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Author(s): Derek Robbins

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Review of Frédéric Keck: *Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Entre philosophie et anthropologie. Contradiction et participation*, CNRS Editions, Paris, 2008. ISBN: 978-2-271-06652-7. ISSN: 1248-5284.

In the acknowledgements at the end of his book, Keck discloses that ‘Cet ouvrage est issu d’un travail de thèse de doctorat en philosophie soutenu à l’université de Lille III en décembre 2003, sous la direction de Pierre Macherey ...’ and he also thanks colleagues who ‘m’ont encouragé à creuser mon sillon entre philosophie et sciences humaines’ and Claude Lévi-Strauss ‘pour les leçons d’anthropologie que j’ai reçues de lui’ (Keck, 2008, 271). Amongst the colleagues mentioned are Luc Boltanski, Benoît de l’Estoile, and Isabelle Kalinowski, all of whom were originally associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu in sociology and social anthropology. Since completing his thesis, Keck has written two books on Lévi-Strauss – *Lévi-Strauss et la pensée sauvage* (2004) and *Claude Lévi-Strauss, une introduction* (2005) – both of which suggest an interest in philosophical anthropology rather more than in the relations between philosophy and anthropology. This published text, therefore, represents a reversion to consideration of the problem which concerned Keck before his studies of Lévi-Strauss. It chooses to explore the epistemology of the social sciences through its consideration of the interdisciplinary nature of Lévy-Bruhl’s work but, in doing so, it never reflects sufficiently on the discourse within which that consideration itself is conducted. More than usual here, the conceptual apparatus brought to bear on the object of study is integrally involved with that object.

I hesitate to give too much weight to the influence of Directors of Studies of research projects, but it seems possible to suggest that Keck was ploughing his research furrow somewhere between terrain occupied by Macherey and Bourdieu, and it is, therefore, worth recollecting the juxtaposition of Macherey’s “L’analyse littéraire, tombeau des structures” (Macherey, 1966) and Bourdieu’s “Champ intellectuel et projet créateur” (Bourdieu, 1966) in the number of *Les Temps Modernes* of 1966 devoted to “Les problèmes de structuralisme”. In his contribution to volume 1 of *Lire le Capital* (Althusser, ed., 1965) entitled “A propos du processus d’exposition du ‘Capital’”, Macherey had already tried to argue that *texts* establish the terms on which they are to be read, or the categories of their meaning, and this position was fully articulated in his *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* (Macherey, 1966). Bourdieu’s view was that the position which he associated with Macherey was surreptitiously sustaining the function of philosophy as arbiter in the legitimation of the knowledge claims of competing discourses. Bourdieu argued that “... the philosophers, guardians or guarantors of the store-room, are restored to the function (to which they have always laid claim) of judges ‘of the last resort’ of scientific practice (which, by the same token, they render dispensable).” (Bourdieu, 1976, 69). In *Le métier de sociologue* (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1968) Bourdieu et al. endeavoured to show that the sociological analysis of diverse practices was not a philosophically absolute perspective but one which was the consequence of a socially contingent intellectual construction. It was part of Bourdieu’s argument to suggest that the French sociological tradition initiated by Durkheim in the 1890s had, in the work of the ‘Durkheimians’ of the 1920s, such as Bouglé, Fauconnet, and Davy, been appropriated by academic philosophy.

Keck’s book importantly contextualises the work of Lévy-Bruhl during the historical period in which, perhaps, this appropriation of Durkheim’s work took place. The careful consideration of the development of Lévy-Bruhl’s thought in its relation to German philosophy, the social philosophy of the Third Republic, and the character of French colonialism is enormously to be welcomed and it invites reflection on the parallel career of Durkheim. Keck follows the progression of Lévy-Bruhl’s thought chronologically by reference to the four key notions of ‘primitif’, ‘mentalité’, ‘participation’, and ‘expérience’ which characterised the emphasis,

respectively, of 1850-1880, 1880-1900, 1900-1920, and 1920-1940. This chronological treatment is preceded by an introduction in which Keck relates the conflict in logic between concern with ‘contradiction’ and ‘participation’ to three philosophical movements of Lévy-Bruhl’s lifetime – analytic philosophy, phenomenology, and structuralism. This is a conflict which existed from the beginning of the Western European tradition of sociology, as manifest in the articulation of a philosophy of social science in John Stuart Mill’s *A System of Logic* (1843) in opposition to that presented in the later lectures of Comte’s *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830-1842). ‘The fundamental question’, as J.A. Passmore succinctly expressed it in his account of 19th century formal logic, ‘is whether logic is concerned with inference or with implication – with the human activity of inferring or the formal relationship of implying’ (Passmore, 1970, 173). This is the issue which lies beneath the tension between the logical ‘propositions’ presented by Bourdieu and Passeron in *La Reproduction* (1970) as devices for explaining social phenomena, and the terminology of the ‘logic of practice’ or ‘soft logic’ used by Bourdieu to try to capture inferentially the motivations of social agents. Keck concludes by asking how we should, finally, situate Lévy-Bruhl, ‘dans une histoire des sciences humaines’ (Keck, 2008, 256). This may be the right final question for this book, but it is to be hoped that Keck follows the logic of his own intellectual investigations to consider more explicitly how the historical tension which he identifies and illuminates between anthropology and philosophy should be accommodated in our present research practice and related to the contemporary social contexts within which that practice occurs¹.

Althusser, L., ed. (1965) *Lire le Capital*, vol. I, Paris, François Maspero.

Bourdieu, P., (1966) “Champ intellectuel et projet créateur”, *Les Temps Modernes*, 246, 865-906.

Bourdieu, P., (1976) “La lecture de Marx, ou quelques remarques critiques à propos de ‘quelques critiques à propos de *Lire le Capital*’”, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 5-6, 65-79.

Bourdieu, P., J.-C. Chamboredon, & J.-C. Passeron (1968) *Le métier de sociologue*, Paris, Mouton-Bordas.

Bourdieu, P., & J.-C. Passeron (1970) *La reproduction. Eléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement*, Paris, Minuit.

Macherey, P., (1966) “L’analyse littéraire, tombeau des structures”, *Les Temps Modernes*, 246, 907-28.

Macherey, P., (1966) *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire*, Paris, Librairie François Maspero.

Passmore, J.A. (1970) *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, Harmondsworth, Pelican.

¹ For a continuation of this line of argument see my review of Simon Susen’s *The Foundations of the Social. Between critical Theory and Reflexive Sociology* (2008, Oxford, Bardwell Press) in the *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 2010, 10, 1, 1-8.