WHAT IS CLAUDE LEVI-STRAUSS UP TO?

- Bernard Lonergan

The topic of my talk will be "What is Claude Levi-Strauss Up To?". It will not be directly based upon my ~~study, my exhaustive~~ study of Claude Levi-Strauss, but on pieceing together six different people who I have no doubt know him far better than I ever will.

Claude Levi-Strauss has the distinction of bringing together modern anthropology and modern lingusitic analysis. First, then, something must be said about modern anthropology. That will be my first section and in that I will be depending upon Louis Millet and an article he wrote on "L'anthropologie moderne" in Etudes, 1967, pp. 163-169. Secondly, something must be added about linguistic analysis; and in that I will be drawing on a confrere of mine at Boston College who is in the department of Romance Languages and passed on to me his summing up of structuralism, literary structuralism. Thirdly, an account must be given of the transfer of linguistic techniques to anthropological study; and in that I will be drawing on an article by Sanche de Gramont published in The New York Times Magazine. Next, of the insights that arise from this transfer; and in that I will be drawing upon Robert Goedecke of Washington State who had an article on Levi-Strauss in Philosophy Today, Spring, 1978. Finally, of Levi-Strauss's views on human science and on structure; and in that I will be drawing upon Jean-Marie Le Blond - another article in Etudes, 1967, pp. 147-162. Louis Millet was added on. And finally, I'll say,is there any other way of coming to the same sort of thing from a different approach. How do we know that Levi-Strauss is talking about something real? I can't answer that question but I can give you a clue, and that will be from Ira Progoff and especially his second important book Depth Psychology and Modern Man.

First, then, Louis Millet. In the decade, 1910-1920, knowledge of human customs took a new turn. During that period Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski (1884-1942), professor at the University of London, introduced empirical method into the analysis of cultures. He went to study on the spot, among others, the Melanesians. He showed the

originality of their culture, which forms a coherent whole, a system
of beliefs and actions. Thus, the circlet of KOULA,(which perhaps
is a Melanesian word), in which a necklace of shells received from
a different island was to be transmitted to still further islands
along a determinate route that governed these religious and gratuitous
rites. But with the circulation of ceremonial objects there were
associated trade and alliances and the like. So we have on an
empirical basis inference, study on, watching what is going on
on the spot, an account of what primitive culture is.

There is another account. In 1928 Margaret Mead published a
study on adolescence on the isle of Samoa. From it emerged the
conclusion that adolescence gave rise to a crisis, not as had been
thought, because it was psychologically natural and even tied in
with physiological needs, but because of the social situation that
does not recognize adolescence as a distinct stage intermediate between
that of the child and that of the adult; for if the transition from
the child to the adult is not marked by some rite of initiation, it
will not be apprehended concretely and so will give rise to a crisis.

In the period between the two world wars, American anthropologists
showed by cumulative observations that personality was modeled on
cultural forms, with different personalities endemic in different
cultures. The first works on linguistics, during the same period,
showed that each language is a particular system of pure differences,
a totality of signs in which it is the whole that endows with meaning
each of the parts. The standard illustration is the dictionary: any
word in the dictionary is also explained in the dictionary; it forms
a closed circle—the words alone apart from the things they are talking
about; and that is the key point to Saussure's analysis of language.
Again, to speak a language is to utter a series of sounds named
phonemes. Their number, in any given language,is a special selection
out of a vast extent of the sounds man can utter. So it is that a
child in learning its mother tongue loses the ability it previously
had to pronounce any of the sounds belonging to other languages. If you
want to learn languages learn them when you are young. George Steiner
doesn't know if his mother tongue was English, French or German and

he tried to settle the question by various startling events and
so on and found that in an emergency he would use the language of
the people he was with. As every other social structure, a linguistic
structure is a particular system differing from the other both in
its matter (sounds) and in their meaning. And so you have the Italian
expression, Traddutore, traditore (to translate is to betray).
Languages do not correspond exactly.

Man is an incomplete animal. For a man is determined by his
culture. This determination is effected by the long process of education
which transmits and gives (hands on) as natural the cultural models.

Culturalism teaches that mankind escapes biological and, in
particular, racial determinism.   The prohibition of incest is universal,
but its forms are relative and variable; it is not simply natural but
becomes cultural. Human sexuality is no more than a tendency not
differentiated by nature and so only culturally does it become functional.
One can say as much about nourishment, association, struggle, regression,
death.   These facts have biological data as their matter but their
form comes from a cultural system. It may be that such systems are
limited in number; but what counts here is that each system rests on
values and the institutions are interpretations of the values.
The primitive said, "If you married your sister, who would you go
hunting with?" As linguistic meanings, their determination comes
from interdependence with other cultural elements. It is an interpretation
given a function by the culture as a whole. A stable culture gives firm
interpretations.

But do stable cultures exist? As languages, so cultures are alive
by their variation. In the sphere of life variation gives rise to new
species.   In the sphere of human life, variation changes cultures and
gives rise to history. But species do not know one another, while
cultures interpenetrate. Cultural anthropology has drawn attention to
the relativity of values, to that source of mutual incomprehension; and
so one can account for the permanence of traditional customs under
the varnish of colonization; but the opposite fact of communication,

exchange, mutual influence is no less real. For Bergson (a Frenchman writing for Frenchmen) the closed society is a principle of explanation but never a fact in reality.

In brief, the systems of relations named cultures are in relation with one another.

This will be better understood if we take into consideration contemporary cultural psychology, especially in the United States since 1945.

The works of Linton, Kardiner, which converge with those of Karen Horney, explain the process of inculturation. A set of institutions train the child from its birth, lead him or her to adopt manners of conduct and of belief etc.; such are the primary institutions; once such conditioning has been acquired, the individual has interiorized the personality that is basic in a given type of culture. Subsequently, he will proceed to react against this basis; personal existence comes out of the past but also it has its own originality. In this fashion the basis and variations are complementary; and so culture is subject to change; it is historical.

The historical dimension will be better understood, if one adverts to the fact that the basis is not a reality that exists but an abstract construct. Its elements are statistically selected medians or means; such a selection can hardly be found to exist in any single person; hence the structure of the most elementary society reveals the coexistence of heterogeneous systems.

If a contemporary hindu ascetic or red guard were brusquely transplanted in Paris (not to be objects in a fair but to live there) they would be unable to retain their customary ways and still be regarded as normal; they would differ too much from the average Parisian; such a difference is deviance. But we also know deviants that do not come from India or China but more and more are produced by our own society. Formerly society protected itself by interning them; today, under pretexts of philanthropy which hide perhaps fear,

it tries to maintain its norms without excluding its deviants.
Relativism supports this effort.

Deviants are of different kinds. Neurotics in general are
incapable of adaptation. The exigences of the group wound them,
crush them. They turn in on themselves; try to reject certain values
and to reduce the number and the implications of the remainder; their
lives become impoverished; their relations with others diminish; they
become walled in. In contrast, think of the insurgent who is neither
unadapted or in revolt; he wants to put more life into existing values;
insurrection is always forward, it is always a moral event; it is not
the work of a solitary: it is a resurrection. Socrates, Jesus were
of their place and time, but they still call us to rise toward the
city that they would renew.

Tradition is transmission, from age to age. Centuries pass, and
nothing changes. Generations multiply in vain; each started from the
same point; and the grossness of earliest times kept persisting; the
human species was old, but man was still a child. Right up to our own
century small and isolated groups have managed to remain outside history;
their cultural system with its set rigidity _played the part of instincts.
For them culture was an absolute; it was unquestioned; how could it
change when variation was not experienced?

Cultural relativism expresses above all the surprise of the
Occidental when he witnesses the enormously different customs of
other peoples. But a primitive cannot be a relativist. His culture
consists in the lack of outside relations and of variations.

Relativism then is a historical notion. It describes history.
It ends with a new type of comparison, far more radical than ancient
chronicles. The modern mind admits the relativity of beliefs, rites,
ways of life. This is not scepticism, when the very notion of truth
is just a feature in a particular culture.

Millet qualifies this by saying that he feels that cultural
anthropology is merely a human science and more cannot be expected of it.

Next, linguistic structuralism. First of all, cultural anthropology today, in this century. Next, lingustic structuralism, structuralism simply as applied to literary objects. Structuralism is a variety in La nouvelle critique which divides along philosophic lines. It is Marxist, psychoanalytic, structuralist or formalist, existentialist, or thematic; and the thematic is explained in parenthesis as dealiing with an organized network of obsessions.

The terms: <u>structure</u>, according to Robert, the way a building is constructed; by extension, the internal relations of the parts of building from the viewpoint of architectural technique, or of plastic beauty. <u>Structuralism</u> (Petit Larousse). It is a linguistic theory that considers a language as a structured set where all the terms are defined by their mutual relations. And in that connection you can think of Hilbert's rewriting of Euclid's geometry. There are a number of theorems in Euclid that aren't proved and the reason is because you have an image before you and you use the image to give you a little more than you can get out of your axioms and definitions. And Hilbert rewrote Euclidian geometry in which the terms were defined by their relations to one another and the relations were fixed by the terms they related. So that a point need not mean something with position but without length, breadth and thickness. It could mean an ordered pair or an ordered triad or an ordered quartet of numbers; and a straight line would mean a first degree equation without any image added on and so on. It is a way of eliminating the images and consequently eliminating the fallacies that are involved in the Euclidian presentation of geometry.

Again, in <u>Collection</u>:(Papers by Bernard Lonergan, Herder and Herder, New York, 1967) there is a paper entitled "Cognitional Structure" in which all the terms are operations you can discover in your own conscious operations and the relation is the dynamism relating one operation on to the next. So the fundamental point to Saussure is precisely that - considering words in their relation to one another and apart from their relations to any object. It is a beautiful feat of abstraction.

The term, structurel; there is distinguished structurel and
structural - this is from a professor in French. Structurel: a
concrete type of organization directly perceptible in reality.
Structural: any arrangement that in human signs gives rise to meaning.
For example, "red" and "green" through their contrast mean "stop"
and "go" because of the contrast and the situation, on the roadsigns.
The function of the structuralist is to recover the rules governing
the appropriate use of signs; one reconstructs signs by placing them
in the context of their usage, their functioning; the reconstructing is
a developed understanding of the sign. And that fits in with linguistic
analysis, linguistic philosophy - the English variety. You know the
meaning of the word if you know how to use it. Your reconstructing
yields a developed understanding of the sign

Criticism of a work is a refabrication of the work not for the
sake of a copy but for the sake of understanding. There emerges a homology,
an analogy of functions, between the original and its reconstitution
(reconstruction). Hence structuralism is neither a school nor a
movement, (for structuralists differ from one another in their approach),
it is an activity, a regulated succession of mental operations (Barthes).

Saussure, a Swiss grammarian, linguist, about 1910 wrote his
Cours de linguistique generale. It was first published after his death
in 1916 and the fourth translation was in 1946. He distinguished a
horizontal axis of simultaneous objects and a vertical axis of successive
objects. The simultaneous axis is called synchronie and the vertical
axis is called diachronie, it goes through time, diachronic and synchronic
if you wish. The relevance to anthropology which studies cultures that
do not write, and so leave no history, is what you know in this connection.
If you get a synchronic approach to culture you won't be needing the
historical dimension - the elementary cultures do not change, or they
change very little.

Structuralism makes possible a notable study of races, of the
behaviour of human groups, of popular stories, of the religious myths
of other civilizations. Barthes sees its application in fashions of
dress and of cooking. Gauthier adds film, television, advertizing.

Meaning (signification) as the intentional link between a sign or word
and what it means. You know the meaning of a word when you know how to
use it, you use it to hit off the thing that it means. Besides the
relation of sign to signified, there is the codified implication of
the position of this word or sign to other words or signs. If you
change the position of a word in a sentence you can change the sentence -
within limits. (Synchronic elements are said to be syntagmatic.
Diachronic elements are said to be pradigmatic).

Critical analysis is to be conceived solely from a scientific
viewpoint. It is not to follow the traditional methods of philological
or historical investigation, or to study literary groups. The work
itself is to be the center of attention. Its production is to be
described technically. It is not to be understood on the basis of the
writer's biography, of his interpretation (inspiration), of his mind.
It is to be concerned with the "code" by which the author reveals himself
by writing. Thus, literature reverts to Aristotelian rhetoric, how do
you do it or how did he do it. There is a distinction made by some
authors between the syntagmatic figures (ellipsis, suspension, repetition,
suppression of connectives) and systematic figures of substitution
(metaphor, allegory, play on words, irony. (For Barthes, according to
Fages). The substitions use a different word to denote the object
meant. Syntagmatic figures modify the sentence structure.

The dimensions of a work are the Aristotelian:
inventio - the subject-matter
dispositio - the plan
elocutio - the style.

Structuralist criticism find in Aristotelian rhetoric the first
attempt to investigate the literary object as such, quite apart from
the author and all the rest of it, or the things he is talking about.
This approach to literature (which eliminates the biography of authors,
the philological commentaries on texts, the history of periods) reverts
by an analysis of writing (its rules of usage and of composition) to a
linguistic science that yields a real comprehension of a work or more
exactly an access to :. the intelligible in a natural object.

So that is, according to a professor of French at Boston College, what literary structuralism is. It is <u>Lanson, Gustave's L'analyse du texte</u>.

Parsing and analysis. I have an offprint of a contribution of a professor of Slavic languages at Boston College from the <u>Festschrift</u> in honor of Roman Jakobson, the big literary structuralist, and it is a study of patterns in English and Russian verse. And what he does is to write out the words or have the words printed out and build in connecting words and annotating just what the point is in putting this word in connection with that word.

Third. Structuralist Anthropology, the transferance from the pattern of structuralist linguistics to anthropology; and here I'm quoting <u>The New York Times Magazine</u>, January 28, 1968, pp 28 ff. Sanche de Gramont on Claude Levi-Strauss.

Claude Levi-Strauss "an ethnologist who has spent more than half of his 59 years studying the behavior of North and South American Indian 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 blossoms. It is being applied indiscriminately to areas for which Levi-Strauss never intended it. It has sprouted into a full-fledged philosophical doctrine whose impassioned partisans insist that all of human knowledge must be re-examined in its light."

"Structuralism, as Levi-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 rubber 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 composition (or structure) of a deck of cards."

"In the same way, the ethnologist observes how marriages are arranged within a tribe and is able to extrapolate certain laws (or structures) that govern the tribe's social organization."
"'Structuralism' says Levi-Strauss, is the search for unsuspected harmonies. It is the discovery of a system of relations latent in a

series of objects.'" "...Levi-Strauss believes you can study a tribe the same way a biologist studies an amoeba."

"The variety of experience in the life of a social group seems to defy analysis. Precisely for this reason Levi-Strauss chooses to study primitive societies because they are more static than our own. And within these societies he picks what he calls "crystallized" social activities like myths, kinship, laws, and cooking practices. Aside from being unchanging activities of unchanging societies, they are activities at the brink of consciousness - a member of some Brazilian tribe never stops to wonder why he cooks his meat a certain way or believes a myth about a man turning into a jaguar. This is the type of subconscious, taken-for-granted process, which he believes lends itself best to scientific investigation." There is an enormous simplification there. On that basis you don't draw many conclusions about anything else - just close your eyes.

Levi-Strauss derived structuralism from a school of linguistics whose principal exponent is Roman Jakobson. (He is a Russian who teaches at Harvard) Very simply, these linguists study the relations 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 which the words form. The structure of a language is its grammar, and through this kind of analysis, a linguist should be able to discover the grammar of a language he cannot speak, in much the same manner that a crytographer is able to decipher a code thanks to recurring patterns of digits."

"In addition, the modern linguists agree that there is a ground plan for the languages of the world. Every language in every society has the same fundamental properties. Thus, Levi-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 by the linguists also recurs in a great many other activities.'"

"Levi-Strauss 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 the same story. In that connection you can
think of transformation mathematics. Newtonian transformations,
Galilean transformations, Lorentz/Einstein transformations and so
on. By replacing one symbol by another you can tell the same story
in a different way. This is the grammar or code of myths. Once
he has unravelled hundreds of South American myths using different
symbols and sensory codes (one deals with what is heard, another with
what is seen) and found that they all can be reduced to a 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 same 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 the
human spirit."

"Primitive man, in organizing himself into social groups, passes
from a natural to a cultural state. He uses language, learns to cook
his food, and accepts various laws that ensure the survival of the
group. All these activities set him apart from the animal.
Structuralism postulates that in achieving this passage from nature
to culture man obeys laws that he does not invent. These laws are
inherent in human nature, which is everywhere identical, since it is
no more than the mechanism of the human brain. The cerebral cortex,
like a computer, responds to the outside world, according to a limited
number of categories..."

"With Levi-Strauss the whole human tradition goes down the
drain. Instead of a free spirit, responsible for its decisions, we have
man responding to programmed circuits called structures. The
individual conscience is no longer relevant. The whole body of
Western thought from Plato to Descartes to Sartre, which held that
knowledge of the world begins with knowledge of oneself, belongs in
the natural history museum, alongside the witchdoctor's headdresses."
I'm quoting Sanche de Gramont!!

"Levi-Strauss is the advanced man for an age in which the
human sciences will have caught up with the natural sciences. Soon,
if he is right, a pyschologist will be able to chart a human life as
accurately as now he measures the progress of a rat sniffing its way
through a labryinth toward a piece of cheese.

History too goes down the drain, because it is sees as merely
a form of our own society's mythology, a collective delusion irrelevant
to the scientific study of man..."

 · "The sudden popularity of structuralism has little to do with
Levi-Strauss's own specific research. It is in part a fad, the
French intellectual's equivalent of the hula hoop. On another level
it is a reaction against centuries of rhetorical philosophers and
historians, and an awareness that today knowledge of man cannot be
divorced from the great scientific advances. Finally, it is a
specific attempt to discredit Jean-Paul Sartre as an outdated thinker
and to relegate existentialism to the philosophical garbage can."

"His three mistresses were Marxism, psychoanalysis, and geology.
From the first he learned that understanding consisted in finding
common properties among a variety of incidents. Freud taught him that
beyond rational categories there existed forms of behavior more valid
and more meaningful. In geology he had the example of a science with
discovered laws amid the great tumult of nature." So much for
Sanche de Gramont on Claude Levi-Strauss. But he shows the transition
from the use of structuralism in the study of language to the use
of structuralism in the study of anthropology.

Now my next section 3b:"Insights from the Transfer."
First there is a section on words and secondly there is the applications
that arise in Levi-Strauss on various topics. (Robert Goedecke
on Levi-Strauss in Philosophy Today, Spring 1978)

78 "A word or term is always a differentiation within a larger
systematic whole of logical-linguistic space, which is called by the
linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the Langue."

79 "Given that the relation between sign and significance is, with qualifications, arbitrary, what Levi-Strauss discovers is that in the langue concrete of primitive reason, specific things in the world are used as symbols in their langue: primitives think the world, and thus logical space and natural space have the same locus ..."

79 "The kinds of linguistic analysis most dicussed by Jakobson and Levi-Strauss are the metaphoric and the metonymic. The metaphoric may be crucial in polemics and moralizing largely dominated by metaphoric and part-total or synecdochic meanings, while moderns live in a world dominated by time and a causality of contiguity and correlation, or metonymy; the latter seem to live in science and history, while the primitives live in timeless symbolic mythopoiesis. Of course both sorts of humans live in both sorts of meanings, plus two more kinds of meanings delineated as follows:

First, "a metaphor taken seriously does not reduce to a simile... the metaphor leads to insight and discovery not to reduction, back to separate spheres which have similarities. When heat and light are said to be both forms of motion, this metaphoric discovery, does not deny that motion, is the basic factor behind both heat and light. The opposite of metaphoric meaning is prosaic acceptance of appearances and conventions as they separately exist. Metaphors tend to lead to synchrony rather than diachrony - the reality discovered is not in time in quite the way exemplars are." The examplar wants a copy. Just on metaphor I recall a remark of Ricoeur's talking about the parable. And he says that the parables are very ordinary stories, you expect them to happen. A father has two sons and one is a rotter, the other is a good guy. But he does everything when the rotter comes home for him. Well what kind of a father is this, where does he live? The parable winks at you, he says. It is the religious dimension in the parable that he doesn't belong to this world. And similarly for the father that sent one servant who was beaten up and a second that was killed and he decided to send his son and they kill the son too. Well, what kind of a father is that, where does he live, let's see him. The Sophists would speak about their Sophos and people would ask where is the Sophos? The point of a parable.

"Literal meaning analyzes specific differences...Totemic differentiation is literal, although symbolic: bears are different from wolves, elk, crows, etc., and thus one can have a differentiated system of clans, as well as a differentiated ecosystem in nature. The opposite of literal differentiation is ambiguity and vagueness...

Metonymic meaning analyses pairs of things as continuous or in some other way correlated with one another ...Principia mathematica of Russell and Whitehead is metonymic linguistic analysis par excellence. They drop out implication in the ordinary sense - if you think this then you should think that. P implies Q for them means not P without Q, it is juxtaposition. The next two relations are completely separated from content in the terms, which in declared nonrepeated contiguities are the stuff of history; supposedly the modern paradigmatic sciences are these. The opposite of metonymic correlations, for metonymists, is chaos ..." If you are not thinking this way, according to Russell and Whitehead logic, well you are not thinking at all. "It should be noted that the Middle Ages worked in a basic metonymic scheme but a vertical one: stones or hell at the bottom, then vegetables, animals, the world, man but in though not of the world, the angels, archangels, and at the top the Trinity. Locke and Kant developed a kind of downward metonymy, in which real essences or the Ding an sich always underlie all next two levels of scientific, metonymic structuring. Hume and his followers made the metonymies "horizontal" or basically temporal and diachronic."

Metaphor, literal, metonymic. There are families of meanings. Wittgenstein pointed out that "games" form a family, neither a literal species, nor an arbitrary collection, nor a metonymic series. Other later thinkers have suggested that the same sort of familial analysis can be given to ultimate terms, such as "justice" or "property" or "art" or "knowledge". Family meaning applies almost too obviously to families of humans where, say, all Kennedy's or Churchill's bear relational resemblances but different similarities occur more markedly between some members than others, and no one

characteristic runs throughout. Similarly, there are families of
furniture, of motor cars, of myths. The opposite of the familial
meaning is the strange or foreign meaning: foreign cars, wines, terms.
One has to get out of one's family to be truly human and to discover
the human.

There is a fifth language of meaning, but it is not linguistic:
that of music.

The general thesis of Levi-Strauss is that all four kinds of
linguistic meaning are necessary for understanding and achieving the
logos which is the ultimate structure of culture and nature. Using
all four, man can dimly apprehend the existence and the knowability of
the natural world and the cultural worlds. What is wrong with modern
civilization is not only its obvious injustices, but its reliance on
various metonymic analyses to the exclusion of metaphoric and familial
analyses. What was lacking in preliterate cultures was any emphasis on
metonymy at all: totems and metaphoric symbols and synecdochic parts
absorbed their energies, and they became prey to the mass metonymic
culture of the Western World. Since logic is based on culture as well
as natural reality, the disappearance of primitive tribes is a genuine
loss of meaning in the world. On the other hand, modern complacent
metonymic meaning, such as exemplified most obviously perhaps by
Bertrand Russell's writings is a kind of logical aphasia, such as
that exhibited by brain damaged persons. Levi-Strauss, by beginning
with langue as the basis of human expression and communication, can
accept all the kinds of human meaning and linguistic analysis: none
are ruled out on the bases of not being scientific or ordinary or
democratic or contemporary or whatever the usual philosophic
justifications are for looking upon certain areas of meaning with disdain,
or moral concern, or civilized repulsion or brain-damaged giggles.

Now, that is the analysis of language and meaning that underlies
Levi-Strauss - he wants to use all meanings.

Levi-Strauss, The Elementary Structures of Kinship
82   ...Exploration of the problems of exogony and endogamy takes him

through 400 pages of factual and metonymic logistic analysis of various marriage systems of primitive cultures...

Then about page 490 there is a great methodological change. Basic semantic moves which were suggested at the beginning are now affirmed literally and conclusively. The nature of man is developed in exchange, in which society also develops. A woman is a symbol as well as a living thing. The exchange of women from one family to another, of economic goods, and of stories ... is not just characteristic of human beings, it is the essence of humanity. Therefore the taboo of incest is not a derivative prohibition within society; it is the basic requirement of society itself. The transformation from nature to culture is the transformation of things from space-time events in their singularity to symbols in their necessary community. A woman is not only a biological thing par excellence, since she can produce more humans, she is also the symbol above all symbols, since she unites groups and brings about kinship and clan relationships, and ultimately, through the peculiar unions of marriage, brings about the union and yet the differentiation of nature and culture, and makes pre-human animals into human beings.

Levi-Strauss differentiates three levels of exchange, or human-creating relationships: the marriage relationship, exchange of economic goods, and talking proper. All three are necessary both to preserve societies and mankind and to create societies and mankind. The primitive cultures understood this better than modern scientific civilizations, where private acquisition tends to overshadow exchange in the economic sphere ... Although the private is required for exchange, exchange /83/ and reciprocity are the essence of culture and the source of the real and the ideal in human life.

Totemism

The linguistically organized inter-relationships of natural species and kinds of things are taken as the homologous basis for totems. Totems not only identify one's own clan, college, club, army division, favorite baseball team, one might add hockey team, they also differentiate that group in a social order which includes other groups with that group.

The Logic of totemic identification and differentiation does not come from some primitive superstitious nonsense or mysticism, it comes from the very differentiated and yet identifiable nature of things themselves..

The Savage Mind

The taxinomic classification of natural things is applied to the cultural ordering of social groups in totemic classification, which, when related to the diachronous problems of clan exogamy, leads to twofold, fourfold, and sixfold kinship and totem orders. The endogamous caste system is related to exogamous clan systems as an opposite type of application of natural kinds.

In chapter five of The Savage Mind the ultimate logical notions of categories, elements and numbers are derived from the given notion of differentiation. Levi-Strauss derives all these basic logical principles from differently organized symbolic systems. He insists that thought must begin with observation of the world, and then the symbolic results of such observation can be dialectically pushed to the furthest limits of questioning.

3c   Concepts of Human Science and of Structure

In this section I'm summarizing, for the most part, Jean-Marie Le Blond, whom I knew personally before the second world war in Rome. He did his dissertation at the Sourbonne on logic and method in Aristotle. He came to the Gregorian to teach philosophy and I travelled with him from Paris to Saint-Malo and then by steamer to Jersey, during the Summer.

147   At Paris, in France, and even abroad, the current prestige of structuralism is attached to the name of Professor Claude Levi-Struass. His influence is extensive and profound. It is accounted for by the scientific value of his work, by his competence in directing the work of others, but above all by his open and winning humanity. It also is reinforced by the interest (which is not without ambiguity) excited by his "sciences humaines" to which the university is more and more extending an official place. Further must be noted the exceptional

liberty of spirit with which Claude Levi-Strauss did not hesitate to express his doubts - and more - about the modern myth of progress, and as well questioned the accepted primacy of history.

Le Blond draws on six books and an article:
Tristes tropiques, The Sad Tropics, given a privileged place among Levi-Strauss's books because in the course of these ethnographique studies, the author reveals his views on the vocation of the ethnographer as he conceives it. Anthropologie sturcturale, Structural Anthropology; La pensee sauvage; Le Cru et le cuit, The Raw and the Cooked; Le Miel et les cendres, Honey and Ashes; Totemisme; and an article and a review in Aletheia, mai 1966 on "Criteres scientifiques des disciplines sociales et humaines", "Scientific Criteria in Social and Human Science".

I deal with two sections from Le Blond: first, Levi-Strauss's idea of human science and secondly, his idea of a structure.
148 "The name science is no longer more than a fictive appellation that denotes a large number of quite heterogeneous activities; of these only a few are properly scientific". So he has a very strict notion of what a science is. "For Levi-Strauss science means natural science and even mathematics. He grants that this implies that man is regarded not as a subject but as an object. The subjectivity of phenomenology he found stifling."

149   " Insofar as the human sciences succeed in doing properly scientific work, any distinction between the natural and the human is going to be attenuated." (Aletheia p. 195.) On this Levi-Strauss is not dogmatic. He proposes it as his option, as "a philosophic hope which has not yet been confirmed". He regards as the privileged type among the human sciences linguistics in its most formal aspect. I assume that this aspect is from Ferdinand de Saussure's procedure of concentrating on the patterns of relations between words and neglecting the relations of words to the objects they denote. Levi-Strauss does not aim at being a linguist such as de Saussure or Martinet; but in his study of man he takes from linguistics his model of science for three reasons:
1) "Linguistics has a universal object, articulated language, which is

known to all races of men; 2) its method is homogeneous; 3) and apart
from some secondary divergences, the method rests on certain fundamental
principles which all linguists regard as valid.

150 It is because of his method that Claude-Levi Strauss remains
rather indifferent to the content which the forms embrace. What gives
interest to the classifications he sets up is not their content but
the ingenuity of the use to which they are put, and it is that usage
that reveals the proper role of human intelligence. By taking these
representations which seem to us to be a minor matter, allegedly primitive
peoples have exercised genuine intelligence, they even have manifested
what is most profound in intelligence.

"The aim of this book, Levi-Strauss has written, is to show how
empirical categories, such as raw and cooked, fresh and rotten, moist
and burnt, which can be defined with precision by ethnographic observation
alone, and in each case by placing oneself within the horizon of a particular
culture, nonetheless can serve as conceptual tools for bringing to
light abstract notions and linking them together in propositions."
(Le cru et le cuit, Paris Plon 1954, p.9)

151 More radically, Levi-Strauss bases human reality in the unconscious.
"If, as we believe, the unconscious activity of mind consists in imposing
forms on a content, and if these forms are basically the same for all
minds, ancient and modern, primitive and civilized, ... it is necessary
and sufficient to reach the unconscious structure, underlying each
institution and each custom, to obtain a principle of interpretation
valid for other institutions and other customs, naturally on condition
that one pushes the analysis far enough." This is in Anthropologie
Structurale, p. 28.

While there does exist in human languages and institutions an
experienced meaning (un sens vecu), conscious and connected with
liberty, still that meaning is not the good meaning, that is, the more
profound and the more real.

"Marx and Freud have taught us that man attains meaning only
by entering into the viewpoint of meaning. With that we agree.
...But one should add that such meaning is not the good meaning;
superstructures are vain operations (des actes manques) that
socially have met with success." That is in Le Pensee Sauvage, pp.
115-36. "Phenomenology seemed wrong to me (me heurtait) inasmuch
as it postulated continuity between what is lived and what is real ...
To reach the real one must begin by setting aside what is lived,
though later on one has to integrate it in an objective synthesis
stripped of all sentimentality." This is Tristes Tropiques.
His option for the infrastructures (Marx) and the unconscious (Freud)
fits in with his refusal to rank the civilized above the primitive and
indeed his sympathy for neolithic man." He says in Tristes Tropiques p.44
"J'ai l'intelligence neolitique."("I have a neolitique mind").
(p.152 Music and mythology confront man with virtual objects whose
shadow alone is actual, with conscious approximations to truths which
inevitably are unconscious." This is in Le cru et le cuit p. 2.
So much for his notion of science.

Structures
The points made so far, are also made by Levi-Strauss himself, are:
zeal for strict science, primacy of linguistics in human studies,
attachment to abstract combinations rather than to the contents that
are combined, and the role of the unconscious in the life of man.

No doubt there are in human societies conscious structures which
first catch out attention: men draw up constitutions, establish customs,
posit norms. They test them with criticism, ratify them, or modify them.
But such conscious structures are superficial; they do not reveal man
in his depths.

"Conscious models - commonly called norms - are the poorest of
all, because their function is merely to perpetuate beliefs and usages
rather than to bring to light their source. So it is that structural
analysis runs into a pardoxical situation well known to linguists.
The clearer the apparent structure, the more difficult becomes the
task of grasping the deep structure; for the models that are conscious

stand between the observer and his object." This is <u>Anthropologie</u>
<u>Structurale</u>, p 308. He follows von Neumann's definition of models.
"Models, like games, are theoretical constructions which suppose
a definition that is precise, exhaustive, and not too complicated;
also they should correspond to reality in all respects that bear upon
one's current research." This is in <u>Anthropologie Structurale</u> p. 306.
Since deep structures are unconscious, they cannot be verified directly.
Hence the importance of the correct model. "(On peut en effet) One can
conceive many different models each in its own way apt to describe and
explain a group of phenomena. Nonetheless, the best will always be the
true model, that is, the one which, besides being the simplest, will
satisfy the double condition of not appealing to facts other than those
considered and of accounting for all of them" <u>ibid</u>, p. 307.

"Following Rousseau, and in a manner that appears more decisive,
Marx taught that social science was no more erected on social events
than physics on the level of sensibility: the end in constructing a
model, studying its properties and the various ways it reacts in a
laboratory, is afterwards to apply one's observations to the
interpretation of what empirically goes on and may differ greatly from
one's anticipations." <u>Tristes Tropiques</u>, p. 49f.

Deep structure lies beyond the models. It is as it were the
pole of their convergence. It is sketched by the most suitable model.
But it cannot be verified by observation. There can be no question of
bringing the unconscious into consciousness in the hope of having a
better look at it. It remains the object of an exigence. It cannot
be the object of an observation even though it were only approximative.
(M. de Grandillac noted three features in the structure: coherence, shape,
and vision. Coherence inasmuch as the structure is the organization of
an ensemble and itcharacterizes every society right down to the family
which is the social atom. Shape means the permanence of the structure,
its conservation through changes of extent, volume, color. Vision denotes
objectivity aimed at beyond the construction of the model.)

It is clear that structure does not include in itself the note of
process, genesis, although one can speak of genetic structures and

constant procedures of production.   Finally, structuralism is not
practical.   "There are those who think of social science as preparing
pupils for professional activity and considering problems with a
view to practical intervention."   "But human sciences on the contrary,
(this is Levi-Strauss, Aletheia p. 208) are outside each particular
society.   Whether they seek to adopt the viewpoint of some particular
societies or the viewpoint of an individual within any society, or
finally aiming at a reality immanent in man, they take their stand away
from every individual and every society." Aletheia, p.208

What is not practical, is contemplative.   Levi-Strauss has some
praise of contemplation in his Tristes Tropiques, pp. 448f.

Has Structuralism a Real Object?

Has this study of structuralist anthropology got an object, is
it dealing with a reality? Is it something underneath that is really
important? Well, I can't answer the question for you tonight but I
can give you a clue.   Ira Progoff speaks of twilight imagery - and you
can probably do it yourself. He relates how a man came to see him.
He is a psychiatrist and a practicing one: he runs a research institute
at Drew University, he has an office in New York, has published a
number of books.   The man that came to see him was a very sucessful
business man and then everything just collapsed.   And he asked him to
lie down on the couch and close his eyes and tell him what he sees,
his twilight imagery.   If you close your eyes what you see are things
that flash up - things have to be quiet.   And the man was to tell him
what he saw.   And at the start it was jumping - you don't get a pattern
right away.   He has his tape recorder on and was taking notes and after
a bit it became most extraordinary what the patient was saying, it was
most coherent.   And afterwards he discussed it with the fellow, he went
over it and in no time at all he was restored.   And he gives several
illustrations of this sort, dream interpretation and so on.

He is a follower of Ranke,who worked with Freud for two dozen years,
and then wrote a book that was published only posthumously, Beyond Psychology.
The end of depth psychology is to help people get further on in their
development, beyond psychology.   And that is what Progoff is working at.

He has a guru session, one to one; he has the intensive journal in
which you write down the things you discover, that impressed you in
a dream or in twilight imagery, in which you go back over and compare and
put things together; and he has the seminar in which you have twenty
people and different individuals will account experiences that they
had and found fruitful, and the others won't have to go through the
same thing - their history is different, but they can be attracted
by it, and when this fellow goes into silence, when he has no more
to say, they do too. There is a release to it. I thank you.

(Ira Progoff, Depth Psychology and Modern Man, McGraw-Hill, 1973
Julian Press 1959,1969) pp. 118,119,184 for a treatment of enacting
images, or dynatypes, and the formative images, or cognitypes).

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