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INTRODUCTION

This paper represents an attempt to analyze the general features of the work of Claude Levi-Strauss and to examine the critique of his work offered by Paul Ricoeur. Levi-Strauss presents a view of myth, history, and language which differs quite sharply from any of the various positions utilized by theologians. Because of what seems to be the increasing influence of Levi-Strauss in anthropology and philosophy, it appears safe to say that theologians will have to take seriously his interpretations of the nature of myth, history, and language. Ricoeur offers a critique of Levi-Strauss which simultaneously attempts to indicate several directions in which the methodology of structuralism may prove useful in the task of hermeneutic. This paper will attempt to demonstrate or at least suggest that Ricoeur may well be correct concerning the value of structural method within the hermeneutic task, but that Ricoeur's critique of Levi-Strauss is meaningful only for those who share the same semantic field or hermeneutic circle as Ricoeur; as an instrument of dialogue with Levi-Strauss Ricoeur's critique will not prove very helpful. We will attempt to suggest that Levi-Strauss seems to have done little reflection on his own performance as a scientist and that a more fruitful dialogue with structuralism might be possible from the standpoint of Bernard Lonergan's invitation to the appropriation of one's own conscious performance. The suggestion is offered at the outset—it will not be developed here—that a dialectical

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criticism of Levi-Strauss a la Lonergan could result in several interesting possibilities:

a) valuable concrete data may be added to the thought of Lonergan concerning the structure of human cognitional performance;

b) possibilities are suggested for a development on the part of both thinkers concerning the unconscious;

c) the philosophical conclusions of Levi-Strauss may be drastically affected by Lonergan's rigorous account of that domain of knowledge which Levi-Strauss has acknowledged, but not analyzed.

Rather than attempt to develop these hypotheses we will simply take the position that theologians can profit not only from the suggestions of Paul Ricoeur concerning a hermeneutical Aufhebung of structural method but also from the application of Lonergan's dialectical method of criticism to the philosophy of Levi-Strauss.[1] In fact, such dialectic may be the most fruitful form of dialogue with structuralism.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NOTION OF STRUCTURE

I. Structural Linguistics

Levi-Strauss has cautioned us not to be too facile in our
employment of the word "structuralism" as a general term of reference
for the thought of a number of contemporary French thinkers, including
himself, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, etc. At the
same time, while indicating that structural approaches represent a
relatively old and familiar enterprise, he has not repudiated the term
but has in fact found it quite applicable.[2] In his fascinating auto-
biographical sketch, Tristes Tropiques, we are told of three influences
which awakened and kept alive his interest in underlying structure,
prior to his explicit discovery of structuralism in linguistics: geology,[3]
psychoanalysis,[4] and Marxism.[5]

In 1939, after his first visit to Brazil, Levi-Strauss developed
what was to become a lasting interest in the problem of kinship, from a
reading of Marcel Granet's Les categories matrimoniales et les relations
de proximite dans la Chine ancienne.

> On the one hand, the difficult problems of kinship posed by Granet
> seemed to him to be the first problems permitting the undertaking
> of a study of human societies by means of unequivocal and clearly
> definable relations; on the other hand, the solutions brought to
> these problems by Granet seemed to him too complicated, and he had
> the impression that it would be possible to disengage from them
> more simple elements, but only by isolating, within matrimonial
> categories, certain fundamental properties indicative of an
> underlying structure. But structure was still an unknown notion
> in ethnography. While Levi-Strauss was naturally a structuralist
> when he analyzed a landscape or a melody, he did not dare to be so
> in his profession of ethnography, since he imagined that this
> would be to conduct himself as a dilettante rather than as a man
> of science. The hour had not yet come for him to apply a method
> which he rather divined than directly perceived.[6]

The principle and the method for which he was seeking were provided when, in the early 1940's, he came into contact with the Russian linguist, Roman Jakobson, in New York. Jakobson was a member of a small group of linguists, the linguistic circle of Prague, who initially intended simply to apply the principles of phonology to poetic language. Jakobson introduced their procedures to America and to Levi-Strauss, who was later to refer to their work as "revolutionary".[7] Milet states the main features of this linguistic revolution, which we shall shortly examine in more detail in the pioneer work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics.

> A language contains a certain number of words, of "monemes", which form "meaningful units", but these words are themselves composed of "phonemes" corresponding roughly . . . to the letters of the alphabet; in isolation the "phonemes" signify nothing but they are necessary for the formation of words; they are designated as "distinctive units". A language contains an indefinite number of words, but the number of "phonemes" is strictly limited (between twenty and thirty) and is therefore much more susceptible to comparative study. The method of phonology tries to utilize this economy of means to the best advantage. Phonology does not stop at the conscious linguistic phenomena of words, but pushes further to their unconscious infrastructure which is built on "phonemes", which cannot be considered as independent entities but which must be defined by their reciprocal relations within a linguistic system. The number of phonological combinations is theoretically very large, but a methodical analysis leads us to recognize that a given language never retains more than a small part of these combinations and that a language is always characterized by a restricted number of specific configurations which we can call structures. These structures, which are linked and connected with one another, correspond to a totality of necessary relations, which can be expressed in the form of laws. The application of phonological method to linguistics thus permits us to order and unify, by means of simple principles of a limited character, the extraordinary multiplication of languages, their vocabulary, and the different registers in which they express themselves.[9]

Levi-Strauss speaks of an illumination: why would it not be possible to transpose these methods and principles to the phenomena of kinship,

which is itself a kind of language whose terms are comparable to phonemes? These terms, i.e., women, gain their significance by being integrated into systems whose extreme variety, he felt, could be reduced to certain general laws which would reveal unconscious structures composed of differential elements. He put forward his hypothesis in an article, "L'analyze structurale en linguistique et en anthropologie",[10] and attempted to verify it in the book, Les structures elementaires de la parente (1949).[11] We will summarize briefly these two works, but first we must examine more closely the major theses of structural linguistics. Here we turn to the founding work in this discipline, de Saussure's Course in General Linguistics,[12] and specify three points of importance:

   a) langage, langue, and parole;

   b) diachrony and synchrony;

   c) structure in linguistics.

    A. Langage, langue, and parole

De Saussure employs the term langage to refer to human speech. The one definite part of human speech which linguistics studies is language, langue, which he takes to be "the norm of all other manifestations of speech".[13] Langue is "both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty".[14] A language in this sense is "a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas".[15] Distinct from both langage and langue is parole (speaking), the executive, and always individual, aspect of speech. For de Saussure, to separate language from speaking is to separate "(1) what is social from what is

individual; and (2) what is essential from what is accessory and more or less accidental".[16] Language is a system of signs, the most important of such systems. De Saussure envisions the possibility of a general science of signs, semiology.

Language is constituted by a social bond; it is a "storehouse filled by the members of a given community through their active use of speaking, a grammatical system that has a potential existence in each brain, or, more specifically, in the brains of a group of individuals, . . . a product that is passively assimilated by the individual. It never requires premeditation, and reflection enters in only for the purpose of classification".[17] Language can be "localized in the limited segment of the speaking-circuit where an auditory image becomes associated with a concept".[18] It is both the instrument and product of speaking. De Saussure uses a helpful image: "Language exists in the form of a sum of impressions deposited in the brain of each member of a community, almost like a dictionary of which individual copies have been distributed to each individual".[19]

The linguistic unit or sign is composed of two psychological terms, a concept and a sound-image; the latter is not the material sound itself but its psychological imprint. The concept is the signified and the sound-image is the signifier. The bond between concept and sound-image is arbitrary, i.e., there is no natural connection. Sound-images are linear in nature, i.e., they are unfolded solely in time, and thus differ from visual signifiers, "which can offer simultaneous groupings in several dimensions".[20]

B. Diachronic and synchronic linguistics

The linguistic sign participates in a strange combination of mutability and immutability. The signifier is fixed with respect to the linguistic community that uses it, for four reasons:

1) the arbitrary nature of the sign: "there is no reason for preferring soeur to sister, Ochs to boeuf, etc.;[21]

2) the limitless multiplicity of signs necessary to form any language;

3) the over-complexity of the system: "the system is a complex mechanism that can be grasped only through reflection; the very ones who use it daily are ignorant of it";[22]

4) collective inertia toward innovation: "Language -- and this consideration surpasses all the others -- is at every moment everybody's concern; spread throughout society and manipulated by it, language is something used daily by all . . . . This capital fact suffices to show the impossibility of revolution".[23]

Nevertheless language changes despite the inability of speakers to change it. Whether the forces of change directly regard the signifier or the signified, "they always result in a shift in the relationship between the signifier and the signified".[24] The paradox of language, resulting from the arbitrary nature of the sign, is that while no one can change anything in language, there is also nothing to prevent the establishment of any relation whatsoever between concepts and sound-images.

The time-factor opens to linguistics "two completely different paths". The subject matter of linguistics is aligned along two co-

ordinates: "(1) the axis of simultaneities . . . , which stands for the
relations of coexisting things and from which the intervention of time
is excluded; and (2) the axis of successions . . . , on which only one
thing can be considered at a time but upon which are located all the
things on the first axis together with their changes".[25] This distinction
is necessary for all sciences concerned with values, but especially for
linguistics, "for language is a system of pure values which are deter-
mined by nothing except the momentary arrangement of its terms . . . .
Nowhere else do we find such precise values at stake and such a great
number and diversity of terms, all so rigidly interdependent".[26]

Thus the necessity for two sciences of language: static or
synchronic linguistics and evolutionary or diachronic linguistics.
Synchronic linguistics studies a state, which is all that confronts a
speaker. " . . . the linguist who wishes to understand a state must
discard all knowledge of everything that produced it and ignore diachrony.
He can enter the mind of speakers only by completely suppressing the
past."[27] The synchronic viewpoint is of far greater importance, since
it is "the true and only reality to the community of speakers".[28]
Synchronic linguistics is the study of "the logical and psychological
relations that bind together coexisting terms and form a system in the
collective mind of speakers".[29] It aims at discovering "the constituents
of any language-state", which concretely are signs and their relations.[30]

C. Structure and language

Any linguistic entity or sign cannot be defined until it is de-
limited, separated from surrounding units on the linear sound-chain. The

sound-chain cannot be divided without the assistance of meanings. The
unit is "a slice of sound which to the exclusion of everything that pre-
cedes and follows it in the spoken chain is the signifier of a certain
concept".[31] These concrete entities are not coterminous with words, nor
are they directly observable. The notion of linguistic value is of prime
importance in helping us to delimit units. " . . . language works out
its units while taking shape between (the) two shapeless masses" of
thought and sound.[32] Linguistics works in this borderland. The com-
bination of thought and sound produces what De Saussure calls a form,
distinguishing this from a substance.

The linguistic terms cannot be isolated from their system. The
system cannot be constructed by beginning with the terms; rather, "it is
from the interdependent whole that one must start and through analysis
obtain its elements".[33] Linguistic value belongs neither to the concept
nor to the sound-image, but to the sign which results from their com-
bination. "Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the
value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the
others."[34] From the standpoint of the material side of value, "the
important thing is not the sound alone but the phonic differences that
make it possible to distinguish this word from all others, for differences
carry signification".[35] Once again we are confronted with a result of
the arbitrariness of sound-images in relation to concepts; "Phonemes
are characterized not, as one might think, by their own positive quality
but simply by the fact that they are distinct. Phonemes are above all
else opposing, relative, and negative entities."[36] Within the complex

whole that is language, "Whatever distinguishes one sign from the others constitutes it. . . . Everywhere and always there is the same complex equilibrium of terms that mutually condition each other. Putting it another way, language is a form and not a substance".[37]

There are two kinds of relations between linguistic terms. Syntagmatic relations exist between terms occurring in the linearity of discourse, in which "a term acquires its value only because it stands in opposition to everything that precedes or follows it, or to both".[38] Outside of discourse, words which have something in common are associated in the memory, forming associative relations. The similarity can be one of meaning or of form or of both.

D. Summary

Paul Ricoeur distinguishes three rules, all of which are consequences of the distinction between langue and parole and all of which will be transported by Levi-Strauss outside of linguistics into anthropology:

1) the idea of system: the object of a linguistic science is a system of signs, resulting from the mutual determination of the sound-chain and the conceptual chain. In the system, importance attaches not to the terms but to their differences;

2) the relation of diachrony and synchrony: "The system of differences shows up only on an axis of coexistences entirely distinguished from the axis of successions. History is secondary and figures as an alteration of the system. In linguistics these alterations are less intelligible than the states of the system. . . . Events are apprehended only as realized in a system, as receiving from the system an aspect of regularity";[39]

3) the laws of linguistics point to an unconscious, non-reflective, non-historical level of the mind. For Ricoeur, this unconscious is more Kantian than Freudian, but without reference to a thinking subject. "This is why structuralism, as philosophy, will develop a fundamentally anti-reflective, anti-idealist, anti-phenomenological kind of intellectualism. This unconscious mind can be called homologous to nature; perhaps it even is nature."[40]

II. The Transposition to Anthropology

A. Levi-Strauss' Word article, "L'analyse structurale en linguistique et en anthropologie".[41]

This article proposes Levi-Strauss' original hypothesis regarding linguistics and anthropology, arrived at as a result of his contact with Jakobson. He laments the fact that linguists and anthropologists have so seldom learned from one another, despite the fact that even superficial relationships between the two disciplines had been acknowledged: "The linguist provides the anthropologist with etymologies which permit him to establish between certain kinship terms relationships that were not immediately apparent. The anthropologist, on the other hand, can bring to the attention of the linguist customs, prescriptions, and prohibitions that help him to understand the persistence of certain features of language or the instability of terms or group of terms."[42]

Levi-Strauss is not content, however, with such superficial relations, for he feels that the structural revolution in linguistics will completely renovate the social sciences. He lists Trubetzkoy's four canons of structural method:

a) shift from the study of <u>conscious</u> linguistic phenomena to study of their <u>unconscious</u> infrastructure;

b) take as basis of analysis, not <u>terms</u> as independent entities, but <u>relations</u> between terms;

c) show the system;

d) work toward <u>general</u> <u>laws</u> of an absolute and necessary character.[43]

Levi-Strauss finds a formal relationship between the anthropologist and the linguist, at least in questions concerning kinship.

> Like phonemes, kinship terms are elements of meaning; like phonemes, they acquire meaning only if they are integrated into systems. "Kinship systems", like "phonemic systems", are built by the mind on the level of unconscious thought. Finally, . . . the observable phenomena result from the action of laws which are general but implicit. . . . Although they belong to <u>another order of reality</u>, kinship phenomena are of the same type as linguistic phenomena. Can the anthropologist, using a method analogous in form (if not in content) to the method used in structural linguistics, achieve the same kind of progress in his own science as that which has taken place in linguistics?[44]

That he can is further argued from the discontinuity and confusion in anthopology resulting from a diachronic analysis of specific customs and rites. Despite difficulties attendant upon certain ways of proceeding structurally in anthropology, Levi-Strauss finds at least one case where the analogy with linguistics holds: the problem of the maternal uncle. In particular, "why are only certain attitudes associated with avuncular relationship, rather than just any possible attitudes, depending upon the group considered?"[45] The problem is similar to that posed to the linguist by the fact that, from an almost unlimited number of sounds which can be articulated by the vocal apparatus, only a few are retained

by each language. "Like language, the social group has a great wealth of psycho-physiological material at its disposal. Like language, too, it retains only certain elements, at least some of which remain the same throughout the most varied cultures and are combined into structures which are always diversified. Thus we may wonder about the reason for this choice and the laws of combination."[46]

Radcliffe-Brown was the first to analyze the modalities of a general principle of "attitude qualification", and, conveniently, he was dealing with the same problem of the avunculate. He discovered, though not through a strictly structural method, two pairs of oppositions: "In groups where familiarity characterizes the relationship between father and son, the relationship between maternal uncle and nephew is one of respect; and where the father stands as the austere representative of family authority, it is the uncle who is treated with familiarity."[47] A principal difficulty found by Levi-Strauss is that "the avuncular relationship is not limited to two terms, but presupposes four, namely, brother, sister, brother-in-law, and nephew. An interpretation such as Radcliffe-Brown's arbitrarily isolates particular elements of a global structure which must be treated as a whole". This global system contains "four types of relationships which are organically linked, namely: brother/sister, husband/wife, father/son, and mother's brother/sister's son". The general law should be stated as follows: "the relation between maternal uncle and nephew is to the relation between brother and sister as the relation between father and son is to that between husband and wife. Thus if we know one pair of relations, it is always possible to

infer the other".[48] Levi-Strauss refers to this as a "synchronic law
of correlation".[49] Furthermore, this structure is the unit of kinship,
its most elementary form,[50] "the true atom of kinship".[51] Actually,
the avuncular relationship is found to be a direct corollary of the
incest taboo: "In human society a man must obtain a woman from another
man who gives him a daughter or a sister".[52] At this point in his own
development, Levi-Strauss insists that the socio-cultural character of
this phenomenon consists in the way in which it diverges from nature.
"A kinship system does not consist in the objective ties of descent or
consanguinity between individuals. It exists only in human consciousness;
it is an arbitrary system of representations, not the spontaneous de-
velopment of a real situation."[53]

B. Les structures elementaires de la parente.[54]

In this work, Levi-Strauss reiterates his insistence that the
complex diversity and confusion of marriage regulations among "primitive"
peoples can be reduced to unity if they are conceived as diverse manners
of assuring a fundamental exchange among the groups of a society, an
exchange consisting positively in the free circulation of women and
negatively in the incest taboo. The universal occurrence of the pro-
hibition on incest can be explained only by the necessity of an equitable
sharing of women. (In primitive tribes, at least, the satisfaction of
"economic" needs seems to depend on conjugal society and the division of
work between the sexes). Marriage is a privileged form of exchange
through reciprocal giving, an act of communication. Marriage rules are
"so many different ways of insuring the circulation of women within the

social group or of substituting the mechanism of a sociologically determined affinity for that of a biologically determined consanguinity. . . .
It would only be necessary to make a mathematical study of every possible type of exchange between n partners to enable one almost automatically to arrive at every type of marriage rule actually operating in living societies and, eventually, to discover other rules that are merely possible; one would also understand their function and the relationships between each type and the others".[55]

C. Paul Ricoeur's reactions to the transposition.

Ricoeur finds in the above quotation a distilled version of the entire program of The Savage Mind. Levi-Strauss' understanding of structures is concentrated in the notion of a universal code of homologies between structures and a simultaneous comprehension of the symbolic function as rigorously independent of the observer. For Ricoeur, the principal problem is to understand how an objective, "decoding" intelligence can work together with a hermeneutic, "deciphering" intelligence which recovers meaning for itself while being enriched by the meaning which it deciphers. He finds reason for deliberation in the following remark from Levi-Strauss: "As in the case of women, the original impulse which compelled men to exchange words must be sought for in that split representation that pertains to the symbolic function. For, since certain terms are simultaneously perceived as having a value both for the speaker and the listener, the only way to resolve this contradiction is in the exchange of complimentary values, to which all social existence is reduced".[56] Ricoeur asks:

Does this not mean that structuralism enters into action only upon
the already established basis of the "split representation" which
results from the symbolic function? And is this not to appeal to
another intelligence which concentrates on the split itself, from
which exchange arises? Isn't the objective science of exchanges
only an abstract segment in the total comprehension of the symbolic
function, which is basically a semantic comprehension? The raison
d'etre of structuralism, for the philosopher, would then be to
restore this full comprehension, but after having dismissed,
objectified, and relieved it by structural understanding; the
semantic basis, thus mediated by the structural form, would be
accessible to a more indirect but more certain comprehension.[57]

For Ricoeur, Levi-Strauss seems to exceed the bounds of prudence
when he extends the linguistic model beyond the exchange of women to
problems of art and religion, which represent not only a kind of language
but "a meaningful discourse built upon the basis of language. . . . A
given, particular discourse is now compared with the general structure of
language. It is not a priori certain that the relation between diachrony
and synchrony, valuable in general linguistics, rules in an equally dominant
fashion the structure of particular discourse". Parole is seen as governed
by the same rules as langue. But, says Ricoeur, "mind understands mind,
not only by the analogy of structure, but by a renewal and continuation
of particular discourses. Nothing guarantees that this understanding
depends on the same principles as those of phonology. The structural
enterprise seems to me perfectly legitimate and free from all criticism,
as long as it is conscious of the conditions of its validity and thus
of its limitations".[58] Ricoeur wants to know the place of a general,
structural theory of relations in a general theory of meaning. For him,
the touchstone is time. In The Savage Mind we see the destiny of the
relation between diachrony and synchrony; Ricoeur will oppose to it the
historicity of symbolic meaning.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCRETE LOGIC OF THE SAVAGE MIND

Totemism, the work which immediately preceded The Savage Mind, had attempted to point up the illusion contained in previous anthropologists' positing of a natural kinship between a clan and its totem. The relation, says Levi-Strauss, is rather indirect, passing through the human mind, which postulates a homology between differences existing, on the one hand, between two species of the animal or vegetable world and, on the other hand, between two clans. The differences resemble one another, not a clan and its totem. Totemism is the product of an original logic, a direct expression of the mind, even of the brain, "and not an inert product of the action of the environment on an amorphous consciousness. . . . It is this logic of oppositions and correlations, exclusions and inclusions, compatibilities and incompatibilities, which explains the laws of association, and not the reverse".[59]

The Savage Mind attempts to extend these conclusions to myth, art, and ritual. As Milet and Ricoeur both indicate, we find in The Savage Mind a generalization of structuralism.[60] An entire level of thought is now the object of investigation, a level held to be the "non-domesticated" form of all thought.[61] The thought of primitives is in no way pre-logical; we have misjudged so-called primitive peoples. For one thing, the languages of these peoples have no dearth of abstract words. The use of abstract terms is a function, not of intelligence, but of interest, of attention to detail. "The proliferation of concepts, as in the case of technical languages, goes with more constant attention to properties

of the world, with an interest that is more alert to possible distinctions which can be introduced between them."[62]

Levi-Strauss finds among the people whom he has studied "a thirst for objective knowledge" which, he says, implies "comparable intellectual application and methods of observation" to those of modern science.[63] At least, "in both cases the universe is an object of thought at least as much as it is a means of satisfying needs. . . . Animals and plants are not known as a result of their usefulness; they are deemed to be useful or interesting because they are first of all known".[64] He presents many examples of classification, categorization, and systematization to substantiate his point that primitive thought is based on a demand for order. "It is through the properties common to all thought that we can most easily begin to understand forms of thought which seem very strange to us."[65]

Magic and science differ in that, while the classification of primitives can lead to valid scientific results, magic in general postulates a far more complete and all-embracing determinism than science would allow. This demand "can at the most be regarded as unreasonable and precipitate from the scientific point of view". And yet magical thought represents "an expression of the unconscious apprehension of the truth of determinism".[66] Magic is not, however, a "timid and stuttering form of science". Rather magic and science are "two parallel modes of acquiring knowledge", requiring "the same sort of mental operations" and differing "not so much in kind as in the different types of phenomena to which they are applied".[67]

There are two distinct modes of scientific thought. These are
certainly not a function of different stages of development of
the human mind but rather of two strategic levels at which nature
is accessible to scientific enquiry; one roughly adapted to that
of perception and the imagination; the other at a remove from it.
It is as if the necessary connections which are the object of all
science, neolithic or modern, could be arrived at by two different
routes, one very close to, and the other more remote from, sensible
intuition.[68]

There is, then, a science of the concrete, which is adapted to those

discoveries authorized by nature "from the starting point of a speculative

organization and exploitation of the sensible world in sensible terms".[69]

It seems clear that objectivity for Levi-Strauss is equivalent

to order and thus can be a purely relative notion. It would have nothing

to do with the real in Charles Sanders Peirce's sense of "that which is

what it is no matter what anybody might think about it" nor with Lonergan's

"absolute objectivity" attained in the reflective grasp and affirmation

of a conditioned whose conditions are both fulfilled and known to be

fulfilled. One might already raise the question of how aware Levi-Strauss

is of the logic of modern science -- to say nothing of the structures of

its performance! --, a logic which, whether science be Kantian or not,

has been characterized by Peirce, Dewey, and Lonergan -- all independently

of the others -- as consisting of three moments, the last of which is the

return from abstract conceptualization to verification. This essential

difference from concrete logic would immediately call into question

whether these two modes of knowing can be termed "parallel", and, while

not leading to an outright denial of "a genuinely scientific attitude,

sustained and watchful interest and a desire for knowledge for its own

sake"[70] on the part of the "concrete logicians", certainly raises questions

as to their "method" -- which Levi-Strauss calls "comparable" to that of

modern science -- and to the "normative objectivity" and "critical

exigence" (to borrow from Lonergan) in their "scientific" performance.

Levi-Strauss compares this concrete logic with what is known in

French as "bricolage".

> The "bricoleur" is adept at performing a large number of diverse
> tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of
> them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and
> procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of in-
> struments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make
> do with "whatever is at hand", that is to say, with a set of tools
> and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous
> because what it contains bears no relation to the current project,
> or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result
> of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock
> or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or
> destructions .[71]

Mythical thought is seen as an "intellectual bricolage" which uses

a heterogeneous repertoire to produce its results. Its elements are signs,

which form a link between images and concepts, just as linguistic signs

are the result of the combination of a sound-image and a concept. The

scientist works with concepts, which have an unlimited capacity of refer-

ence; the mythic thinker's signs do not relate only to themselves, but

their power of reference is less than that of a concept. Like the elements

of bricolage, a limit is placed on the signs by the fact that they are

drawn from a language which has already given them a certain extension of

meaning.[72] The difference between concepts and signs is perhaps most

clearly stated as follows: "Concepts . . . appear like operators opening

up the set being worked with and signification like the operator of its

reorganization, which neither extends nor renews it and limits itself

to obtaining the group of its transformations".[73] Thus mythical thought

builds structures out of the products of events, while science issues in
events as a result of structural hypotheses and theories. For Levi-Strauss,
"both approaches are equally valid", at least to the exent that even
mythical thought "acts as a liberator by its protest against the idea
that anything can be meaningless".[74]

How does concrete logic work? Levi-Strauss provides the extremely
helpful comparison with the workings of a kaleidoscope,[75] and then proceeds
to define the features of this logic. Ethnographic inquiry reveals both
an affective and an intellectual aspect. Levi-Strauss compares the class-
ifications of his natives with similar work done by such naturalists as
Galen, Pliny, Hermes Trismegistus, and Albertus Magnus -- perhaps we could
add Aristotle -- and to the formal classifications still employed by
zoology and botany.

The methodological difficulties experienced by an ethnographer
are seen to be enormous: " . . . it is not possible to interpret myths
and rites correctly, even if the interpretation is a structural one . . .
without an exact identification of the plants and animals which are
referred to or of such of their remains as are directly used." This
poses a task for which the ethnographer is rarely equipped. Added to
this is the difficulty of knowing "the role which each culture gives them
within its own system of significance".[76] In any given myth or rite,
any number of other systems of signification can be used besides those
which appear. This is used to argue that "the terms never have any
intrinsic significance. Their meaning is one of 'position' -- a function

of the history and cultural context on the one hand and of the structural system in which they are called upon to appear on the other".[77]

Another way of posing the two methodological difficulties of the ethnographer mentioned in the last paragraph would be to refer to them as extrinsic and intrinsic difficulties. "The extrinsic difficulties arise from the lack of knowledge of the (real or imaginary) observations and the facts or principles on which classifications are based. . . . The intrinsic difficulties . . . are due . . . to the polyvalent nature of logics which appeal to several, formally distinct types of connection at the same time."[78]

A conflict between synchrony and diachrony affects particularly those classifications which are lived -- i.e., those of so-called "totemic" groups. "Whenever social groups are named, the conceptual system formed by these names is, as it were, a prey to the whims of demographic change which follows its own laws but is related to it only contingently. The system is given, synchronically, while demographic changes take place diachronically; in other words, there are two determinisms, each operating on its own account and independently of the other."[79] These conceptual systems are much more rudely affected by change than is language, for "they are means of thinking, an activity which is governed by very much less stringent conditions".[80]

The following lengthy quotation concerning this logical level reached by semantic impoverishment will serve to summarize the first major section of The Savage Mind.

. . . the practico-theoretical logics governing the life and thought of so-called primitive societies are shaped by the insistence on differentiation. . . . On the theoretical as well as the practical plane, the existence of differentiating features is of much greater importance than their content. Once in evidence, they form a system which can be employed as a grid is used to decipher a text, whose original unintelligibility gives it the appearance of an uninter-rupted flow. The grid makes it possible to introduce dividions and contrasts, in other words the formal conditions necessary for a significant message to be conveyed. . . .

. . . The operative value of the systems of naming and classifying commonly called totemic derives from their formal character; they are codes suitable for conveying messages which can be transposed into other codes, and for expressing messages received by means of different codes in terms of their own system. The mistake of classical ethnologists was to try to reify this form and to tie it to a determinate content when in fact what it provides is a method for assimilating any kind of content.[81]

The chapters which follow in The Savage Mind indicate various applications of this structural hypothesis to myth, ritual, prohibitions, and laws. Always the rule is to reach the logical level by semantic im-poverishment, finding the lowest common denominator in structure. Meaning is not found in manifest content. Levi-Strauss wants to destroy the distinction between pre-logical and logical thought. Social organization and behavior are the result of a unified set of categories reflected from nature or inherent in the brain. In Levi-Strauss' earlier works, there is a distinction between nature and culture; man passes from nature to culture. But in The Savage Mind, culture is reduced to nature. Man obeys laws which are rooted in nature, laws which he does not invent. He re-sponds to programmed structures.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY AND DIALECTIC

Jean-Paul Sartre regards structuralism as capitalist bourgeoisie's last attack on Marxism, since its quest for structure leads it to regard genetic growth as secondary. Levi-Strauss in turn claims that existentialism, as an attempt to save philosophy, man, and humanism, is uttering its last faint cries. He admits a fundamental antipathy between history and systems of classifications. The civilizations of Europe and Asia have elected to explain themselves by history, an undertaking which is incompatible with that of classifying things and beings by means of finite groups. Man the classifier lives in an atemporal regime, while a society which understands itself in terms of history postulates a single series with an unlimited number of terms. All societies are in history and change, but they react to this condition in different ways. Some accept it, with good or ill grace; others want to deny it and try to make the _states_ of their development as permanent as possible. They do this not by denying the historical process but by admitting it as a form without content. Antiquity and continuance are the foundations of legitimacy, but, as distinct from the thought of "historical" societies, antiquity is conceived as absolute, going back to the origin of the world, and the continuance admits of neither direction nor degree.

Levi-Strauss begins the chapter on history and dialectic by contrasting his own notion of dialectical reason with that of Jean-Paul Sartre, thus delivering a critique of Sartre's critique of dialectical reason. Dialectical reason totalizes, but for Sartre it does so by

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setting pure seriality aside and excluding schematization. Levi-Strauss

finds the very principle of dialectical reason in the savage mind, pre-

cisely because it refuses to exclude anything human or even living.

Levi-Strauss accuses Sartre of vacillating between two conceptions

of dialectical reason. "Sometimes he opposes dialectical and analytical

reason as truth and error . . . while at other times these two kinds of

reason are apparently complementary, different routes to the same truths."[82]

In the first case, Levi-Strauss recalls Sartre to a consideration of his

own performance: "the work entitled Critique de la raison dialectique is

the result of the author's exercise of his own analytical reason: he

defines, distinguishes, classifies, and opposes. This philosophical

treatise is no different in kind from the works it examines and with

which it engages in discussion, if only to condemn them".[83] In the second

case, Sartre's attempt to champion dialectical reason appears superfluous.

For Sartre, in either case, dialectical reason exists independently

of analytical reason. Levi-Strauss finds only a relative opposition

between the two. " . . . dialectical reason is always constitutive; it

is the bridge, forever extended and improved, which analytical reason

throws out over an abyss. . . . The term dialectical reason thus covers

the perpetual efforts analytical reason must make to reform itself if it

aspires to account for language, society and thought". Reason is thus

dialectical when "it is roused to action, tensed by its efforts to

transcend itself".[84] Dialectical reason is "something additional in

analytical reason: the necessary condition for it to venture to undertake

the resolution of the human into the non-human".[85]

Levi-Strauss wins from Sartre the charge of aesthete, a term which Sartre applies to anyone studying men as if they were ants. For Levi-Strauss this is "just the attitude of any scientist who is an agnostic"; besides, analytical reason has a hard time with ants as well as men! "So I accept", says Levi-Strauss, "the characterization of aesthete insofar as I believe the ultimate goal of the human sciences to be not to constitute, but to dissolve man"[86] insofar as these sciences strive to attain invariants beyond the empirical diversity of human societies, thus reintegrating culture into nature, life into its physico-chemical conditions.[87]

Two conditions are to be met if this reduction is to be possible: a) there is to be no impoverishment of the phenomena subjected to reduction; b) the reduction will totally overturn any preconceived idea of the level one is striving to attain. "And when we do finally succeed in understanding life as a function of inert matter, it will be to discover that the latter has properties very different from those previously attributed to it." Both of these conditions seem to rest on the principle that "scientific explanation consists not in moving from the complex to the simple but in the replacement of a less intelligible complexity by one which is more so".[88]

Perhaps Sartre's capital sin, according to Levi-Strauss, lies in the necessary depreciation of so-called primitive societies as a result of defining man in terms of dialectic and dialectic in terms of history. Sartre judges that "the relationship between native thought and his

knowledge of it, is that of a constitutive to a constituted dialectic".[89]
Thus the fact that a native can explain to an anthropologist the func-
tioning of his marriage rules and kinship system by a diagram represents
to Sartre, not a thought, but a piece of manual work. Very interestingly,
Levi-Strauss admits to lending unwitting support to such erroneous ideas
"by having seemed all too often . . . as if I were seeking out an uncon-
scious genesis of matrimonial exchange".[90] The conscious codification of
these rules is much more important than has been realized in the past.
Analytical reason is present in all societies and therefore any anthro-
pological approach must allow us to find it there.

If analytical reason were not present in primitive societies,
such societies would reveal to us only the type of unconscious teleology
revealed by linguistics and psychoanalysis, and here too Sartre's position
would break down, for he also fails to account for the "entities" presented
by these disciplines.

The method of the anthropologist is a reduplicated progressive-
regressive method. "In the first stage, we observe the datum of experience,
analyze it in the present, try to grasp its historical antecedents as far
as we can delve into the past, and bring all these facts back to the light
of day to incorporate them into a meaningful totality."[91] This first
stage is that of analytical reason. The second stage begins when "this
internalized human thing which we have sought to provide with all its
wealth and originality, only fixes the distance analytical reason must
cover, the leap it must take, to close the gap between the ever unforeseen
complexity of this new object and the intellectual means at its disposal".

Analytical reason must then "transform itself as dialectical reason, in
the hope that once flexible, widened and strengthened, by its agency this
unforeseen object will be assimilated to others, this novel totality will
be merged into other totalities and that thus little by little . . .,
dialectical reason will descry other horizons and other objects".[92] All
along, there must be a readiness to retrace one's steps back to the
experienced totality "which serves both as . . . end and means".[93]
Levi-Strauss regards this return on itself as a verification, not, as
Sartre would, as a demonstration.

Levi-Strauss is quick to admit that this expansion entails a
contraction in meaning but so, he intimates, does every attempt at ex-
planation. "The real question is not whether our endeavor to understand
involves a gain or loss of meaning, but whether the meaning we preserve
is of more value than that we have been judicious enough to relinquish."[94]
The meaning man has insofar as he views himself as meaningful is never
the right one; such is our lesson from Marx and Freud.

> . . . superstructures are faulty acts which have "made it" socially.
> Hence it is vain to go to historical consciousness for the truest
> meaning. What Sartre calls dialectical reason is only a recon-
> struction, by what he calls analytical reason, of hypothetical
> moves about which it is impossible to know -- unless one should
> perform them without thinking them -- whether they bear any relation
> at all to what he tells us about them and which, if so, would be
> definable in terms of analytical reason alone. And so we end up
> in the paradox of a system which invokes the criterion of historical
> consciousness to distinguish the "primitive" from the "civilized"
> but -- contrary to its claim -- is itself ahistorical. It offers
> not a concrete image of history but an abstract schema of men
> making history of such a kind that it can manifest itself in the
> trend of their lives as a synchronic totality.[95]

The man of science is bound to place himself outside of historical
context and when he does so the truth of interpretation from within the

context "first beoomes confused and finally disappears altogether. . . .
Thought is powerless to extract a scheme of interpretation from events
long past".[96]

Man cannot divorce himself from the spurious intelligibility
attached to the temporary internality of history, but he should know
that "what he lives so completely and intensely is a myth," for "all
meaning is answerable to a lesser meaning, which gives it its highest
meaning, and if this regression finally ends in recognizing 'a contingent
law of which one can say only: it is thus, and not otherwise' . . . ,
this prospect is not alarming to those whose thought is not tormented
by transcendence even in a latent form".[97] History has no privileged
place in the understanding of man. It must be decoded structurally, and
when it is it will consist only of classes of dates, in which each date
has meaning only insofar as it stands in complex relations of correlations
and oppositions with other dates.

CHAPTER FOUR

RICOEUR: STRUCTURE AND HERMENEUTIC

In the first of two _Esprit_ articles on the thought of Claude Levi-Strauss,[98] Paul Ricoeur attempts to confront structuralism, considered as a science, with hermeneutic, understood as the philosophical interpretation of mythic contents which are grasped and contained in a living tradition and taken up into living reflection and speculation. His desire is to pinpoint the validity of structural method precisely by indicating its limitations.[99] The touchstone of the confrontation will be the importance which structuralism and hermeneutic respectively attach to historical time.[100] He does not wish to oppose structuralism and hermeneutic as if they were either contradictory or mutually exclusive; nor does he wish to oppose structuralism's talk of synchrony/diachrony to hermeneutic's emphasis on historicity. Structuralism is rigorous science; as such, it seeks to place the "personal equation" of the investigator at a distance, to separate it off, and to objectify the structure of a myth, rite, or institution. Hermeneutical interpretation, on the other hand, is a segment of my understanding of myself and of being; as such, it is appropriation of meaning, a philosophical discipline caught in the hermeneutic circle of understanding and believing. The hermeneutic interpretation of symbols ought to be able to find a support in structuralism, since one can properly appropriate what one has put at a distance from oneself.[101]

On the other hand, Ricoeur judges that, for every method, there

is a critical point beyond which the method loses validity. In the case
of Levi-Strauss, this critical point has been passed in The Savage Mind,
in which structural method is generalized in an exaggerated fashion so
as to be applied exhaustively to such phenomena as myth, ritual, religion,
and art; Ricoeur objects also to the transposition from a structural
science to a structuralist philosophy.

Ricoeur begins by discussing the structural model provided by
structural linguistics. From the very beginning, he asks to what extent
the linguistic model of synchrony and diachrony can lead us to an under-
standing of the historicity proper to symbols. The critical point will
be reached when we are face to face with a genuine tradition, i.e., a
series of interpretative recoveries of meaning which cannot be considered
solely in terms of the intervention of disorder into a state of the
system.[102]

Levi-Strauss' insistence, derived from structural linguistics,
on the unconscious and non-reflective level of the mind, homologous or
identical with nature, is also important for Ricoeur's study, for this
insistence is what institutes between the observer and the system a
relation which is non-historical, objective, independent of the observer;
to comprehend the system is not to recover meaning; there is no hermeneutic
circle.[103]

In examining the transposition from the linguistic model to
structural anthropology, Ricoeur finds that the essential feature of a
full-fledged structuralism is the notion of a universal code capable
of expressing the properties common to specific structures. This type

of comprehension of the symbolic function is rigorously independent of the observer. Ricoeur asks how an objective decoding intelligence can join up with a deciphering hermeneutic intelligence which recovers meaning for itself and is enriched by the meaning which it deciphers. Is objective structural science not simply an abstract segment in the entire understanding of the symbolic function, which itself is basically semantic comprehension?[104]

The problem with the transposition or generalization comes in the case of such meaningful discourses as art or religion. Ricoeur can find no guarantee that the relation between diachrony and synchrony, valid in general linguistics, rules so dominantly the structure of particular discourses. Where is the guarantee that culture in general possesses an architecture similar to that of language? Levi-Strauss himself can justify the parallelism only by introducing a third term: the human mind. But, says Ricoeur, we do not understand mind only by an analogy of structure, but also by the recovery, appropriation, and continuation of particular discourses. There is no guarantee that such an understanding is based on the principles of linguistics.[105]

As long as a structuralist enterprise remains aware of its conditions of validity, and thus of its limits, it presents no problem and is in fact very helpful.[106] But what precisely would be the place of a structuralist theory of relations within a general theory of meaning? In the case of art and religion, what is it that one has understood when he has understood structure? The key to answering the question of whether

the understanding of structure can aid hermeneutical intelligence lies
in _time_. The diachrony-synchrony "lineup" of structuralism must confront
the historicity of symbolic meaning.[107]

Ricoeur is struck by the fact that none of the examples studied
in The Savage Mind—examples used to argue for the presence of an entire
level of thought which is held to be the non-domesticated form of all
thinking and in which comprehension is not recovery of meaning but
applying a universal code—are taken from the domain of Semitic, pre-
Hellenic, or Indo-European thought. The question must be asked whether
the mythic thought of these latter peoples submits to structural analysis
in the same way as that of the people studied by Levi-Strauss. Is it not
rather true that with these peoples content is more important than arrange-
ment? Is there not a semantic remainder after a structural analysis is
performed? Does The Savage Mind indicate that only certain cultures are
susceptible of structural study? Are the examples used by Levi-Strauss
exemplary or exceptional? Is there another pole of mythic thought where
semantic richness allows of indefinite historical recoveries in various
social contexts? Is there a pole of mythic thought where structural
intelligence is less important, or at least less exclusive, and gives
way to hermeneutical understanding? The civilizations of Europe and Asia
have chosen to explain themselves by history. Does this not demand
another kind of comprehension? Is the diachrony-synchrony relation
equally applicable as an explanation of the role of time in _all_ mythic
thought?[108] The first limitation which Ricoeur will find with Levi-Strauss'

structuralism is that the passage to the mythic mind is made on the basis of an example which is exceptional.[109]

In Gerhard Von Rad's Old Testament Theology, Vol. I, which studies the historical traditions of Israel, Ricoeur finds the inverse relation between diachrony and synchrony to be the opposite of that suggested by Levi-Strauss in The Savage Mind. Von Rad's work helps Ricoeur to pose the question of the relation between structural understanding and hermeneutical understanding.[110]

What is decisive for a comprehension of the level of meaning of the Old Testament is not a system of names nor a set of classifications, but founding events. The content of the Hexateuch is a kerygma, an announcement of the deeds of Yahweh. There are three major sequences of events: first, the sequence of the deliverance from Egypt, crossing of the Reed Sea, the revelation at Sinai, the wandering in the desert, arriving in the promised land; second, a series of events organized around the theme of the anointed of Israel and the Davidic mission; and third, a level of meaning introduced after the exile: the destruction of the Kingdom appeared to be a foundational event opening up onto the unresolved alternative of promise and threat. This unresolved alternative must be restored if this network of events is to be understood. Thus we must recover the intellectual work which issued from a historical faith and a cultic confession; this intellectual work presided over an elaboration of traditions--the elaboration which we now call Scripture. Various traditions, separated at the outset, gravitated together because

of an original minimal confession of Yahweh. In all of this we must recognize a primacy of history, first because the relations of Yahweh to Israel are signified in and by events without any trace of theological speculation; but also because the theological work done on these events is itself an ordered history, an interpreting tradition. Because of reinterpretation, the comprehension of history itself has an historical character. We see here an historical interpretation of the historical, in which tradition corrects itself by additions which constitute a theological dialectic.[111]

From this reinterpretation of her own traditions Israel was given an identity which itself was historical. Only through interpretation was Israel able to project herself into the past as a unique people to whom the deliverance from Egypt, the revelation of Sinai, the adventure in the desert and the gift of the promised land happened. Only through interpretation did Israel become an indivisible totality. Such a unity is impossible without an unlimited quest for the meaning of history, for a meaning within history. Israel herself became an object of faith and of a history constructed by faith.[112]

Three different historicities can be found in the Old Testament: the historicity of the founding events (heilige Geschichte, hidden time); the historicity of the living interpretation by the writers (constituting tradition); and the historicity of comprehension, of hermeneutic--i.e., the historicity of the identity of Israel (constituted tradition).[113]

The symbols and myths of the Old Testament are not exhausted as

to their meaning by structural method, for their meaning is a reserve capable of being employed in other structures. This is not to say that their meaning is bricolage, for it is not debris. The re-employment of biblical symbols rests on a semantic richness which opens upon new re-interpretations. The initial surplus of meaning is precisely what motivates tradition and interpretation. Structuralist explanation is at home only in systems where synchrony is strong and diachrony disturbing, as in linguistics. Structural re-establishment of harmony is a phenomenon of inertia much more than a living reinterpretation. The examples employed by Levi-Strauss are exemplary only because they occupy an extreme position in a chain of mythic types which must be understood also in terms of its other extreme. The survival of the Israelite kerygma, in very different and new socio-cultural contexts, represents the other pole, exemplary also because extreme, of mythic thought.[114]

Temporality has a completely different bearing or import at one extremity and the other. Thus Ricoeur goes so far as to ask whether we can continue to speak of myth without falling into equivocation. The function of myth, understood in terms of structure, lies in synchrony; myth is a protection against diachronic fragility. But when the model becomes kerygmatic, the surplus of meaning in the symbol is of much more importance than the myth itself; thus the myth of Adam is of secondary importance when compared to the symbolic expressions of the pure and the impure, of error, fallenness, and exile. The richness of this symbolic base appears only in diachrony. The content never ceases to provide food

for thought and becomes more and more explicit through the succession of
recoveries in interpretation and renovation.[115]

The second limitation which Ricoeur finds in Levi-Strauss'
structuralism is the passage from a structural science to a structuralist
philosophy. For Ricoeur, an unconscious order can never be anything but
a step abstractly separated in an understanding of self by self. Structured
decoding must be an objective step in deciphering, and the latter must be
an existential episode in the comprehension of self and of being. If
thought is only structural, then it is a thought which does not think;
but philosophy helps thought to see itself as also hermeneutical.
Structural objectivity can be an abstract moment in thought's appropriation
of itself, in the movement from abstract reflection to concrete reflection.[116]
Structuralist philosophy is an absolutization of the linguistic model, in
which language itself is an abstraction of the speaking subject. We do
not look to linguistic laws when we seek to understand ourselves; rather
we look to the meaning of words. I seek to understand myself by recovering
the meaning from the words of all men. In this way events, hidden in time,
become the historicity of tradition and of interpretation.[117]

There is a very definite sense for Ricoeur in which structural
considerations are today a necessary step in all hermeneutic understanding.
The mutual articulation of these two ways of understanding are much more
difficult than their distinction. Ricoeur attempts only exploratory
suggestions: a) structural explanation can never be completely separated
from hermeneutic comprehension. For hermeneutic understanding is relied
upon in the constitution of the semantic field in which the relations are

established. Different levels of reality are rendered comparable by semantic analogies. The code presupposes the cipher, i.e., a correspondence of contents.[118]

b) There is no recovery of meaning without a minimum of comprehension of structures. A separated symbol has no meaning. Symbols signify only when they are within a given order or economy, a totality which limits and articulates their meanings.[119] Comprehension of structures is not exterior to a comprehension whose task it is to think from symbols; it is today the necessary intermediary between symbolic naivete and hermeneutic understanding.[120]

* * * * *

By way of a concluding unscientific postscript, we will simply repeat the suggestions made above, particularly in the Introduction to this paper. It is not at all difficult for anyone in the same hermeneutic circle or semantic field as Paul Ricoeur, either because of his philosophical convictions or because of a common religious faith, to accept his conclusions and particularly his critique of Levi-Strauss. It is much more difficult, however, if not impossible for anybody who does not already share this universe of meaning and discourse to arrive at the same conclusions. It is quite likely that a Judaeo-Christian orientation of some sort is a prerequisite, a condition of possibility, for understanding and accepting Ricoeur's critique. This means that some other instrument of dialogue will have to be discovered. The suggestion is made here that the transcendental philosophy of Bernard Lonergan may be a starting-point for dialogue with structuralism. For this philosophy calls upon each man to examine the structure of his own conscious performance. This, it seems, Levi-Strauss has neglected.

[1] For Ricoeur's attempt to enter into dialogue, see especially the exchange in _Esprit_, November, 1963. Lonergan's method of dialectical criticism is presented in Chapters 14 and 17 of _Insight_, New York: Philosophical Library, 1957.

[2] See the fine introductory article, "Pour comprendre le structuralisme: Claude Levi-Strauss et l'oeuvre", by A. Milet, _Confrontations_, no. 3, 1968, esp. p. 202. The article runs from p. 201 to p. 246.

[3] "One of the memories dearest to me is not so much that of our excursions into the unknown centre of Brazil as that of the search, on a limestone plateau in Languedoc, for the line of contact between two geological strata. It's a very different thing from just taking a walk, or even from the straightforward exploration of a given area: what seems mere incoherent groping to an uninformed observer is to me the very image of knowledge-in-action, with the difficulties that it may encounter and the satisfactions it may hope to enjoy.

"Every landscape offers, at first glance, an immense disorder which may be sorted out howsoever we please. We may sketch out the history of its cultivation, plot the accidents of geography which have befallen it, and ponder the ups and downs of history and prehistory; but the most august of investigations is surely that which reveals what came before, dictated, and in large measure explains all the others. From the pale broken line, that often imperceptible difference in the form and consistency of the jubled rocks, I can detect that, where there is now nothing but an arid waste, one ocean once followed another. The investigator who establishes, trace by trace, the evidence of their millenary stagnation may not seem to make much sense as, indifferent alike to footpath and barrier, he negotiates the obstacles--landslips, cliff-faces, stretches of bush, farmland--that stand in his way. But his contrariness springs from a determination to find the master key to the landscape; baffling this may well be, but in comparison with it all others are deformed or incomplete.

"And sometimes the miracle happens. On one side and the other of a hidden crevice we find two green plants of different species. Each has chosen the soil which suits it; and we realize that within the rock are two ammonites, one of which has involutions less complex than the other's. We glimpse, that is to say, a difference of many thousands of years; time and space suddenly commingle; the living diversity of the moment juxtaposes one age and the other and perpetuates them. Thought and sensibility take on a new dimension, in which every drop of sweat, every movement of muscle, every quick-drawn breath becomes the symbol of a story; and, as my body reproduces the particular gait of that story, so does my mind embrace its meaning. I feel myself luxuriating in a state of heightened perception, in which Place and Period make themselves known to one another and have at last a common language in which to communicate." _Tristes Tropiques_, p. 60. In passing, we may note the similarity of the experience here recounted with that of Archimedes running naked from the baths of Syracuse, crying "I've got it", which serves as Lonergan's dramatic, if somewhat homely, introduction to

Insight, if only to comment at the beginning of this paper that it is
precisely the significance of this type of exhilaration that Lonergan
attempts to explicate in that work. Would a reflection on his own
performance change Levi-Strauss' view of knowledge and of man?

[4]"When I first read Freud his theories seemed to me to represent quite
naturally the application to individual human beings of a method of which
geology had established the canon. In both cases the investigator starts
with apparently impenetrable phenomena; and in both he needs a fundamental
delicacy of perception--sensibility, flair, taste: all are involved--if
he is to detail and assess the complexities of the situation. And yet
there is nothing contingent, nothing arbitrary, in the order which he
introduces into the incoherent-seeming collection of facts. Unlike the
history of the historians, history as the geologist and the psycho-analyst
see it is intended to body forth in time--rather in the manner of a
tableau vivant--certain fundamental properties of the physical or psychical
universe. A tableau vivant, I said; and, in effect, the acting-out of
proverbs does provide a crude parallel to the activities of geologist and
psycho-analyst. These consist, after all, in the interpretation of each
act as the unfolding in time of certain non-temporal truths. Proverbs
are an attempt to pin down these truths on the moral plane, but in other
domains they are just called 'laws'. In every case our aesthetic curiosity
acts as a springboard and we find ourselves immediately in a state of
cognizance." Tristes Tropiques, pp. 60-62. This quotation indicates
Levi-Strauss' fascination with similarity of structure, independent of
content. At the level of theoretical explanation, Lonergan argues that
content will have to be taken seriously into account; in this particular
example, he would argue that the structural similarities between the
physical and psychical universes will not offer an argument for re-
ductionism, because of the content of the data in each universe. For
his unique argument against reductionism, see Insight, chapters 4
(emergent probability), 11, and 15.

[5]"Marx followed Rousseau in saying--and saying once and for all, as
far as I can see--that social science is no more based upon events than
physics is based upon sense-perceptions. Our object is to construct a
model, examine its properties and the way in which it reacts to laboratory
tests, and then apply our observations to the interpretation of empirical
happenings; these may turn out very differently from what we had expected.
"At a different level of reality, Marxism seemed to me to proceed in
the same way as geology and psycho-analysis (in the sense in which its
founder understood it). All three showed that understanding consists in
the reduction of one type of reality to another; that true reality is
never the most obvious of realities, and that its nature is already
apparent in the care which it takes to evade our detection. In all these
cases the problem is the same: the relation, that is to say, between
reason and sense-perception; and the goal we are looking for is also the
same: a sort of super-rationalism in which sense-perceptions will be
integrated into reasoning and yet lose none of their properties."
Tristes Tropiques, p. 61.

[6]Milet, pp. 214-5.

[7]Structural Anthropology, p. 31. See Milet, p. 216.

[9]Milet, pp. 216 f. F. de Saussure prefers to limit the term "phoneme" to speaking, which, as we shall see, is very distinct from language.

[10]Word, Journal of the Linguistic Circle of New York, vol. 1, no. 2, August, 1945, pp. 1-21.

[11]We mention in passing that it is such a procedural structure as that experienced here by Levi-Strauss -- illumination, hypothesis, verification -- which is the object of Lonergan's structural analysis: the domain of theoretical inquiry.

[12]Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger. Translated, with an introduction and notes by Wade Baskin. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1966.

[13]Course . . . , p. 9.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 10.

[16]Ibid., p. 16. Lonergan's emphasis on performance precludes his regarding of speaking as accessory and accidental. De Saussure feels that "language can be classified among human phenomena, whereas speech cannot". Lonergan would not agree. See Course . . . , p. 15. For further material on the contrast of language and speaking, see pp. 17-20.

[17]Ibid., pp. 13 f.

[18]Ibid., p. 14.

[19]Ibid., p. 19.

[20]Ibid., p. 70.

[21]Ibid., p. 73.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., pp. 73 f.

[24]Ibid., p. 75.

[25]Ibid., p. 80.

[26]Ibid., pp. 80nf.

[27] Ibid., p. 81.

[28] Ibid., p. 90.

[29] Ibid., pp. 99 f. The expression "collective mind" raises some interesting questions. What precisely is a "collective mind"? Does Levi-Strauss too locate his structures and systems in a collective mind or has he transferred his attention to individual minds? How valid is such a transference?

[30] Ibid., pp. 101 f.

[31] Ibid., p. 104.

[32] Ibid., p. 112. "Psychologically our thought -- apart from its expression in words -- is only a shapeless and indistinct mass. . . . . Without the help of signs we would be unable to make a clear-cut, consistent distinction between two ideas. Without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language.
"Against the floating realm of thought, would sounds by themselves yield predetermined entities? No more so than ideas. Phonic substance is neither more fixed nor more rigid than thought; it is not a mold into which thought must of necessity fit but a plastic substance divided in turn into distinct parts to furnish the signifiers needed by thought." Pp. 111 f.

[33] Ibid., p. 113.

[34] Ibid., p. 114.

[35] Ibid., p. 118. This raises the important problem of meaning, which is not de Saussure's central concern. It does not seem that he is saying that differences produce meaning, but simply that language could not be a bearer of meaning without differences.

[36] Ibid., p. 119.

[37] Ibid., p. 122.

[38] Ibid., p. 123.

[39] Paul Ricoeur, "Structure et hermeneutique", Esprit, November, 1963, p. 599. The central problem in Ricoeur's reflections concerns the extent to which the linguistic model of the relations between synchrony and diachrony leads us to an understanding of the historicity proper to symbols. "The critical point will be reached when we are confronted with a true tradition, that is, with a series of interpretative recoveries which can no longer be considered as the intervention of disorder into a state of the system." Ibid.

[40] Ibid., p. 600. For a further discussion of structure in linguistics, from a different point of view, see Andre Martinet, "Structure and language", in the Yale French Studies, Volumes 36-37, pp. 10-18. Martinet works from the Oxford Concise Dictionary definition of structure: "the manner in which a building or organism or other complete whole is constructed". He links structure very closely with function, and the structure of language with the function of communication. For him, the structure of any object is identified with its relevant features. Since he introduces the choices made by speakers (the paradigmatic axis as distinct from the syntagmatic) as a necessary factor to consider in a search for linguistic structure, the operation called "commutation" (comparing various segments of speech which present different elements in identical contexts) must be practised by the linguist. Martinet adopts a realistic conception of linguistic structure (i.e., structure is not a construct). He also insists that language cannot be disembodied of sounds and meanings, as Hjemslev proposes. The following points, he says, must not be forgotten: "The linerity of speech is not the only constituent feature of this structure; the reality of the object, the language, is to be found in the speaker; the texts with which one operates in fact can be conceived as symptomatic of this reality only through the use of a procedural artifice, communication, which consists of comparing text fragments taken from different utterances; the physical features which one can attribute to linguistic structure are often presented in terms which reflect only that manifestation which is most accessible to observation." P. 17.

[41] Reprinted in English in Structural Anthropology, pp. 29-53.

[42] Ibid., p. 30.

[43] Ibid., p. 31. See N. Broubetzkoy, "La phonologie actuelle", Psychologie du langage, Paris, 1933, p. 143.

[44] Ibid., p. 32.

[45] Ibid., p. 38.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., p. 39.

[48] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

[49] Ibid., p. 43.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., p. 46.

[52] Ibid., p. 44. Thus to search for the origin of the avunculate is to start on the wrong scent. The maternal uncle is a "given".

[53]Ibid., p. 49. He adds: " . . . in both anthropological and linguistic research, we are dealing strictly with symbolism. And although it may be legitimate or even inevitable to fall back upon a naturalistic interpretation in order to understand the emergence of symbolic thinking, once the latter is given, the nature of the explanation must change as radically as the newly appeared phenomenon differs from those which have preceded and prepared it. Hence, any concession to naturalism might jeopardize the immense progress already made in linguistics, which is also beginning to characterize the study of family structure, and might drive the sociology of the family toward a sterile empiricism, devoid of inspiration." Ibid., pp. 49 f.

[54]Our material in this section is summarized from A. Milet, pp. 218-221.

[55]Structural Anthropology, p. 59. The importance of structure, and its independence of content can be seen in the following quotation regarding the equivalence of kinship and language: "That the mediating factor, in this case, should be the women of the group, who are circulated between class, lineages, or families, in place of the words of the group, which are circulated between individuals, does not at all change the fact that the essential aspect of the phenomenon is identical in both cases. Ibid., p. 60.

[56]Ibid., p. 61

[57]Ricoeur, p. 604.

[58]Ibid., p. 605.

[59]Totemism, p. 90.

[60]Milet, p. 230; Ricoeur, p. 606.

[61]Ricoeur, ibid.

[62]The Savage Mind, pp. 2 f.

[63]Ibid., p. 3.

[64]Ibid., pp. 3,9.

[65]Ibid., p. 10.

[66]Ibid., p. 11. Words such as "objective knowledge", "unreasonable and precipitate", and "truth" would figure heavily in a relating of Lonergan to Levi-Strauss. Though objectivity is clearly different for Lonergan from what it is for Levi-Strauss, one might be justified in asking precisely what is meant by "truth" here. And what does it mean to be "precipitate"? Particularly on this point, Lonergan's emphasis on performance would prove helpful.

[67]Ibid., p. 13.

[68]Ibid., p. 15. What kind of necessary connection is Levi-Strauss referring to? Interestingly enough, on the same page, he states that "there is no necessary connection between sensible qualities and properties", and on the next page he speaks of heterogeneous and arbitrary classifications.

[69]Ibid., p. 16.

[70]Ibid., p. 14.

[71]Ibid., p. 17.

[72]If one adopts the theory that language is constitutive of meaning, the scientist, with his "concepts", would have the same problem. Levi-Strauss sees this problem, now admits a limited power of reference for "concepts", and yet maintains a real difference between the scientist and either the bricoleur or the mythic thinker. The engineer (whom Levi-Strauss facilely interchanges with the scientist) "is always trying to make his way out of and go beyond the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization while the 'bricoleur' by inclination or necessity always remains within them". P. 19.

[73]Ibid., p. 20.

[74]Ibid., p. 22.

[75]See p. 36.

[76]Ibid., pp. 46-54. These references by Levi-Strauss to his own difficulties in attempting to understand from a scientific point of view suggest Lonergan's emphasis on the performance of the knower or one who is trying to know.

[77]Ibid., p. 55. If Levi-Strauss is correct concerning the nature of concrete logic and particularly on this point of the relative significance and cultural relativity of terms, this could well mark the major difference between concrete logic, as viewed by Levi-Strauss, and the logic of modern science, as viewed by Lonergan.

[78]Ibid., pp. 60 f.

[79]Ibid., p. 66.

[80]Ibid., p. 67.

[81]Ibid., pp. 75 f. We might summarize our suggestions relating to Lonergan as follows:

1) the question of conscious performance -- of the conscious performance of an ethnologist, for example -- represents a further relevant question which ought to be raised; in Lonergan's terms, the data of the conscious performance of the empirical scientist represent a "coincidental manifold" from the standpoint of Levi-Strauss' explanation of thought;

2) the question of the conscious performance of the mythic thinker is not a closed question; it can be studied without denying what Levi-Strauss has asserted concerning unconscious structures;

3) if Levi-Strauss is correct concerning the unconscious structures of mythic thought, the relative insignificance of terms vis-a-vis relations in such thought marks the principal difference from what characterizes the (usually unconscious) structures of the performance of a theoretical scientist, in whose work the relations fix the terms and the terms fix the relations;

4) finally, the discovery of the structures of theoretical performance also provides a grid for deciphering a text, the text of undifferentiated "consciousness"; the grid thus discovered can be appropriated by the discoverer and, having been thus appropriated, function as a way of incorporating and moving with changing events, unlike the (unappropriated) synchronic structures of concrete logic; and consequently an alternative has been offered to the dissolution of man suggested by Levi-Strauss in his chapter on history and dialectic.

[82]Ibid., p. 245.

[83]Ibid., pp. 245 f.

[84]Ibid., p. 246.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid., p. 257.

[87]"The opposition between nature and culture to which I attached much importance at one time now seems to be of primarily methodological importance." Ibid., p. 247.

[88]Ibid., pp. 247 f.

[89]Ibid., p. 251.

[90]Ibid. It is not clear whether Levi-Strauss is here weakening to some extent the discontinuity between consciousness and the unconscious which appears to be implied in his earlier works.

[91]Ibid., p. 253.

[92]Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., p. 254.

[95] Ibid. It is quite likely that Levi-Strauss might want to say much the same concerning Lonergan's notion of dialectic in hermeneutics (which, unfortunately, we will not be able to investigate here). The question would be whether Lonergan's analysis of the structures of consciousness will put us in a better position to know whether the movements he tells us of bear any relation to what he tells us about them.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., p. 255.

[98] "Structure et hermeneutique," Esprit, 1963, pp. 596-627. The second article, "La Structure, Le Mot, L'Evenement," Esprit, 1966, is concerned with structure in linguistics and will not occupy us here.

[99] Ibid., p. 596.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid., pp. 596 f.

[102] Ibid., p. 599.

[103] Ibid., p. 600.

[104] Ibid., p. 604.

[105] Ibid., pp. 604 f.

[106] Ibid., p. 605.

[107] Ibid., p. 606.

[108] Ibid., pp. 607-9.

[109] Ibid., p. 611.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid., pp. 611 f.

[112] Ibid., pp. 612 f.

[113] Ibid., p. 613.

[114] _Ibid._, pp. 614 f.

[115] _Ibid._, p. 616.

[116] _Ibid._, pp. 617 f.

[117] _Ibid._, pp. 618 f.

[118] _Ibid._, pp. 621 f.

[119] _Ibid._, pp. 624 f.

[120] _Ibid._, p. 627.