Sanche de Gramont

Claude Lévi-Strauss, an ethnologist who has spent more than
half his 59 years studying the behavior of North and South American
Indians tribes. The method he uses to study the social organization
of these tribes, which he calls structuralism, has flowered into
a movement with many exotic blosssoms. It is being applied indis-
criminently to areas for which Lévi-Strauss never intended it...
Structuralism, as Lévi-Strauss has used it in his ethnological
research is essentially a way of answering the question, how do
you play this game? (imagine someone who has never seen a playing
card watching a game of bridge. By observing the way the cards are
played, he should be able to reconstruct, not only the rules (or
structure) of bridge, but the xxxxxxxx composition (or structure)
of a deck of cards...

    "Structuralism," says Lévi-Strauss, "is the search for unsus-
pected harmonies. It is the discovery of a system of relations latent
inx a series of objects...."

    The variety of experience in the life of a social group seems
to defy analysis. Precisely for this reason , Lévi-Strauss chooses
to study primitive societies because they are more static than our
own. And within these societies, he picks what he calls "crystalized"
social activities like myths, kinship laws, and cooking practices.
Aside frombeing unchanging activities of unchanging societies, they
are activities at the brink of consciousness -- a member of x some
Brazzilain tribe never stops to wonder why he cooks his meat in a
certain way,/or believes a myth about a man turning into a jaguar.
This is the type of subconscious, taken-for-granted mental process
which Lévi-Strauss believes lends itself best to scientific inves-
tigation.

    For instance, he studied gift-giving in Polinesia, of which
there so many forms that most ethnologists had written them off as
haphazard. He foudn that gift giving could be broken down into four
cycles with 35 subcycles. Thus the structure of Polynesian gift-
giving is the sum of all those cycles and subcycles -- the law to which
every known example conforms. The structure is the hidden order
of human behavior.

    Lévi-Strauss derived structuralism from a school of linguistics
whose principal exponent at the present time is Roman Jakobson.x
very simply, these linguists study the relations xxxxxxxxxx
among words rather than the relation of each word to the object it
designates. It is not the meaning of the word which concerns them,

but the patterns the words form. The structure of a language
is its grammar, and through this kind of analysis, a ~~a~~linguist
should be able to discover the grammar of a language he cannot
speak, in much the same manner that cryptographer is able to
decipher a code thanks to ~~the~~ recurring patterns of digits.

In addition, the modern linguists agree that there is a
"ground plan" for all the languages in the world. Every language
on every society has the same fundamental properties. Thus,
Lévi- Strauss says, "just as the discovery of DNA and the genetic
code led biologists to use a linguistic model to explain a
natural phenomenon, I use a linguistic model to explain cultural
phenomena other than language. I try to show that the basic
structure of language observed the linguists in a great many
other activities."

30/   Meaning in social activities as well / as in language,
is thus not to be found in the designated activity but in the
way it differs from other activities. He is not concerned with
the story a myth tells, but in the way the symbols used in
one myth become converted into another set of symbols telling
thex same story. This is the grammar or the code of myths.
Once he has unraveled hundreds of South American myths using
different symbols and sensory codes (one deals with what is
heard, another with what is seen) and finds that they all
can be reduced to a ~~txxmmxgtxxxdxx~~ central idea, the discovery
of fire by man, he is also able to reduce the mechanism of the
primitive mind to a certain number of recurring types of mental
operations. In the way, the laws governing social organization,
which he discovers, whether they have to do with gift giving
or marrying off one's daughter, also illustrate the workings
of ~~xx~~ the human spirit.. ...

.. Just as there is a ground plan for language, there must be
ground plans for other forms of collective behavior.

He sees the ground plan for kinship, for instance, as a
problem in the communication of women inside a primitive society,
just as economist considers supply and demand a problem in the
communication of goods and services.. Instead of studying
marriage and kinship in a tribe as a series of personal dramas,
each the result of subjective psychological and personal factors,
he studies the objective and limited number of ways a woman can
pass, thanks to marriage customs, from her own family into another
family.

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The New York Times Magazine, January 28, 1968, pp. 2b ff.

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Osservatore Romano, Anno cxvii no. 33; 10 febr xxx '77

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5 Lawrence Gaylord Jones, "Grammatical Pxatterns in English and
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Hague--Paris: Mouton, 1967.

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7 Levi-Strauss - Jakobson, "' Les chats' de Charles Baudelaire,"
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8 Louis Millet, "L'anthropologie moderne,"
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9 Jean-Marie Le Blond, Structuralisme et sciences humaines,"
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10 Roman Jakobson, "Une microscopie du dernier spleen dans les
Fleurs xxxdu mal,"

11 Delfino Gauthier, Private notes for lecture course.

12 Robert Goedecke,"Lévi-Strauss out of his langue," Philosophy Today,
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    Goedecke writes from Central Washington State College, Ellensburg, WA
    98926

    G. begins from PRELIMINARY CONFUSIONS (73)

    ".. out of the blue, Lévi- Strauss has declared it (structuralism)
    is the science of the knowable transcendent: it is the arché not
    only of our knowledge of culture in relation to nature, but of the
    very ontos (sic!) of culture and nature itself. It is the very
    presumption of the claim that the most intimate veils of the real
    Logos has been lifted, if only slightly, that has aroused the most
    fury."

    ".. starting with the most sympathetic and ending with the anthrop-
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    Anthropogologist as Hero (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970)

19 Edmuch Leach, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Modern Masters Series, Viking
    Press, 1971

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    Anthropologist as Hero, Hayes and Hayes op cit, and "The
21 Legitimacy of Solomon," in Michael Lane, ed. Structuralism:
    a Reader (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970).

22 Rodney Needham, Structure and Sentiment, (Univ of Chicago P. 1962)
23   "Introduction and Remarks", Rethinking Kinship
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24 Stanley Diamond, In Search of the Primitive (New Brunswick NJ:
    Dutton, 1974.

↓5 Stanley Diamond, "The Myth of Structuralism," The Unconscious in
Culture (Ino Rossi, ed., Dutton, New York 1974.

↓6 Philip Pettit, The Concept of Structuralism: A Critical Analysis,
Berkley: U of California P., 1975

↓7 Edward Said. "Abecedarium Culturae," Beginnings. NY: Basic Books, 197

↓8 Hillis Miller, Introduction to Yale French Studies 1900

↓9 Northrop Frye, "The Instruments of Mental Production," The Stubborn
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↓0 Paul Ricoeur, "Structure et Hermeneutique", Esprit vol 31, 1963.

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|ab
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↓ Michael Lane, Structuralism, A Reader, op cit

77   Immanuel Kant and Paul Ricoeur have a rational view of the
nature of mind, in k which the categories do not come from exper-
ience but are ⌊78⌋ given a radical a priori fashion (Chomsky can
be squeezed into this position also). From this point of view,
it is Lévi-----Strauss who appears to be the wild relatistic
empiricist attempting to find classification and identification
and rationality in an empirical domain, when they are all
necessarily transcendent and definitory of all experience. The
concept of Bricoleur, so crucial in the introduction of From
Honey to Ashes, is meant to be the French or intermediate
answer to the basic problems of knowledge stated by Hume and Kant.
Lévi-Strauss is not an idealist, a Kantian, a Cartesian, nor an
Hegelian... He is closer to Montesquieu than to Kant or Hegel:
rational norms exist, but they are different in different
cultures, and only investigation can reveal the forms actually
developed and the symbolisms really in effect... .. when Lévi-
Strauss does his empirical anthropology on the basis of a
plurality of linguistic methods, the a priori's become linguistic
and observable, no longer rational and necessary, but obtainable
only by analytic deduction..., Kant despite his reflective
rationalism, shares with the English empiricists the aphasic
problem of accepting only metonymic utterance as valid in
social experience and natural reality. But at least Ricoeur and
the rationalists understand the questions about categories,
taxonomy, identification, differentiation posed and answered by
Lévi-Strauss, even if the two have different answers.

Opens from recent attempts to relate the split-brain phenomenon in
man to cogntive-behavioral features of interest to anthropologists
(cf. discussions of bicameral mind in Time and elsewhere)

Proceeds to a more general issue which, given the increasing move-
towards the integration of traditional anthropological approaches
with neuroscientific data, is of profound imtportane. This is the
issue of how to bridge levels of systemic organization.

Comments pp 463-479 References 479-481.

James J. Boggs, 463-4.

R. & L. see the problem of bridging systemic levels as one of cognitive
structure and employ cognitive theory to reach their first conclusion.
I see the problem of bridging systemic levels not only as one of
cogntiive structure but rather as one of the relationshíp between
theory (which is cognitive) and systemic organization....

.. In other words, the argument is that theories are a kind of cognition,
cognition is organized hierarchically. Theoretical levels are
therefore a function of cognitional structure. The process of
bridging levels is explained by subsuming it under the rules of
cognitive developmental process.

My axpproach, on the other hand, is that systemic levels and levels
of analysis (theories x referring to systemic levels) originate
in systemic organization, not in cognitive organization. General
systems theory affords the most sophisticated formulation of
systemic structure and therefore may be drawn upon for an initial
definition of the problem.

Systemic levels are often called hierarchies. Hierarchimxcal organiz-
ation exists because the laws governing the behavior of a system
at one level are different from the laws gov3rning the behavior
of its constituent units. (E g the laws governing the aggregation
protons and neutrons to form atomic nuclei are different from the
laws governing the aggregation of atoms into molecules)....

... although different systemic levels are clearly functionally
related (because them units of xx one level form the constituents

of the next higher level, and so on), the theories that refer
to adjacent levels are abstractions fromk these levels and are
not necessarily connected... This then is why theoretical
bridge principles are needed.

Paredes J. & M. Hepburn, 1976. The Split-brain and the culture-
and-cognition paradox
Current Anthropology 17: 121-27.

Split-brain: experiments on epileptics in whom the corpus
callosum, common to the two hemispheres,has been cut.

Eg ask them to reproduce shapes that they can see or that
they cannot see but can feel