneself, acting in this threefold unity. The purpose of Christian theology is to prevent the domination of one of the parts of life, in other words, the absolutization of the expression of truth as if it was the whole truth.<sup>1534</sup>

Apart of being an oasis for human questions, faith can be viewed as the sharing medium. At this point it is necessary to return to what has been said in the discussion of Mauss’s “The Gift.” I am referring to Mauss’s symbolic interpretation of society and his emphasis on the importance of communicative rather than instrumental actions (which can only be parasitic on the former) in it. According to Mauss, the nature of human activity is social, and human actions therefore correspond to the maintenance of social relations, which are the basis and primary

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<sup>1531</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>1532</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>1533</sup> Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>1534</sup> There can be no such thing as the whole stable truth, because even in the Trinity (which I have described from the actor’s point of view) there is an interaction marked by a communicative gesture.



purpose of one's actions. This is best expressed through voluntary acts of giving that create a sense of obligation and involve people in relations of giving, receiving, and reciprocating. In this way, members of society agree not to harm each other. Mauss described the activity of the gift relation as "eternal morality."<sup>1535</sup>

In other words, the moral roots, as well as the roots of the symbolic, without which no spirituality could be articulated, lie in the actions which maintain gift relations – in the actions of sharing. This is why, for de Certeau, that in addition to the gesture, that is, departure, the place, the "communal practice," is so important.<sup>1536</sup> These two features of religious life cannot exist without each other. It is because the "crossing a threshold, and [...] [the] holding this very gesture as a way of life" (which can be contrasted with the gesture of self-preservation, of defending oneself) can happen only "in a community-based practice."<sup>1537</sup> And it is not just about the anthropological importance of community for individual creativity (which I will touch on below). Here one approaches gesture, in Jousse's sense, as a human essence, which does not exist apart from its takeover, borrowing, and re-playing from the cosmos. The community of faith is about such awareness.

De Certeau writes,

The community is ultimately the rule of all the gestures that seem at first to threaten it [...] There's no more room here for the individualism which grants to one man alone the privilege of defining the truth by becoming the owner, the hermit or the tyrant of the group. Religious truth cannot be capitalized. It cannot [do other] than to share. It shares.<sup>1538</sup>

"Therefore, the practice of communication is the *real* place of religious life," states de Certeau. And in terms of what these practices contribute to the moral – in its "eternal sense" – dimension of actions, de Certeau, echoing Mauss, states that faith "has no reality than face-to-face, in exchange and sharing. The others are our real journeys."<sup>1539</sup>

The practice of communication, the action of sharing, the orientation towards otherness – this is how active faith can be described. While the deeply moral dimension of activity is rightly predominant, I will nevertheless offer some reflections on the relationship between ecclesial practice and physical activity.

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<sup>1535</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 89.

<sup>1536</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 26.

<sup>1537</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>1538</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1539</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 4.3.2.4. *Physical activity in ecclesial practices*

Here I approach the question about the place and direction of physical activity in church practice. In terms of the ideas highlighted in the last section, it can be said with regard to ecclesial practice that the activity of believers gives weight to the other. The moral, solidarity-based action par excellence that Mauss emphasized is paramount. The modes of acts of giving and sharing,<sup>1540</sup> as an essential feature of Christian practice, reaches to the deepest anthropological levels, to the re-play and sharing of cosmic gestures (according Jousse), or to that human resolve not to harm one another (according to Mauss), which made possible the development of the social, the symbolic, the cultural.

The qualitative aspect of action is central in the Christian practice. It is the way in which the question of ego and mortality is addressed, certainly through the act or activity itself. Christian concern for the morality of actions must therefore be seen as natural, if morality is to be understood in the most ancient sense of human solidarity.<sup>1541</sup> For example, Chauvet quotes Emmanuel Levinas, who stated that “an invisible God signifies not only an unimaginable God but also a God accessible through justice.”<sup>1542</sup> Acts of struggle for justice, like liturgical acts, can be a place of encounter with God, a place of spiritual growth. After all, liturgical practices are not purposeful in themselves, divorced from life. They are fully fledged practices that bring to life the experience of non-instrumental, non-reduced action, and the kinesthetic feedback of this life-style governed by such actions, and which the faithful will seek to maintain in other situations. For example, the line of Chauvet’s thought is as follows: the liturgical practices lead to liturgical life style, in which “everyday life becomes a ‘liturgy’ which gives glory to God.”<sup>1543</sup> “Celebrating Jesus Christ in lived experience”<sup>1544</sup> lasts all the liturgical cycle as a great sociodrama, preventing one from putting faith in the tomb of only knowing and seeing (Chauvet’s metaphor).<sup>1545</sup>

Liturgy, one must recall, like most other words which end in ‘-urgy’, means practical activity.<sup>1546</sup> Irrespective of one’s physical abilities, one is inevitably called to be, and can remain, an active participant in the liturgical sociodrama. Humans are in a way doomed to catch and replicate gestures, to coincide with cultures which sooner or later do not avoid symptoms of fixation or algebraosis. The Christian faith must therefore be imagined as an endeavor to

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<sup>1540</sup> In other words, “operations consistent to their origin.” De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 79.

<sup>1541</sup> Such embodied morality should not be confused with empty emblematic ethics. *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>1542</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 75.

<sup>1543</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.

<sup>1544</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>1545</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>1546</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

survive in a humanness that is not reducible to a productivist, rationalist logic, a humanness that gesticulates life that is not acquired from oneself, a humanness that builds relationships, including with the Invisible One, with the resources of the gifted gesture. Faith is doing, but not in the sense of what the producers of discourses want to evoke,<sup>1547</sup> but in the sense of freedom, of creativity, excitation, renewal, of “the poetic invention of things.”<sup>1548</sup>

#### 4.3.2.5. *Vitality of faith and creativity*

In writing about faith, de Certeau uses several oppositions to underline its vitality: the opposition between the spiritual object and the spiritual movement; between the spirit and the letter;<sup>1549</sup> between the past and the future. The vitality of faith is revealed in its relationship with tradition. This brings us back to the topic of the relationship between tradition (ethnic, religious) and the creativity of individuals, as already discussed. But here I will look at this relationship from a theological perspective, drawing on de Certeau’s thoughts.

In de Certeau’s reflections, faith is inseparable from existence, which is a question of finding oneself.<sup>1550</sup> I will employ the category of kinesthetic feedback to further explore this issue. Faith, as opposed to the ‘truths’ of discourses, is inseparable from experience. Time is the element of experience.<sup>1551</sup> “Without us even knowing it, our thoughts and reflexes resonate with an environment that expands and communicates more and more” with the otherness of what was before us, with the teaching we have “received” through the institutions we have “entered.” “The index of a tacit adaptation” is “the awareness of being secretly strangers, [...] an uneasiness devoid of specific symptoms.” “By the mere fact that we exist, we are already heretics in relation to the past.”<sup>1552</sup> In other words, de Certeau draws attention to kinesthetic feedback that has a comparative effect. This effect is not pleasant in the sense that it is an experience of difference, of heterogeneity, of non-assimilation. In a sense, it is a wound in the body of the past,<sup>1553</sup> in what has been done before us.<sup>1554</sup>

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<sup>1547</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 148.

<sup>1548</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 27.

<sup>1549</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>1550</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>1551</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>1552</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>1553</sup> In de Certeau’s usage, the body is a social unit made up of networks of practices, ideologies, and frames of reference, boundaries, behaviours, etc. *Ibid.*, 299-300.

<sup>1554</sup> Here one is confronted with many questions, such as where does this longing for unity come from, the illusion that the environment or the past is clear and solidly fused? There is more than one answer. First, it could be due to human evolutionary unity with the ancestors of the species – not so much genetically, but due to the long experience of infancy, when human being was in bodily dependence on them. Secondly, this is related to “external memory,” using Leroi-Gourhan’s terminology, to the forms of accumulation of cultural experience, that cannot escape processes of “drying” or “extraction” of movement, as one has learned from Jousse.

De Certeau uses the epithet of malleability to describe one's alienation from the past. The past is not malleable, it resists, but this resistance is only functional in relation to the present and the human will. Each generation "alters it, even as it conforms to it; it experiences alterity and, simultaneously, it makes it other."<sup>1555</sup> For this reason, de Certeau argues, tradition can only be dead when it remains intact, and the past is finally fixed when it no longer has a future.<sup>1556</sup> To resist the past is to have the strength to create. Another way to say it is that the effect of difference, the otherness produced by kinesthetic feedback, must be accepted as the very sign of one's existence, the sign of aliveness. This is the deepest, most abiding kinesthetic feedback of one's being in the world. It can be covered by other kinesthetic feedbacks, but this is the true sense of 'self', whose distinctiveness derives from the kinesthetic sense of the possibility of one's non-being, in relation to all that has been and is. Faith deals with this enduring 'self' and its creative capacities. De Certeau writes,

Our first duty is not to be unconscious or unhappy. We have to accept the difference, seeing it as a sign that we have to exist and that this existence does not feel guaranteed by the past. There is always some anguish (that of the "abandonments") or some illusion (that of the "fidelity") to want *to be with* the past, to support that we should "anyway," "in spite of everything," [...]<sup>1557</sup>

So, if people are alive, they are creative. None of the authors examined in this study would argue against this. Creativity is not a trait of exceptional individuals, but an unreservedly human way of being in the world. Loyalty to the past, to tradition, to ancestors, goes hand in hand with creation, free re-creation, play. Traditions and institutions that want to avoid processes of re-creation are doomed. Fixation is a temptation that leads to the absence of a future. It is the temptation of non-existence. Faith, in turn, turns towards God, who calls into being.

#### 4.3.2.6. *Faith and practice*

A final question about the relationship between movement and faith is that of how it is possible to examine faith and practice in a situation of the church which is characterized by a gap between faith and practice.

De Certeau bases the emergence of slavish discourses of truth that replace faith on the gap between faith and practice. For him, as for Chauvet, practice is important as the grounding of the human being in embodiment, a kind of domestication of one's own existence. Moreover,

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<sup>1555</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 77.

<sup>1556</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

<sup>1557</sup> *Ibid.*, 73 (emphasis original).

as is clear from Leroi-Gourhan, religious practice is linked to another existential anthropological necessity: the communal actualization of “external memory.” This last element is the focus of the discussion in this section.

Religious practices can play an important role in the spatial and social integration of people, which is one of the two basic requirements of human well-being, noted by Leroi-Gourhan. The other of the two chief imperatives for human well-being is the creative activity itself, which Leroi-Gourhan associated with the sphere of aesthetics. As art separated from religion, the contribution of individual creativity to the religious sphere diminished. Both sides suffer equally from this separation. (In general, all disciplines that have become autonomous as a result of secularization have thus become detached from the resources of creativity.) Art, which is always a practice, becomes the perfect tool to ‘embody’ the truths of discourses.<sup>1558</sup>

In short, human experience-based mediation, has given way to a greater role for institutional inertia. Technological governance takes this phenomenon to an even higher level. Individuals’ creativity that does not conform to an increasingly uniform system is marginalized. It is thus scattered in unexpected places, creating ways of survival by manipulating sometimes imposed means, as became noticed by de Certeau. The author, unlike Leroi-Gourhan, follows the movement of these creative heroes with confidence and optimism – practices persist despite the mummification of institutions. The same applies to the practices of faith.

Does this mean that one has to accept that what used to be a means on the spiritual journey has now become an end, and start looking for faith in scattered creative actions? Not necessarily. As has already been clarified, movement is never a means, because there is no movement outside the reality of symbolic relations. Even if these networks and movements, like religious endeavors, want to be driven by profit, or in de Certeau words, apostatized by commercialization,<sup>1559</sup> the human situation is different. There are always practitioners of the faith, which means, there are also communities of believers. It is only that the search needs to start with the ‘practitioners of faith’ without preconceptions about how they should look and behave. As I have stressed before, the qualitative, moral aspect of action in terms of human solidarity is fundamental to the practice of faith. It must therefore be central to the search of practitioners of faith.

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<sup>1558</sup> It is not surprising that religious organizations nowadays show a similar interest in the possibilities of art.

<sup>1559</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 118.

#### 4.3.3. *Focus on movement in ecclesial life*

What changes do insights into movement bring to reflection about ecclesial life and to church practice? In this subsection I turn to concrete suggestions for how the ideas about movement from the authors discussed earlier should be taken into account in thinking about the life of the church, and what changes in ecclesial practice this would encourage. Inevitably, my considerations will be related to the practices of Baptist churches, as my own context, but as I said in the introduction, my suggestions are general in nature and carry the possibility of being applied across Christian denominations.

##### 4.3.3.1. *Focus on movement in thinking about church life*

What difference does a focus on movement in thinking about the life of the church make? I would like to highlight three important points (or, in some cases three needed adjustments) in thinking about the life of the church that emerge from the thoughts of the authors I have studied on movement:

1. treating traditions as movements;
2. openness to otherness;
3. the importance of human (bodily) mediation.

I will begin with the suggestion that faith traditions must be understood as movements and not objects. Here the metaphor of idolatry can be fruitfully used. Chauvet, together with other theologians discussed in this study, stresses the danger of focusing on the “the written word” as “something that has been completed”<sup>1560</sup> rather than as a witness to a past spiritual movement that was itself dynamic in various ways rather than clearly static. Making movements into the stable forms is about human laziness, about saving energy, Jousse would remind. However, accepting these ‘sculptures’ as values in themselves, rather than as resources for life, creativity, and free interpretation, is the ultimate betrayal of the life that created them. Reflection on the life of the church should be sensitive to such tendencies.

Another dangerous tendency to which reflection on the ecclesial life must be attentive is intolerance of otherness. I have already discussed the defensive position of the ‘self’, which, in addition to laziness, can be another cause of the tendency towards idolatry. Intolerance of the otherness of life and of other people goes hand in hand with the denial of God’s otherness. Chauvet, for example, states, “This is precisely the process of idolatry: to attempt to blot out

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<sup>1560</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 218. Similar thoughts can be found in De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 61.

the difference between God and ourselves.”<sup>1561</sup> This attempt can take conceptual, ethical, and psychological forms, not to mention the popular position that “it is always somebody’s else’s position that is called idolatrous.”<sup>1562</sup> The absolutization of one’s own understanding, or that of one’s own group, leads to the fixation of the movement. That is why the Christian practice of communion and sharing, to which I will return, is so important – it brings the ‘self’ back into communion with others in communion with life.

Emphasizing the importance of human (bodily) mediation is essential. And not only because of the interdependence between individual creativity and a vibrant tradition or community as already discussed. Faith speaks in the name of human experience, not in the name of disembodied ‘truth’. Faith leads to awareness of one’s situation, freedom, creativity, expression, solidarity. ‘Truths’ are divisive, sow insecurity, fear, demand slavish confession and obedience. Faith comes from people; ‘truth’ needs people. Rootedness in life, in practice, in the body, can help to avoid the inadequacy of ‘truth’ pretensions. Faith, like Job’s,<sup>1563</sup> dares to tell the most solid ‘truths’: “You have nothing to do with my situation!” The concern of reflection on the ecclesial life should be to examine and distinguish ‘truths’ from faith, focusing on the experience of particular people in the present world.

#### 4.3.3.2. *Focus on movement in ecclesial practices*

After the general guidelines in the previous section on how attention to movement should adjust or redirect the perception of church life, I now move on to the practical application of the anthropological, philosophical, and theological ideas that have emerged. What changes in ecclesial practice can be prompted by ideas about movement? In addressing this, I will focus on concrete suggestions as to how church practice could be changed if one were to put into practice the insights on movement from the authors studied.

My proposal is that ecclesial practices, if they are to cultivate people’s faith, need to focus on the following (and change accordingly):

1. the qualitative, moral dimension of practice in harmony with the specific experiences of people in the immediate and wider community;
2. continuity of solidarity-building practices;
3. creativity of believers.

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<sup>1561</sup> Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 217.

<sup>1562</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-217.

<sup>1563</sup> De Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire*, 55.

As discussed in the previous sections, the practice of communion and sharing is essential. It is a practice per se that ensures that human action does not become instrumental. The moral dimension of a practice is not something that is added on to an existing practice, but a key aspect on which practices and their symbolism are modelled.

Participation in a practice where activity equals making sense (because communal sharing is the basis of all symbolic emergence) generates kinesthetic feedback that leads in a comparative way to a weighing up of other actings in the world. In other words, the practitioner will strive to bring their other actions in the world closer to this unity of action, of meaning, of moral solidarity with others.<sup>1564</sup> This is why the permanence, the continuity of such practices is so important. The metaphor of the echo<sup>1565</sup> from Chapter 1 helps us to understand this significance.

The striving for the original human action is already an inspirer of creativity. However, I would like to share a few more insights into the cultivation of creativity through ecclesial practices. First, I want to go back to the issue of developing awareness and sensitivity to one's own and others' situation. The emphasis on direct experience in practice plays an important role here.

As shown in section 4.3.2.1, authentic expression – the essence of creativity – is closely related to the direct experience of movement. It is connected with a focus on interoceptive, proprioceptive, exteroceptive, and kinesthetic experiences. Perception of social situations should also be added to this list. Bourdieu's insights are very important in this picture, as they help to avoid the “fetishization”<sup>1566</sup> of subjective experience as well as the “naturalness” and inevitability of established social norms, habits, and personal status. Without exception, all movements with meaning and purpose, even if their performance focus on bodily sensations, have a social dimension. The performance of symbolic acts par excellence in ecclesial practice can go hand in hand with an attentiveness inspired by direct interaction and an exploration as well as transformation of how people understand life and how they define their relationships.

Attention to kinesthetic feedback can be helpful in developing the above bodily and social perceptions through movement in church practice. This in turn has important

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<sup>1564</sup> Not because of the specificity of religious practice, but because of its anthropological depth.

<sup>1565</sup> Or, the methaphor of the afterglow. Brown, “Seeking Spirituality,” 40.

<sup>1566</sup> This word is related to Bourdieu's critique of such an approach to practice that ignores objective structures and incorporated structures (which, according author, both operate in every practical action). In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that philosophical and theological emphases on embodied experience need to be approached with a vision of the activation of person not in isolation from the social context, while at the same time avoiding “fall[ing] into the fetishism of social laws.” Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 41.



implications for individual creativity, understood as the potential to change a situation for the better.

Why should one focus on kinesthetic feedback? What transformations can it bring? This will be the focus of the last section, which will also provide more insights into the creativity of believers. Before engaging with those questions, I move to the discussion of the third thing that should be the focus for ecclesial practices that nurture people's faith.

#### *4.3.4. On the transformative power of movement*

The transformative power of movement – how does it work and why does it matter? After all that has been presented and analyzed in this research, the answer seems to clearly emerge that, in short, it is one's deepest connection as a human being to the cosmos and the social world, the basis of all human culture. In other words, movement is what unites all living entities, the liveliness that all share. It is the transformation itself. The authors discussed in this work have revealed how movement has transformed us into the species humans are today, how it has played a role in the emergence and functioning of the social body, with its inimitable significance for what remains and needs to be cultivated as the essential being human.

The task here is to point out how this can work in a person's experience. I intend to do this by continuing to emphasize the need to focus on kinesthetic feedback. In exploring where the transformative power of movement lies, this concept is a recurrent theme. This concept denotes a sensitive point in an individual's experience, which is directly related to their movement under specific movement conditions. This bodily response to the movement experience in the world, which has a comparative, evaluative, transformative effect on future actions, underpins the creative potential of humanity. It is at the heart of the uniqueness of each individual human, and at the same time the guarantee of the continuity of the human species. The cultural vitality of humanity depends on the contribution of individuals – on their contribution of new variants of movement, on their re-creation of gestures, in other words, on their bodily manifestations. On the other hand, a cultural environment rich in diversity is essential for such manifestations.

Church practices inevitably contribute to the cultural milieu. The question therefore arises as to what difference the focus on kinesthetic feedback makes to this. As mentioned above, since kinesthetic feedback is a phenomenon that is personally experienced, my proposals will focus on the individual experience.

First, I propose that attentiveness to kinesthetic feedback, which follow one's activity in the world, can change the way of looking at things. It helps to see them as becoming rather

than existing, evolving rather than stable. (This also applies to attitudes towards other people and relationships.) This approach encourages interaction rather than passive acceptance of the state of things and encourages active redesign. Human creativity then seems much more influential for change at different levels, in different micro- and macro ways and means.

Secondly, the focus on kinesthetic feedback has a psychological aspect, as it changes the way a person sees themselves. I am because I have become. Because I have become, I can become again. This underlines the importance of present choices, the importance of what one does, not just what one has done or what has happened. Without denying that past events have a huge impact on the way one feels, focusing on the kinesthetic feedback of the present acting undoubtedly brings new colors to one's sense of self.<sup>1567</sup> This opens up the possibility of looking at the future as something that depends on human creativity, but at the same time draws attention to the many other factors involved. A more complex focus avoids excessive self-centredness,<sup>1568</sup> which in turn frees up action.

Thirdly, a focus on kinesthetic feedback changes the way one looks at moral issues, such as sin, for example. Sin is not to be understood as the content of the person's essence, but as that which contaminates the transparency of gestures and makes communication with the Gesture (or God) impossible. This approach restores the evangelical hierarchy of sins, dominated by pride, human hubris, and insensitivity to one's neighbor, as well as a lack of concern for the restoration of justice. Certainly, sinful actions have a social and psychological motivation, but this must also be seen and corrected through the perspective of movement.

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<sup>1567</sup> The advantages of focusing on the direct movement experience have been described in 4.3.2.1.

<sup>1568</sup> The interpretation of phenomena through the concept of kinesthetic feedbacks, which implies action-derived thinking that is inherent to the actor's situation, can be applied in many fields. In addition to psychology, this interpretation can be useful in many other disciplines working for human well-being, such as addiction treatment practices. I will explain with brief examples. Why is it that when you are ill you do not feel like doing the usual bodily routines, such as drinking coffee, or eating, where there is the 'disappearance' of appetite in general? Is this not related to the kinesthetic feedbacks – a sense of self in other, sick body circumstances (compared with the 'normal')? Meanwhile, young children remain normally active (due to their focus on movement) when they are not seriously ill (unlike adults, who already 'know' how to fixate on changes in their sense of well-being when ill). Another example could be the influence of sexual pleasure on pain relief. All this raises the question of the possibility of treating addictions and chronic pain through movement practices that can generate a 'covering' kinesthetic feedback.

The focus on kinesthetic feedback can be useful in analyzing and interpreting a particular person's experiences and feelings in the world. For example, how much attention is paid to how the dislike of this or that is related to the environment in which these things were introduced to people or to the way people were taught them? After all, kinesthetic feedback is a reaction to a set of circumstances, both geographical and social. Trying to untangle them methodically, with respect for collaborative human openness and with attentiveness to his or her informative kinesthetic feedback, can be a very productive path to empowerment.

When analyzing kinesthetic feedback, it is useful to bear in mind Bourdieu's insight that taste or lifestyle is a naturalized habitus that can act as a censor and mask its own inconsistency. Merleau-Ponty's insights about habit, and its role for the birth of spontaneous or new ways of acting, are also extremely important and can be productively applied to the analysis of person's experience.

Humanness itself, especially with regard to the body mechanics and the culture created by gesture described by Jousse, is in no way linked to sin. On the contrary, the denial of bodily mechanics leads directly to the denial of the human situation, and then to illusion and hubris.

#### *4.3.5. Movement and the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue*

Christian practices do not have an ultimate goal;<sup>1569</sup> movement, its ‘gestural’ quality, meaning its transparency in relation to the neighbor, the social body, the cosmos, is a goal in itself. Faith is human ‘being’ through awareness as an embodied being in the cosmos, is ‘being’ through the clarifying relationships with the environment, and ‘being’ through creative actions in communion with others and the Other.

In light of this sense of being, can a ‘gestural’ view of the world be at the heart of interreligious dialogue? The ideas of the authors considered in this study do not contradict this possibility. After all, a gesture is the commonality of all, leading to the obligation to share. Human bilateral body mechanics (as described by Jousse) is sharing with every gesture. Human bodies weigh and divide the weight of life, because no one owns it, and still less no one owns the ‘truth’ about life. Humans oscillate through life, and take in as much of it as they can only do by dividing it in their own bilateral body as well as in the external social body. But not in sense of fragmenting. On the contrary, in the sense of sharing. Humans are responding beings per se and sharing is their language. Even traditions can be treated as great, balanced systems of explications of the gestural origins, the purpose of which is the possibility of sharing.

Thus faith (or, in case of other religions, spirituality) can be seen as journey with the outcome of the clarification of the channels of gesture. And this journey is undertaken by means of the resources of gesture and brings one into closer proximity with life.

A ‘gestural’ view of the world can become the basis for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue if the various denominations and religions take into account the importance of movement. The Christian churches have a major step to take in this direction. The good news is that the theoretical prerequisites for this are certainly there.

#### *Summary*

The final part of the fourth chapter was devoted to applying the insights of Mauss, Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, de Certeau, Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty and Chauvet on the

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<sup>1569</sup> Compare this with Eastern spiritual practices, where the path to enlightenment is through movement. Since the concept of spiritual enlightenment has already been used, the phenomenon can also be interpreted as an incredibly special form of kinesthetic feedback!

transformative power of movement to the context of the church broadly understood. I began this part by summarizing what was most important about movement as revealed by each of the seven authors, where they saw the transformative power of movement, and how the insights of each of them might be relevant to thinking about ecclesial practice.

The results of this discussion in brief can be detailed as follows:

1. Mauss's treatment of bodily techniques suggests that spiritual states and actions are inseparable not only from human biology but also from tradition, history, and social context. His thinking on the inseparability of the symbolic and the effective reminds that the life of the church cannot be divorced from that which improves people's lives, both in a broad sense and in concrete terms. The psychological element, as one of the three constituent elements of action, is of paramount importance for Mauss. In the ecclesial context, attentiveness to individual experience can provide vital information for the continuity of the techniques of the body, and hence for maintaining their effectiveness.

Mauss derived the transformative potential of movement from the phenomenon of kinesthetic feedback, which takes place at the boundary between the individual and society, between the body and the world, between real life and imaginary life. It is worthwhile for the church to take note of Mauss's remark about the openness of practice –which is an end in itself – to a variety of possible symbolic relations, which in turn multiply the possibilities of meaning and transformation. Accordingly, ecclesial practice must be an end in itself in order to be able to maintain a diversity of symbols and meanings, which means maintaining the possibility of transformation.

2. Jousse analyzed movement anthropologically, foremost as a response of *anthropos* to cosmic laws, giving it a spiritual meaning. By introducing into his science of anthropology a global understanding of gesture, Jousse opened the door to a harmony between theology and anthropology that is inconceivable without an emphasis on the fundamental importance of the human body. According to Jousse, the gestural mechanisms of *anthropos* are the source of all human knowledge and creativity. Creativity is a transformative human destiny as well as an existential need. It would be the church's responsibility to foster such an understanding, not only through the proper interpretation of biblical passages and traditions, but also through practices that organize the life of the faithful according to the multiple rhythms of the ecclesial body, emphasizing their intertwining with the individual

body and with the universal intelligent cosmos, whose inside is expressed in human gestures. Openness to spontaneity and creative interventions (understood as transformative efforts to make human life in the broadest sense more comfortable, more beautiful, better) in practices must be maintained.

3. Leroi-Gourhan extended the approach to movement with a historical and biological dimension. His main contribution is revealing the role of movement in human evolution. Another important contribution of Leroi-Gourhan, associated with the theme of transformation through movement, is his insights on aesthetics and ethnic community. The transmission of gestures has shaped humanity in the evolutionary process, forming the individual body together with its external extension, the social body. The author sees the development of the body and the brain as inseparable from the formation of external memory in the ethnic group. Humanity is fundamentally characterized by a symbolically organized culture in which art and religion play an important role. Individual creativity goes out from and comes back to the community.

Attention to aesthetics, to the flexibility of symbols and to the practices themselves can keep church life alive and allow individuals to recognize themselves in it and to make the necessary contributions and changes to it. Ethnicity can contribute to this process. The sensory and biological (movement-based) basis of aesthetics and religion must not be lost.

4. De Certeau attributes the transformative power of a movement to its ability to resist disciplinary networks. For him, transformation is a creative practice of resistance to the reality of discipline.

Placing de Certeau's ideas in an ecclesial context would call attention to practices that take place outside religious institutions, following in the footsteps of the creativity of the faithful. This is important to do, especially if one takes into account de Certeau's critical assessment of the situation of the church. If church institutions no longer provide (enough) practices that organize people's lives in a meaningful way, it is necessary to look at where this organizing actually takes place.

5. Bourdieu included the aspect of social hierarchy in his study of movement. Through movement, actors recognize social structures, understand their place in them, and through their actions, bodily "naturalize" the social order. Transformative possibilities arise when there is an incompatibility between habitus and the field, leading to innovation, crisis, and structural change.

Bourdieu attributes religion (I proposed calling it meta-habitus) to the “naturalization” of the conventional or dominant order of power. As in the case of habitus, the incompatibility of symbolic systems with the field can lead to changes in the life of both the individual and society.

Bourdieu’s insights help to avoid the “fetishization” of subjective experience and the “naturalness” and inevitability of established social norms, habits, and personal status. This leads to the idea that the performance of symbolic actions par excellence in ecclesial practice can go hand in hand with awareness, inspired by direct interaction and exploration and transformation of how people understand life and of how they define their relationships. Focus on the practice of faith can contribute to the symbolization of previously unexpressed human experience.

6. Merleau-Ponty contributes to the study of movement by formulating the mechanisms of a newly interpreted consciousness (I-body), emphasizing the parallelism between acting and thinking. Another aspect of this new approach to consciousness is communication with self, which is communication with the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, human life is defined as the manifestation of the an “interior” in the “exterior,” and consciousness is nothing more than the projection of a new environment onto the world.

According to the philosopher, transformation seeks freedom. Merleau-Ponty understood freedom as freedom of expression, in which the subjective situation is the means of expression. According to him, the expressions of individuals based on motor intentionality play a central role in this transformative movement, as they have a direct embodied relationship with the world. Human subjects, in their movement, engage in the flow of life and humanize their environment by adapting it to the future – they distinguish time, create symbols in order to be able to communicate with other subjects.

Drawing on the parallelism between action and understanding, Merleau-Ponty also revealed the role of movement in many invisible modes of human expression, including faith. The philosopher treated both invisible (of ideal world) and visible phenomena as an irreducible intertwining of different spheres that promotes transformation.

The church can contribute to improving the conditions for the expression of individuals by giving more freedom for expression, which in turn will improve the human condition and increase real freedom. Therefore, the church’s artefacts as

well as ecclesial practices must be used for this purpose and oriented towards it. In short, they must serve as a source of inspiration for the transcendent expression of the faithful.

7. Chauvet revealed the sacramental character of the Christian faith as rooted in the corporeality and showed that it cannot be understood apart from the symbolic order, which the theologian described in much the same way as Mauss. Another theme that Chauvet fruitfully developed in the liturgical context concerns Merleau-Ponty's concept of expression.

Expression, according to Chauvet, creates a differentiation, which is a movement between the externality and the internality of expression. It is in this differentiation that subjectivity appears. Subjective differentiation also leads to the overproduction or re-creation of signification. Accordingly, liturgy can be understood as a practice for the education and cultivation of subjectivity. Here, the agency of individuals is liberated from their purposiveness and efficacy in the world. In an environment saturated with symbols and multiple meanings, special attention can be paid to the differentiation that 'creates' the subject. The subject will acquire a (culture-specific) interpretative direction of their own differentiation and will be able to contribute their unique expression to the continuity of the human world, which is always historical and cultural. It would be very important for the leaders of ecclesial practice to understand and focus on the goal of nurturing human experience in a sensitive and respectful way.

The insights of most of the authors discussed here undoubtedly confirm that ecclesial practices may play an important role in the emergence of subjectivity and expression, and thus in the continuity of the human cultural world. What kind of subjectivity they can produce and how it relates to movement practices formed the next question under consideration.

The decline in the importance of active action in the cosmos in the perception of the self is the result of a series of historical social and cultural changes, as described in Mauss's "A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self." Mauss's assertion that a self-awareness of metaphysical being deriving from a Christian origin is still prevalent has led to an analysis of what metaphysical thinking is, how it relates to movement, and what solutions contemporary theologians offer.

Drawing on Chauvet's insights, I presented metaphysical self-awareness as based on self-defense, on the desire to remain intact, and hence unharmed, in other words, 'saved' from

being in the world. Moreover, the metaphysical perception of the self can be imagined as relating to the world from a 'place of its own', and opposed to taking an active part in the cosmic drama. Chauvet sees liturgical practice as a cure for the metaphysical oblivion of one's being. Chauvet understands liturgical activity as the putting of self at the disposal of the Other in the world through the mediation of the church, with the church as a whole understood as an active subject of liturgy.

Jousse in turn treats gesture as that "living tool" that brings one closer to life itself. Potentially, the gesture can help renew all areas of life. The prerequisite for this is not to consider this "living tool" as one's own property, but rather as a cause and a way of becoming 'self', the nature of which is always dialogical with respect to otherness. In short, the focus on movement and liturgical practice is presented by theologians as an opportunity to avoid too much self-centeredness, which leads to fixation and stagnation.

In terms of the collective aspect of practice, communal practices as logical implications of gestures (according to Jousse), 'assemble' their logic in active communication. Since this is their only mode and goal, the mediation of gestural mechanisms in practices, as well as the communicative process they underpin, should not be considered as a means of creating logic or 'truth'. Faith differs from the 'truth' of discourse in its creative potential – faith enables freedom and initiatives. Like the Absolute, faith has no location, according to Jousse. However, faith has gestural elements that are intimately connected both to the self-body and to the social body. This intimacy is not accessible in any other way than through movement.

I further explored the relationship between ecclesial practice and physical activity, placing the question in a contemporary context: on the one hand, a social order oriented towards productivity and efficiency, on the other hand, a situation where there is a gap between faith and practice. I came to the conclusion that the qualitative aspect of action is central to Christian practice. It is the way in which the issue of ego and mortality is dealt with. The Christian concern for the morality of action must therefore be seen as natural if one understands morality in the most ancient sense of human solidarity and not confuse it with empty emblematic ethics. Accordingly, acts of the struggle for justice, like liturgical actions, can be a place of encounter with God and spiritual growth. Meanwhile, liturgical practices must be understood as fully fledged practices that enable the experience of non-instrumental, non-reduced action, and of kinesthetic feedback, connected with a life-style governed by such actions, and which the faithful will seek to maintain in other situations.

The non-instrumental treatment of movement (where movement is not reduced to a means, but also does not become an end in itself) has a lot to do with creativity and preserving



diversity. Creativity is not a trait of exceptional people, but an unreservedly human way of being in the world, on which the future of traditions and institutions depend. Accordingly, turning to concrete proposals as to how ideas about movement should be reflected in thinking about the life of the church, I have noted the following points: the formation of an attitude towards traditions as movements; the emphasis on openness to otherness; the focus on the importance of human (body) mediation. Meanwhile, ecclesial practice, in order to nurture people's faith, needs to focus on the following: the qualitative, moral dimension of the practice, which corresponds to the concrete experience of the people of the immediate and wider community; the continuity of the practice of building solidarity; and the creativity (understood as the potential to change a situation for the better) of the faithful. Focusing on kinesthetic feedback can be useful for this kind of development.

In the search for the location of the transformative power of movement, the concept of kinesthetic connection keeps coming back. The term denotes a sensitive point in a person's experience that is directly related to their movement under specific movement conditions. This bodily response to the experience of movement in the world, which has a comparative, evaluative, transformative effect on future movements, underlies the creative potential of the human being. It is the basis of the uniqueness of each individual human being and, at the same time, the guarantee of the continuity of the human species, since the cultural vitality of humanity depends on the creative contribution of individuals. On the other hand, individual creative manifestations require a cultural environment rich in diversity. The practices of the church can and must protect and foster both.

Reflecting on the importance of movement and its transformative power in the context of faith and ecclesial life can also contribute to the well-being of humanity in other ways, namely by providing a theoretical basis for ecumenical and even interreligious dialogue. The proposed 'gestural' view of the world (based on Jousse's terminology) can lead in this direction, as can the definition of active faith as the practice of communication, the action of sharing, the orientation towards otherness, suggested in this study.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this dissertation has been to explore the transformative power of movement, and, drawing on anthropological philosophical ideas of Mauss, his disciples Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, Bourdieu and philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, to show how this theme is reflected in contemporary theology, in the works of Chauvet and de Certeau, and can possibly be applied to ecclesial practice. In the conclusions I shall summarize the main themes, and identify and show my research contribution. I will then discuss the research limitations and possible questions for further research, and finally I will discuss how the research has contributed to my personal experience as a leader of a movement and dance studio close to a religious community.

The four main chapters of this thesis look at a very lively tradition of French thinkers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries for whom movement was very important. It can be presented as a fruitful dialogue between anthropology, philosophy, and theology that the French intellectual milieu provided. This dialogue is based on the work of Marcel Mauss, for whom interdisciplinarity was crucial to his pioneering research on techniques of the body. He was followed by Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty, Chauvet, and de Certeau, all of whom were either direct disciples or indirect followers of Mauss, and all of whom developed their original approach to phenomena by paying attention to movement. The crux of the thesis was engagement with Merleau-Ponty, whose importance was underlined by showing the relevance of the ideas of this current of thought to philosophy, which in turn has had a profound influence on contemporary theology.

Demonstrating Mauss's influence on Merleau-Ponty was important both to highlight the philosopher's most original ideas on movement, especially those related to invisible phenomena such as imagination and belief, and to counter the reductionist understanding and application of Merleau-Ponty's ideas on movement, namely the abstraction of movement from its tasks in the sociocultural world. Similarly, seeing the thoughts of other authors about movement in relation to Mauss, it was possible to better understand the contribution of each of them and the new aspects of movement they offered, while not losing the view of movement as an inseparable combination of three dimensions – physical, social, psychological. This latter formulation with its strong emphasis on symbolism as a linkage between these dimensions, served as an antidote to the instrumental approach to movement. Finally, the contribution of the theologians de Certeau and Chauvet is highlighted, which can be said to open a non-instrumentalist approach to movement as essential in finding and interpreting the practices of faith.

The transformative power of movement turned out to be closely linked to the symbolic treatment of movement, which all the authors, following Mauss, understood as what combines the social with the individual consciousness. The way in which each of the seven authors conceived of the transformative power of movement is answered by a detailed examination of their approach to movement: Chapter 1 is devoted to Mauss's approach to movement; Chapter 2 to an analysis of the role of movement in the work of Mauss's students Jousse, Leroi-Gourhan, and Bourdieu; Chapter 3 to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty; Chapter 4 to movement attentive theology of Chauvet and de Certeau. The last chapter then summarizes the most important insights into the transformative power of movement and applies them to the contemporary ecclesial context.

Summarizing the insights of all the authors analyzed in the thesis on the transformative power of movement (see Chapter 4) the theme of subjectivization (the emergence of subjectivity) has come to the surface. If one had to point to one phenomenon that would most closely represent transformation through movement, subjectivization would be the most accurate choice. The phenomenon can be described as related to the kinesthetic awareness of the uniqueness of the self. It is the 'outcome' of an actor's actions in their milieu. Subjectivization is named and interpreted differently by the seven authors, but the same phenomenon is referenced as the engine of all human culture and social practices, the cornerstone of the continuity of the human species. So I will first give a summarization of each author's interpretations of the phenomenon (subjectivization or kinesthetic feedback<sup>1570</sup>), which originates from movement and which can be described as the power for transformation in movement:

1. Mauss derived the transformative power of movement from the phenomenon of kinesthetic feedback, which takes place at the boundary between the individual and society, between the body and the world, between real and imaginary life.  
(1.5.)
2. Mimeme serves as kinesthetic feedback's equivalent in Jousse's writings, reflecting the mimetic nature of the gesture. Jousse's ideas about creative action as a process of removing and stripping away mimemes offer a view of kinesthetic feedback as a phenomenon that needs to be actively 'stripped away' in order to maintain its vitality and closeness to life. Conscious subjectivity is achieved by

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<sup>1570</sup> Subjectivization is not completely identical to kinesthetic feedback. The second term refers to the mechanics of subjectivization, i.e. subjectivisation can take place thanks to the kinesthetic feedback that follows each movement.

- perceiving and maintaining gestural anthropological globality. (Summary of 2.1.; 2.4.1.)
3. Leroi-Gourhan sees the transformative power of movement as related to the dialogue between individual creativity and external memory of the social body. (2.4.2.)
  4. Bourdieu's habitus can be compared to kinesthetic feedback, but habitus has a more pronounced 'public face'. Accordingly, as a product of the collective, habitus often operates strategically and without much consciousness. Although transformations can arise from a mismatch between habitus and field, the inertia of habitus and its tendency to censor mismatches contribute to the rarity of change. (2.3.2.; 2.3.3.)
  5. Merleau-Ponty associated the transformative potential of human action with a 'third dialectic' that causes the emergence of new cycles of behavior. This is the manifestation of the an 'interior' in the 'exterior', when the consciousness projects a newness into the world. The philosopher's concepts of expression, structure, time, and habit are crucial in revealing the ongoing dialectic of human action that gives birth to creativity and the transcendence of biological nature. (3.5.)
  6. According Chauvet, expression causes differentiation, which is the movement between the exteriority and interiority of expression. It is exactly where the subjectivity comes forward, manifested by the re-production or the re-making of signification. (4.1.4.2.)
  7. Subjectivization of the contemporary individual is inseparable from emancipation. The mode of 'spatialization' identified by de Certeau, which takes place through kinesthetic appropriation, can be seen as an analogy of kinesthetic feedback. (4.2.5.1.; 4.2.5.2.)

Another way to talk about the transformation of movement is through the concepts of expression and habit. This way allows one to see in more detail the gestural nature of all human activity, visible and invisible (such as abstract thinking, imagination, belief). In other words, it substantiates and explains the hypothesis of Mauss that techniques of the body underlie all mental, even mystical, states.<sup>1571</sup> The concept of expression is mostly associated with the work

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<sup>1571</sup> In other words, it substantiates and explains the hypothesis of Mauss that bodily techniques underlie all mystical states. Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 93.

of Merleau-Ponty, Chauvet, and Jousse. Although not mentioned in the summarized thoughts below, Leroi-Gourhan, Bourdieu, and de Certeau have also provided important insights into movement habits, particularly in explaining the interrelationships between individual creativity and the social body.<sup>1572</sup>

The approach towards the transformative power of movement through the concepts of expression and habit, can be summarised as follows:

1. Merleau-Ponty's expression is not the spontaneous creation of total novelty, but something in between the reproduction of what has already been expressed and the creation of new meaning.<sup>1573</sup> The fundamental paradox of expression lies in this ambiguity, the operation of expression between the transmission and the generation of meaning through movement. According to Merleau-Ponty, habit is the body's guide, which the body needs for its realization. (3.4.5.)
2. According to Jousse, habit is a "letting go" mechanism backed by deep intelligence, which allows this intelligence to delve even deeper. Thrown back into the unconscious, the habit frees the intellect to move in new directions. (2.1.2.4.)
3. Merleau-Ponty describes this intellectual re-direction as follows: it is through habit that the intellect is able to respond to new situations, to the whole rather than to the elements, to the overall meaning rather than to the stimuli. (3.5.5.)
4. Movement determines habit through the processes of sedimentation<sup>1574</sup> and depersonalization. (3.4.6.1.; 3.4.6.2.)
5. According to Chauvet, retrospective reflection, which perceives the action afterward, must not be confused with the authentic act of expression. The theologian speaks of a split – the external-internal agency of expression allows for the development of further variations, including reflection. (4.1.4.2.)
6. Expressions create a field of settled meanings. According to Merleau-Ponty, creative new ideas, words, meanings, paradigms, theories, and ways of thinking invade the world as ways of organizing the ideal world, and their artefacts (writings, artworks, images, texts, spoken words)<sup>1575</sup> literally become part of the visible and

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<sup>1572</sup> Many of these authors' insights on movement can be applied to more specific questions in the context of the church, from the cultural (Leroi-Gourhan's notions of symbiosis and tendency, which have received little attention) to the psychological (Bourdieu's insights to the saturation of habitus and its tendency to act as a censor).

<sup>1573</sup> Like human creativity in Jousse's anthropology of the gesture of mimetic origin.

<sup>1574</sup> Bourdieu speaks of the saturation of the action with a psychological heaviness resulting from the gradual perception of objective structures, which limits the creativity of the actor (2.3.4.).

<sup>1575</sup> Jousse's terms "mimogram" and "mimoplasm" describes the artefacts, at the same time underlining their gestural (mimetic) origins. (2.1.2.3.)

can inspire further transcendental articulations. In other words, transcending acts themselves leave sedimentary data in the world and thus change it. Human bodies of expression share meaning together through their ability to engage with the traces of expression, taking them into their own lives. (3.5.2.)

7. Expression reshapes the world in a way that is favorable to the point of view of the actor. The sediments of expression are meanings which inhabit the world. Gestures are the primordial expression that can be infinitely varied depending on the situation and the overall intention.

My main conclusions come from applying the anthropological, philosophical, and theological insights of my research on movement to the context of the church, that is to the ecclesial life of all traditional branches of Christianity. It is related to the assertion, based on the insights of most of the authors discussed in this dissertation, that church practices can play an important role in the emergence of subjectivity and expression and thus contribute significantly to the continuity of the human cultural world. The study did not seek to evaluate specific church practices; however, it provides guidance on how insights about movement and its transformative power should inform thinking about faith and church practices themselves:

1. When thinking about ecclesial life, it is important
  - a. to treat the artefacts and practices of tradition as witnesses of past faith movements, which was itself clearly not static, but variously dynamic;
  - b. to maintain openness to otherness in terms of other people and the newness of expression;
  - c. to be guided by the understanding of the essential importance of human (body) mediation, because faith speaks on behalf of human experience, and the continuity of the tradition depends on the creative involvement of individuals in its reformation. (4.3.3.1.)
2. Ecclesial practices, if they are to nurture people's faith, must be focused on (and changed accordingly)
  - a. the qualitative, moral dimension of practice;
  - b. the pursuit of continuity in the practice of solidarity-building;
  - c. trusting and investing in the creativity of believers. (4.3.3.2.)
3. Attention to aesthetics, the flexibility of symbols and the practices themselves can keep church life alive and allow individuals to recognize themselves in it and bring

about the necessary improvements and changes. Ethnic and cultural diversity can contribute fruitfully to this process. (Summary of 4.3.)

4. The recognition of movement (gesture) as the commonality of all, leading to the obligation to share, is proposed in this study as a possible way of ecumenical and even interreligious dialogue. (4.3.5.)

One must not forget the sensory and biological, that is movement-grounded, basis of aesthetics and religion. The same is true of the entire visible and invisible world of human culture.

After summing up the main findings and demonstrating the contribution, I will move on to acknowledge the limits of the study. My research, based on the insights of scholars attentive to movement, was limited to providing guidelines of what is important to consider when thinking about the life of the church and practicing the faith. What would be beneficial for future study is the development of specific suggestions or even working methods for how these guidelines could be taken into account when organizing church practices in certain contexts. In doing so, it would be important to consider the experiences of believers, which would lead to the understanding of their situation and the discovery of the possibilities of emancipation. The qualitative, moral dimension of practice, which churches must focus on, as emphasized in this research, is inseparable from the emancipation of individuals.

The same applies to the platform (connected with a 'gestural' worldview) proposed in the dissertation for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue (4.3.5.). There are anthropological and theological foundations for such a dialogue, but specific proposals for meeting formats, the course of conversations, and work methods in ecumenical and interreligious groups must be developed. Comparative studies of faith and spiritual writings with a focus on movement as well as their interpretations emphasizing movement are greatly needed. But the beginning of this dialogue comes from a deep awareness of unity in movement, to which all the authors I have studied have contributed.

Finally, a more comprehensive theological reinterpretation of the phenomena (mentioned in 4.3.4.) is needed, inspired by interdisciplinary dialogue related to the study of movement. In addition, the focus on kinesthetic feedback, proposed to be useful in analyzing and interpreting a particular person's experiences and feelings in the world (4.3.4., footnote 1568), also requires more specific explanations and instructions, that may be a task for future research.

Having summarized the main results of my research and shown its limits, I conclude with my own testimony as an author and dancer as to the personal benefits of the journey of movement research. The ideas about movement discussed in this thesis have been useful to me as a director of a movement and dance studio close to a religious community. They have assisted me in organizing people's education with a focus on changing or developing bodily habits, and to see movement habits in the broader perspective of life with its temporal, social, historical, and cultural aspects. A movement-based approach to aesthetics gives more freedom and confidence in choosing dance as a path to emancipation. Awareness of the proximity of art and religion and their importance for humanity also gives more motivation to continue the work. However, the most motivating and essential insight, perhaps the main conclusion of this research on movement, is that no activity can be instrumental, it always has a qualitative and moral weight and thus affects people's lives.

Writing this dissertation was very revealing for me as an author, not only in terms of its content, but also in terms of the process itself (although the two are very closely linked). Writing is a technique of the body, to use Mauss's term, that is acquired and trained and this changes one's perception of oneself. Especially if one goes to the limit of one's strength, as in facing death (as in the martial arts from 4.3.2.1.). Also, to use Merleau-Ponty's terms, writing is an expression, which leaves its sedimentary data; but most importantly, through creating habit (as it were, moulding from sedimentation) it releases new ways and possibilities of thinking. These new ways and possibilities arise not before expression, but rather through it, through the movement of writing. I am therefore testifying to the importance of consistent, purposeful, committed movement. This lesson is suitable for all fields, because everything is inseparable from movement.

So, I end writing the dissertation with both a slightly reduced ego and a changed attitude towards what is important to me as a movement researcher and practitioner. Now I see movement everywhere more than in dance, and its possibilities as endless.



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