



HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory is an international peer-reviewed, open-access online journal. It aims to situate ethnography as the prime heuristic of anthropology, and return it to the forefront of conceptual developments in the discipline.

The journal is motivated by the need to reinstate ethnographic theorization as a potent alternative to “explanation” or “contextualization” by philosophical arguments, moves which have resulted in a loss of the discipline’s distinctive theoretical nerve. By drawing out its potential to critically engage and challenge Western cosmological assumptions and conceptual determinations, HAU aims to provide an exciting new arena for evaluating ethnography as a daring enterprise for “worlding” alien terms and forms of life, by exploiting their potential for rethinking humanity and alterity.

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HAU takes its name from Mauss’ Spirit of the Gift, an anthropological concept that derives its theoretical potential precisely from the translational inadequations and equivocations involved in comparing the incomparable.

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Endorsements

I am strongly in favor of the laudable double aims of Hau: open access (via internet) and the grounding of anthropological knowledge in and as ethnography. Especially I respect the notion that *we cannot know the novel cosmologies of others by the received philosophies of ours*.

Marshall Sahlins, Charles F. Grey Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, University of Chicago

I enthusiastically support the project of a journal such as Hau: for its accessibility of course (online and open to every reader), but even more so for the specific matter it intends to deal with: revivify anthropological theory on the basis of ethnography. The most decisive level, in my opinion, is that of our so-called “analytical concepts”, which are most of the time no more than terms of the ordinary speech, heavily loaded with ambiguities. *What are we talking about when we pretend to work on “belief”, on a “tribe”, on “witchcraft”, on “identity”?* What do the “social relationships” of people we talk about consist of exactly? *To refer them to terms which are a century old does not do the job of describing them anymore – if they ever described them at all.* The societies in which we live, and in which those we visit live in themselves, can neither be apprehended through the ancient categories, nor through the general categories of our current theories (globalisation, etc.). Deeply questioning our so-called concepts, a journal such as Hau could be a prelude to a needed renewal of the ethnographic gaze.

Jeanne Favret-Saada, Directeur d'études, Ecole Pratique des Hautes études

Hau is a journal that dares to defy the Great Man theory of intellectual history, to recognize that most ordinary human beings have just as much to say about love, time, power, and dilemmas of human existence as any paid philosophers, and that sometimes, their reflections can be decidedly more interesting. It proposes anthropologists return to the kind of conversations with which we began, except this time, as equals, and that we have a moral responsibility to make the results freely available to everyone, the world over.

David Graeber, Reader, Goldsmiths College London



I wish to second David Graeber's trenchant remarks. And would just add a comment about *delusion*. There are so many ways in which we 'know' people these days, and we seem to inform one another so quickly, the delusion is that anthropology can side-step its own project of engagement. *Anthropologists really have nothing to offer if they cannot demonstrate the difference it makes to understand relations through the relationships they are involved with.* Here Hau opens a window to theoretical reflection – and to ways of knowing that are not reducible to information-gathering. This could not be more important.

Dame Marilyn Strathern, Professor, University of Cambridge

I see anthropology as one of the major players in today's intellectual landscape, and precisely to the extent that it has decided to engage directly in a conceptually determining way with classic so-called philosophical problems, rather than being forced to express those problems unreflectively and implicitly. *What is distinctive about anthropology's engagement with its own cultural (philosophical) tradition, however, is its reliance on an epistemological relation – a cosmopolitical alliance – with what has been “constitutively” excluded from that tradition, and which may as well be located inside as outside its historical and geopolitical limits.* This excluded element is the subject-matter of what is usually called “ethnography” – the description of the myriad ways and sundry means of people's ontological self-determination: the intelligence of life. Anthropology is the effort to think through ethnography, in other words, to think with those thinking practices which are in perpetual insurrection against the colonization of the mind. So anthropological practice is ethnographic theory. *No word expresses this better than Hau, the spirit of the relation, the gift of the concept, the felicitous equivocation.*

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Professor, Museu Nacional Rio de Janeiro

Submissions

Where once anthropologists drew their theoretical terms—‘totem’, ‘taboo’, ‘hau’, ‘mana’, ‘potlatch’—from ethnography, causing thinkers from Wittgenstein to Sartre and Freud to feel the need to weigh in on the resulting debates, in recent decades, ethnographically embedded conceptualization has increasingly given way to analysis through philosophers' terms (deterritorialization, governmentality, bare life, etc.), resulting in a loss of the discipline's distinctive intellectual nerve and its grounds for contributing fruitfully to some of the most exciting cross-disciplinary debates. HAU welcomes submissions that pursue the theoretical potential of ethnographic insight, therefore bringing it back to its leading role in generating new knowledge.

Topics

The situatedness of theories; myth, magic, witchcraft and sorcery; political and economic cosmologies; truth and falsehood; aesthetics; materiality; morality; hierarchy; learning, transmission and perception; space and time; personhood and subjectivity; humour.