THE ORIGINS OF LEVI-STRAUSS'S STRUCTURALISM

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Abstract The paper is concerned with the intellectual origins of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism. In the first section I define this structuralism, arguing that it consists of far more than a simple method, being underpinned by an epistemology and a theory of man in society. I argue further that this structuralism cannot be seen as the application of a method pioneered in linguistics, indicating that the 'structural' aspects of Lévi-Strauss's first major theoretical work, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* derive rather from *Gestalt* psychology than from linguistics.

In the bulk of the paper I seek to demonstrate that Lévi-Strauss's structuralism in fact has its origins in the attempt to adapt Durkheimian sociology in the light of the newly found individualism characteristic of French radical liberalism of the inter-war years. This adaptation is achieved by submitting Marcel Mauss's theory of exchange to an individualist, rationalist and anti-historicist critique, by means initially of psycho-analysis and subsequently of *Gestalt* psychology. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* combines this theory with a formalistic interpretation of the theory of kinship developed by the Durkheimian sociologist Marcel Granet. In conclusion I note that the significance of the discovery of linguistics for Lévi-Strauss was not the discovery of the concept of structure, but its provision of a radically intellectualist theory of the unconscious as a formal structuring capacity.

1. *Structural method and structuralist philosophy*

Although the concept of 'structure' is one of the oldest in the social sciences, it is only in the last twenty years or so that a school of thought known as 'structuralism' has grown up. The founder of this school of thought in the social sciences is an anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss. Although an anthropologist, in the sense that he has applied his theoretical approach to the study of non-literate societies, Lévi-Strauss's work is of significance for all the social sciences, since it purports to offer a new, scientific, approach to sociological explanation.

The concept of structure is of much wider significance than is the school of thought which privileges this concept. It is not a concept which has a stable or unambiguous meaning. From the present point of view, however, the concept of structure expresses the desire to have a concept of the whole as something greater than the sum of its parts without having recourse to the concept of the whole as something emergent, something transcendental, of a quite different order of

reality from the parts. The concept of structure expresses the claim that the whole is constituted by the relations between the parts, and by nothing more than those relations. The concept expresses, therefore, an opposition both to atomism and to transcendentalism.

This concept is found in the 'empiricist' conception of social structure as comprising relations of interdependence between the different actors or institutions in society, the relations between the elements of the structure representing social interactions. It is also found in a 'positivist' form, where the structure simply expresses statistical correlations. Finally, it is found in functionalist sociology, where the relations do not have any necessary empirical correlates, but express relations of functional interdependence, the existence of one institution, for example, implying the existence of another.

Lévi-Strauss offers a different conception of structure according to which the relations between the elements of the structure are purely formal relations, which need have no empirical counterparts.[1] More than this, however, the elements of the structure have no reality beyond the structure, they are themselves defined by their participation in the structure. Hence, for Lévi-Strauss, unlike others who use the concept of structure, explanation is provided by an elucidation of the structure alone. In traditional uses of the concept of structure the elements related by the structure retain their autonomy. Hence, for the latter, social events are explained as the result of the action of the parts of society, on the one hand, and their interaction, on the other.

His conception of structure constitutes structuralism as a specific method, a method, Lévi-Strauss repeatedly stresses, which 'has no message':[2]

> 'Structuralism is not a philosophical doctrine, but a method. It removes social facts from experience and transports them to the laboratory. There it endeavours to represent them in the form of *models*, always taking into consideration not the terms, but the *relations* between the terms.
>
> It subsequently treats each system of relations as a particular case of other systems, real or simply possible, and seeks their global explanation at the level of the *rules of transformation* which make it possible to pass from one system to another system, such as can be grasped by the concrete observation of linguistics or ethnography.
>
> It thus reconciles the human sciences with the physical and natural sciences'.[3]
>
> 'Structuralism, therefore, far from offering a philosophy, is presented as a scientific achievement before which philosophy is obliged to bow down'.[4]

If structuralism were simply such a method, it would be no different from any other abstract formalism which seeks relations whose significance remains a mystery, and it would be unable to make any special claims to favour. For Lévi-Strauss structuralism is not simply a method, it is *the method* of the human sciences.

It only avoids the danger of formalism by its assertion that the form has a content, indeed that the form *is* the content.[5]

Structuralism clearly, and quite explicitly, is distinct from formalism in presenting the form as the property, as the content, of the real. Hence the application of the method implies claims which in turn have a philosophical origin. The application of the method depends, therefore, on a prior characterization of a reality which constitutes the object of the social and human sciences, indeed a characterization which constitutes man and society as an *object* for a *science*. The characterization of such an object is *prior to* the science and is therefore a philosophical task. The structural method, therefore, necessarily implies within it a philosophical position.

The philosophy has two dimensions. It offers firstly an epistemology which defines the relation between knowledge and its object. In Lévi-Strauss's case this epistemology, although not self-consciously defended, is a positivist epistemology which sees the scientist establishing the facts 'without allowing any theoretical preconception to decide whether some are more important than others',[6] and then establishing the relations between models by experimentation.[7] The very condition of the application of the structural method is the exclusion of the observer from the observed, and so the method is only applicable strictly to societies from which the observer can distance himself.[8] Hence it was in the study of distant societies that the structural method was developed, societies which had historically been treated as objects by our own society.[9]

The philosophy also includes a theory of man in society which founds the theoretical conception of the structure as the essence of the real. For Lévi-Strauss the structure is founded in the mind which imposes it on an amorphous external reality. As a theory of culture and society the implication is that culture and society are the products of the structuring activity of the unconscious mind. As a theory of meaning the implication is that meaning derives from this unconscious structuring activity.[10]

In Lévi-Strauss's hands structuralism is very much more than a methodology, implying as it does an epistemology, and a theory of man in society, on the basis of the privilege accorded to a particular, and very narrow, concept of structure. The *scientific* claims of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism rest more heavily on its assimilation to a broader scientific movement than on its direct achievements, on the achievements of structuralism in linguistics rather than in the study of kinship or of myth, the scientific value of Lévi-Strauss's contribution to the latter being sharply and very generally questioned.

In this context it is not surprising that Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is seen as the product of the application of a method pioneered successfully in linguistics to a new field. It is this view which I would like to contest in this paper. In particular I want to argue that *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, usually presented as the first sustained application of the structural method in the social sciences, owes very little

to linguistics, but rather develops out of the attempt to mould the Durkheimian tradition to the ideological requirements of a new age.

In fact there are very few signs of the impact of linguistics in *The Elementary Structures*. The significance of linguistics is only specifically noted in the concluding chapter.[a] Lévi-Strauss began writing *The Elementary Structures* in 1943, while it was only 'about 1944' that he became convinced of the similarity of 'rules of marriage and descent' and 'those prevailing in linguistics'.[b] In his first published work to betray the linguistic inspiration, Lévi-Strauss's touch is far from sure.[c] Moreover the latter article actually denies that the method can be applied to terminologies,[d] applying it rather to the system of attitudes. In an article of 1946 linguistics is still not especially privileged, 'philosophy, psychology, history, etc.' being picked out as the complementary disciplines.[e]

The concept of structure in *The Elementary Structures* is of *gestaltist* rather than specifically linguistic inspiration. The regulating principle, the principle of reciprocity, is substantive and not purely formal. It is the basis of a synchronic *functional* whole, itself having a physiological foundation. The relation between form and physiological substratum is one of isomorphism and not reduction.[f] Behaviour, in the form of exchange, seeks to achieve an ideal equilibrium (according to the law of *Prägnanz*[g]). Lévi-Strauss lays repeated stress on the unconscious, and so anti-metaphysical, teleology which was precisely what *Gestalt* theory introduced.[h] Finally *Gestalt* theory even anticipated Lévi-Strauss's insulation of the model from reality in that the *Gestaltqualitäten* have no objective correlates.[i]

The only theoretically significant reference to linguistics in *The Elementary Structures*, apart from the very last section, makes a point which has already been introduced by reference to *Gestalt* psychology.[k] The primacy of relations over terms is referred to as a lesson not of linguistics but of psychology,[l] and the concept of structure itself referred to *Gestalt* psychology.[m] In the Preface the work is explicitly assimilated to the *Gestaltist* movement. Subsequently Lévi-Strauss has reaffirmed the roots of his concept of structure in the *Gestalt*,[p] and the common *gestaltist* origins of both linguistics and anthropology, the latter by reference to Benedict and Kroeber as well as his own work.[q] The *gestaltist* approach was well-adapted to his concerns. As Piaget has noted:

> 'the psychological *Gestalt* represents a type of structure that appeals to those who, whether they acknowledge it or not, are really looking for structures that may be thought "pure", unpolluted by history or genesis, functionless and detached from the subject.'[r]

An attentive reading of Lévi-Strauss's earlier work reveals very clearly that he developed his structuralism quite independently of structural linguistics. In the rest of this paper I want to argue that the origins of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism lie in the search for a new philosophy which dominated so many of his contemporaries, which led Lévi-Strauss to anthropology and so to a confrontation with Durkheimian sociology. The collectivism of Durkheim's sociology was no longer

appropriate for radical liberalism in the inter-war period, and so Lévi-Strauss turned first to Freud in an attempt to give Durkheimian sociology a new individualistic, rationalist and anti-historicist foundation. Freud, however, offered only the starting point of an enterprise which led Lévi-Strauss, through *Gestalt* psychology, ultimately to linguistics. What he sought in each was not a scientific method, but a concept of man.

2. *The ideological reorientation of the 1930s.*

If we are to understand Lévi-Strauss's structuralism it is necessary to uncover the theoretical problems in response to which Lévi-Strauss developed his own theories. Lack of published sources makes this task a difficult one. Available evidence concerns the social, political and intellectual environment in which Lévi-Strauss's thought emerged, on the one hand, and his own works produced rather later, on the other. In this section the attempt to bridge the gap between the two is necessarily a speculative, interpretative, rather than 'scientific', enterprise. It presumes that Lévi-Strauss's thought was moulded by the intellectual problems thrown up by his social and political situation.[11] In the last analysis some of the argument will be justified only if it illuminates Lévi-Strauss's work for the reader.

Lévi-Strauss's work is theoretically situated very firmly in the Durkheimian tradition.[12] However, through his years as a student this tradition made no positive impact on him,[13] and he arrived in Brazil in 1934 'in rebellion against Durkheim and his school'.[14]

Lévi-Strauss had come to anthropology not through the Durkheimians, but through North American anthropology.[15] However Lévi-Strauss has made it abundantly clear that, however great his debts to his North American masters in relation to specifically anthropological questions,[16] the latter provided more an inspiration[17] than an intellectual tradition.[18]

Although within the Durkheimian tradition, it was from philosophy, and philosophical problems, that Lévi-Strauss came to that tradition, and so an understanding of his thought is possible only on the basis of an understanding of those problems. In this section, therefore, I hope to show how it was that Lévi-Strauss abandoned philosophy for anthropology, and so came to forge a distinctive philosophical anthropology.

Lévi-Strauss was trained as a philosopher. However, like his contemporaries, he rejected the received doctrines of his professors. These doctrines were based on a philosophy of continuity and progress founded in the subject. 'All our teachers were obsessed with the notion of historical development . . . Philosophy . . . was a kind of aesthetic contemplation of consciousness by consciousness'.[19] The Bergsonian philosophy, which was dominant in Paris at the time, included a fundamentally irrational core, the continuity of experience being counterposed as the irrational reality beneath the conceptual constructions of rational thought.

Such a philosophy of the progressive and continuous development of consciousness had, by the late 1920s, become manifestly absurd to the young radical thinker. Reality was constantly erupting into the universe created by the subject of consciousness,[20] upsetting its continuity and challenging its conception of progress and of history. From the Russian Revolution to the Hitler putsch, as well as in France itself, history had become a series of irruptions which seemed to have no meaning in the context of the progressive development of self-consciousness. It was the meaning of history that was in doubt.

The first sign of the restlessness of the new generation was the appearance in 1932 of *Les Chiens de Garde* by Paul Nizan, an intimate friend of Sartre,[21] and the man who suggested to Lévi-Strauss that anthropology should be his field.[22] However, although the problem facing these young men and women was a common one, the solutions they offered differed. The need was to find a new basis on which man could grasp the meaning of his individual existence in the context of an apparently irrational and ruptural history.

Some remained within the Cartesian tradition of French philosophy, seeking simply to reinterpret the Cartesian Cogito, a task accomplished by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*.

The phenomenological and existentialist solutions, adopted by Merleau-Ponty and by Sartre, involved a rejection of the Bergsonian separation of cognition, ruled by eternal and immutable categories[23] and experience, ruled by the irrational *élan vital*. Phenomenology sought to sweep away all the metaphysical dressing in a return to the brute reality of *existence*, the experience of which is an experience of freedom, of the possibility of transcendence. In the concept of existence the consciousness of self is brought into direct contact with the facticity of the world. In Sartre's early existentialism it is this experience of the transcendence of human existence which is the sole basis of meaning. The world itself is absurd and without meaning. The moral duty of the individual is not to impose meaning on the world, but simply to assert his existence as an individual in the face of the world. The continuity of meaning and of history, the permanence of cultural values, are all undermined.[24] Life is for the moment, consciousness is of the moment, 'impossible to construct or even to predict'.[25] The absurdity of the position of the individual with nothing to which to commit himself is fully reflected in Sartre's work.

Lévi-Strauss, however, rejected philosophy altogether.[26] His commitment to it had never been firm, for he did not see philosophy being able to replace science as the means by which we can know man. He believed that philosophy should be 'the handmaid and auxiliary of scientific exploration'.[27] He had, therefore, espoused a 'naive rationalism' since his youth, and his rationalist convictions remained unshaken.[28] Hence while rejecting, like his contemporaries, the Bergsonism of his professors,[29] he was not attracted to phenomenology or existentialism.[30]

In rejecting philosophy Lévi-Strauss, like others of his generation, turned towards sociology. And yet French sociology was as incapable of providing a theory

appropriate to the fundamental problems of the 1930s as was French philosophy. History had overtaken the dominant Durkheimian school of social theory just as surely as it had overtaken Bergsonian philosophy. Although the Durkheimian school continued to inspire sociological studies, particularly in the field of law and religion, it is significant that its attention was focussed increasingly on exotic societies. Durkheimianism had lost its impetus as a social theory. Born in an age when the State of the Third Republic embodied all the hopes of the liberal and radical intelligensia, the Durkheimian commitment to the civilizing influence of the collective conscience could not survive the reduction of the Third Republic to levels bordering on the farcical. Commitment to the collective had acquired an altogether new meaning in the post-war context. Commitment to the collective could only mean commitment to the Leagues of the right, subordination of individual to nation in a proto-fascist ideology, or commitment to the Communist Party on the left, subordination of the individual to the working class. For many young French intellectuals neither established philosophy nor established sociology could offer the basis for an adequate understanding of man in the world. History had undermined the very foundation of both.

Thus we find in France at the end of the twenties and through the thirties a fundamental reorientation of French liberal culture, a questioning of received ideology, and the development of new social theories. In these theories there is a new emphasis on individualism and the problems of individual morality[31] which replaces the collective emphasis of Durkheim's work, with its search for a social morality. For this reason it is from the ranks of the students of philosophy rather than from those of sociology that the new social theorists emerged, for it was in philosophy that individualism had been preserved. However the ideological crisis also involved a challenge to the received philosophies, for the individualist orientation of the latter was adapted to earlier ideological struggles. Hence the new generation could not find a social theory ready made. It is indicative that so many had to go abroad for their inspiration. Sartre turned to Germany to find Husserl and Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty to find Husserl and Lukacs and, later, Weber. Kojève introduced the French to Hegel, in a semi-phenomenological reading, and the young Marx. Aron, like Lévi-Strauss, left philosophy for sociology, finding Weber in Germany offering an alternative to Durkheimian sociology, an alternative which better reflected the problems of his age. Only Lévi-Strauss managed to create a new synthesis out of French sociology and philosophy, with the work of Freud, just becoming known in France, providing the means to transform and to integrate both.

Although rejecting philosophy as a discipline, Lévi-Strauss by no means turned his back on philosophical questions, but rather attempted to answer them on a new terrain.[32] An early interest in geology gave Lévi-Strauss's reaction a 'particular colour'.[33] There were two 'sciences' available to Lévi-Strauss in his attempt to deal with the problems which confronted him, Marxism and psychoanalysis. Both

provided the means of giving history a new meaning, not based on the continuous progress of consciousness. Marxism restores meaning to history by locating that meaning beyond the individual in history itself, the irrational being one moment of the *contradictory*, yet progressive, development of history, given meaning by the *positive* moment which transcends the irrational in the development towards the final goal. This was the doctrine espoused by many of Lévi-Strauss's contemporaries, including Paul Nizan. However, it was not the road chosen by Lévi-Strauss. Although frequently acknowledging the inspiration of Marx,[34] he tells us that 'my Marxist catechism consists of two or three rules, but that renders me in no way competent to give judgement of Marx's work'.[35]

Psychoanalysis restores meaning to man not through history, but through the unconscious. Psychoanalysis showed to Lévi-Strauss that the scientific method of geology could also be applied to the individual, introducing an order into apparent incoherence by referring the latter to 'certain fundamental properties of the physical or psychical universe'.[36] The lesson was also learned from Marx 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 it takes to avoid 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 always the same: a sort of *super-rationalism* in which sense-perception will be integrated into reasoning and yet lose none of its properties'.[37]

Undoubtedly we would have to refer to personal, biographical, factors to explain the implicit rejection of Marxist philosophy in favour of a philosophy deriving from Freud. Perhaps, had he remained in France, Lévi-Strauss would have maintained his political commitment and sought to integrate the Marxist perspective with his own. However, he went to Brazil and what he encountered there cannot have encouraged a belief in the inherent progressiveness of historical development. In Marxist terms the destruction of primitive cultures might ultimately be progressive, but in Brazil Lévi-Strauss met and sympathized with the 'negative moment' of the dialectic. This sympathy with others suffering as a result of the 'logic of history' became more personal when war came and Lévi-Strauss, as a Jew, found himself victim of another 'logic'.[38] Hence it is not at all surprising that during the thirties Lévi-Strauss developed a strong aversion to all historicism, which he has always identified closely with racism and oppression.[39] Rather than found the meaning of man's existence, and the unity of mankind, on his progressive historical self-realization, Lévi-Strauss sought this meaning in 'certain fundamental properties of the . . . psychical universe'.[40]

Knowledge of man is possible, therefore, not because of his insertion in a continuum, but because of the universality of human nature. The latter is the foundation of the possibility of objective knowledge of man, and so of the by-passing of philosophy, that knowledge being objective 'because my thought was itself an object. Being "of this world", it partook of the same nature as that world.'[41] Hence

it is by the objective methods of natural science that knowledge of man is to be attained.

Initially it was psychoanalysis which showed the way. It was psychoanalysis which undermined the 'static antinomies' of academic philosophy by showing that 'there existed beyond the rational a category at once more important and more valid: that of the meaningful. The meaningful is the highest form of the rational.'[42] By seeking, beneath the apparent irrationality of consciousness, the meaning of human activity in the unconscious, psychoanalysis showed that all aspects of mental life, 'rational' and 'non-rational' alike, could be encompassed without building walls between knowledge and experience. Hence the task Lévi-Strauss sought to accomplish was precisely that of his phenomenologist contemporaries, to integrate meaning and experience, the sensible and the intelligible, in a single synthesis. While phenomenology accomplishes the synthesis in consciousness, Lévi-Strauss accomplishes it in the unconscious.

The turn to anthropology was first suggested to Lévi-Strauss by Paul Nizan,[43] but it was the reading of Lowie which confirmed Lévi-Strauss in his choice,[44] a choice sealed by his appointment to a post in Brazil.[45] Apart from idiosyncratic motives behind the appeal of anthropology,[46] Lévi-Strauss saw in it the possibility of a knowledge of man. He was not concerned with immersing himself in the experience of a particular individual in a particular society at a particular time, he was concerned rather with the most general properties of man, those which are expressed in every society and which he believed anthropology could reveal to him.[47] He sought those characteristics which 'matter to all mankind',[48] rather than those which concerned only one society. It should not, therefore, be surprising that new philosophies developed by his contemporaries did not appeal, based as they were on an identification of experience and reality.[49] While the phenomenologists analysed meaning by reference to the intentionality of the subject, Lévi-Strauss sought meaning through a scientific analysis in which the experienced meaning is to be explained by reference to a more fundamental meaning.[50]

In the rest of this paper I intend to indicate how Lévi-Strauss's early 'structuralism' represents a development of this philosophy of man. The philosophy seeks to found the meaning of man's existence in an atemporal unconscious, and hence seeks in the latter also its fundamental principle of scientific explanation. The philosophy, therefore, has clear theoretical implications, these being, above all, an opposition to atomism, to psychologism, and to historicism.[51]

This philosophy depends on the development of a satisfactory theory of the unconscious, for psychoanalysis itself could not provide the theory. The ultimate reliance of psychoanalysis on the affective was hardly satisfactory for a confirmed rationalist such as Lévi-Strauss. It was only gradually, however, that Lévi-Strauss forged a theory appropriate to his ambition. The first source, after Freud, was *Gestalt* psychology, with its focus on function and system, rather than instinct and

emotion. Later, in New York, Lévi-Strauss would find, in the structural linguistics of Roman Jakobson, the inspiration for his solution to the problem of founding an intellectualist psychology which could integrate both reason and emotion. On the basis of this solution he develops fully his philosophy of man while, at the same time, this philosophical development alters his theoretical preoccupations as he comes to focus increasingly on the symbolic and on the system which gives it meaning. This increasingly formal emphasis brings Lévi-Strauss's thought into contact with another contemporaneous development, that of neo-positivist formalism.[52]

3. *Lévi-Strauss and Durkheimian sociology*

Lévi-Strauss entered anthropology with a project already defined. He sought to find, through anthropology, the nature of man. Unable, perhaps, to see the rationality of man in his own society, he turned to the study of other societies. On arriving in Brazil as an emissary of French culture, Lévi-Strauss was forced to confront Durkheimian sociology.

When Lévi-Strauss first went to Brazil he was an 'avowed anti-Durkheimian'.[53]

What he rejected in Durkheim was the latter's positivism[54] and his 'attempt to put sociology to metaphysical uses'.[55] In particular the concept of the collective conscience, which made man's social nature something outside man, disturbed Lévi-Strauss.

Durkheim developed a sociology by trying to sociologize his interpretation of Kant, making of society not a formal principle, nor an Idea, which is ultimately unknowable, but a substantial reality which has phenomenal effects, experienced by the individual as something existing outside himself, and constraining him. The study of society could thus become an empirical, and not a metaphysical, discipline. Society becomes something tangible, whose effects can be studied empirically. The problem with such an attempt, however, is that Durkheim does little more than name this thing which is society, the collective conscience. The collective conscience is something psychic, and not something material, it is something which is stable and independent of the individual will, something which is distinct from the individual and which stands over him.

Although deriving, in part, from an interpretation of Kant, Durkheim's idea of society is very different from that of Kant.[56] Kant thought that man's actions should be ruled by the categorical imperative, itself determined by purely formal means, but for Kant this categorical imperative derived from 'the general concept of a rational being as such',[57] not from society, and was supposed to be universal, not confined to any one society. Moreover the foundation of the imperative was a *priori*, while the collective conscience supposedly has an empirical foundation. For Kant the law is the condition for the full realization of the individual, while for Durkheim it is the means of implementing the obligation of the individual to submit to the demands of society. In many respects Lévi-Strauss's work represents a Kantian critique of Durkheimianism.

To Lévi-Strauss in the 1930s the Durkheimian position must have seemed morally unacceptable, for reasons which I have just outlined. The only acceptable source of morality for a liberal in France in the 1930s must have been the individual. Man's social nature must be located in the individual, and not in a constraining force which stands over the individual.[58] Man must be the source of his own humanity.[59] At the same time this social nature, the condition of possibility of society, must be empirically knowable, it could not be simply a formal principle. Hence Lévi-Strauss sought to remake Durkheim's sociology by putting the social nature of man, inadequately conceptualized by the latter as the collective conscience, back into the individual.[60] The nature of man as a social being is to be revealed through investigating what it is about man that makes society possible, that makes men, in their interaction, create social relations in which they commit themselves to living in society. Lévi-Strauss argues, in an article published in 1946,[61] that Durkheim was forced to invent the collective conscience because he did not have available to him an adequate conception of the unconscious.[62] It is the nature of the unconscious which makes society possible, and it is because the social is located in the unconscious that it seems to experience to be external.[63]

Durkheim realized that social facts were both 'things' and 'representations', both subject and object,[64] that they were psychic, but that they were resistant to the individual will. Without having available the concept of the unconscious, which is precisely a psychic entity impervious to the will, Durkheim had to invent a 'mind' which existed outside the individual and ruled him.[65] With the concept of the unconscious, however, we can recognize that the meaning of the social fact is not imposed on the individual, that it is the creation of the individual, without being a purely subjective meaning, since its objectivity is founded in the unconscious:

'The solution of Durkheim's antinomy lies in the awareness that these objectivated systems of ideas are unconscious, or that unconscious psychical structures underlie them and make them possible. Hence their character of "things"; and at the same time the dialectic—I mean un-mechanical—character of their explanation'.[66]

The relation to the other, the social relation, is a symbolic relation, and hence must be given an explanation in terms of the psyche.[67] Thus Lévi-Strauss rejects reductionist attempts to dispose of the problem of the collective conscience by devaluing the symbolic nature of the social fact, such as Malinowski's attempt to insert a behaviourist psychology into Durkheim's sociology.[68] 'No social phenomenon may be explained, and the existence of culture itself is unintelligible, if symbolism is not set up as an *a priori* requirement of sociological thought.'[69] At first, it seems, it was Freud who showed the role of the unconscious in constituting symbolic relations between the self and the other. However, for a rationalist Freud's use of the irrational could hardly prove satisfactory. Hence, it was not until his discovery of *Gestalt* psychology and then structural linguistics that Lévi-Strauss was able to develop a satisfactory theory of the unconscious to underpin his sociology.

Lévi-Strauss's objection to Durkheimian sociology was clearly an objection from within the Durkheimian tradition. It is to the solutions offered that he objects, not to the problems which Durkheim posed for sociology. While Durkheim sought the nature of society, Lévi-Strauss sought the nature of man and of his unconscious. For both society is symbolic, for both it is to be studied as a systematic whole, and for both the method to be followed is the comparative method.[70]

Although Lévi-Strauss follows Durkheim in emphasizing the need for a systematic view of society, he rejects Durkheim's claim that this system is an emergent whole which has its own laws and which transcends the individual members of society. For Lévi-Strauss society cannot exist other than in the individual members of society and in the relations between these individuals, these relations being founded in the unconscious and not in some transcendent entity.[71] It is this insistence that leads Lévi-Strauss towards structuralism.

Lévi-Strauss was seeking the most general properties of society in order to uncover the origin of the social in man himself. At the same time he was seeking to root this general conception in the concrete, in the mind of the individual member of this or that society.[72] He believed he saw such a conception, at least in embryo, in the work of Mauss, whom Lévi-Strauss acknowledged in his early work as his 'master'.[73]

Mauss's insistence on the systematic nature of social phenomena is expressed in the concept of the 'total social fact'.[74]

'He studies each type as a whole, always considering it as an integrative cultural complex'.[75] But Mauss ties himself much more closely to the concrete than does Durkheim. The concept of the 'total social fact' leads towards a greater respect for the integrity and specificity of each particular society, and so a lesser readiness to resort to the reductionism of the evolutionary argument to which Durkheim so readily had recourse.[76] Moreover, despite his retention of the concept of a collective psyche, Mauss is much more aware than was Durkheim of the need to relate this to the individual psychology.[77] It is on the basis of a critical reading of Mauss's theory of reciprocity that Lévi-Strauss developed his theory of the social, and it is to the development of this theory that I would now like to turn.

4. *The theory of reciprocity*

The theory of reciprocity was developed in a number of theoretical articles which Lévi-Strauss published in 1943 and 1944, which were based largely on those societies he had visited in Brazil.[78]

One problem which clearly crops up in these articles, and indeed in Lévi-Strauss's later work as well, is the problem of diffusion.[79] The problem was one of explaining apparently remarkable similarities between institutions found in societies as far apart as North and South America, Asia and Oceania. Lévi-Strauss was opposed to all kinds of evolutionary argument, unless there was very good independent evidence for these arguments. Explanation in terms of 'anterior forms' is only

acceptable as a last resort, when functional explanation has failed.[80] In the case of one of the societies which concerned Lévi-Strauss, the Bororo, their dualistic social organization could not be explained in evolutionary terms, as a primitive form, because there was clear evidence that this organization derived from a more complex culture.[81]

Lévi-Strauss was not as strongly opposed to diffusionism, which he saw as being complementary to functional explanation.[82] However he argued that, even where there was evidence to support diffusionist hypotheses, these were insufficient. The question of the principle underlying an institution is a different question from that of its origins, as Durkheim himself had clearly argued.[83] Where we find an institution which is general, we must explain that generality by reference to the generality of its function. This function will be revealed by analysis of the fundamental principles of the institution.[84]

The common principle which was emerging from the analysis of a number of apparently very different institutions was the principle of *reciprocity*. In the articles of 1943 to 1945 Lévi-Strauss finds reciprocity to be the foundation of power,[85] of dual organization,[86] of war and commerce,[87] and of kinship.[88]

Marcel Mauss had already put forward a theory of reciprocity in his essay *The Gift*.[89] For Lévi-Strauss it is this essay which 'inaugurates a new era for the social sciences'.[90] Mauss found, beneath the many different forms of the gift relationship, a common factor.[91] The gift relationship is something other than the immediate giving of the gift, for one object can be replaced by another without the relationship being affected.[92] The gift relationship is also more than the simple sum of its parts, for the giving of a gift institutes an obligation to reciprocate. Mauss saw the key to the relationship in this obligation to reciprocate, and sought to explain this obligation.[93]

Mauss observed that the gift was imbued with symbolic significance. He noted that the real properties of the gift were unimportant, all sorts of quite different items could constitute gifts. He concluded that the gift was very much more than a simple object transferred. It was a total social fact which instituted a social relation between individuals or groups and had religious, legal, moral, economic and aesthetic significance. It was, furthermore, a binding social relation which had the nature of a contract by virtue of the obligation to reciprocate on the part of the recipient. Thus Mauss saw in the relation of gift exchange the origin of the social contract and so the foundation of the relation between individual and society. Though he made no claim to universality for the institution, as Lévi-Strauss was to do, Mauss's conclusion could be that of Lévi-Strauss too:

> 'It is by opposing reason to emotion . . . that people succeed in substituting alliance, gift and commerce for war, isolation and stagnation . . . Societies have progressed in the measure in which they have been able to stabilise their contracts to give, receive and repay.'[94]

According to Lévi-Strauss,[95] Mauss made a serious error, which has its origin in

his characteristic empiricism. Lévi-Strauss argues that Mauss isolates the gift-giving relation from the system in which it is inserted. Mauss believed that the giving of a gift *instituted* a system of reciprocity, rather than seeing it as being *inserted* in such a system.[96] He could not see, beyond the concrete reality of the relation, the system which lay behind. This leads him to see the obligation to reciprocate as being something inherent in the gift, failing to see that the idea of exchange precedes the initial giving of the gift. The gift is given *in order to secure an exchange*, exchange is not the result of the thwarted attempt to give.

Thus Mauss explained exchange in ultimately irrational terms, the giving of the gift setting up a psychological tension which could only be resolved in an exchange. This theory was unacceptable to Lévi-Strauss, seeking as he was a 'super-rationalism'.[97] Lévi-Strauss's own theory, however, was still in the course of development.

Lévi-Strauss was, nevertheless, convinced of the centrality of the institution of reciprocity. His theoretical appreciation was endorsed by his own experience. While living with the Nambikwara he experienced an encounter between two bands. The meeting was accompanied by an elaborate ritual of exchange which lasted for a number of days and which served to reconcile the initially hostile bands to one another. These exchanges were not purely symbolic, for, as Lévi-Strauss tells us in some detail,[98] the bands depend on this sort of contact for important goods. This meeting is described in *Tristes Tropiques*,[99] and referred to in many other works.[100]

This incident provided the material for one of Lévi-Strauss's first theoretical articles.[101] In this article Lévi-Strauss argued that there is an essential continuity between war and trade, which are not 'two types of coexisting relation, but rather two opposed and indissoluble aspects of one and the same social process'.[102] The groups which meet both fear and need one another. When they meet an elaborate ritual is necessary, involving symbolic conflict, in order to dissipate the fears and make trade possible. This trade may even go so far as an exchange of women between the groups, so that the two groups come to be permanently related by marriage. Lévi-Strauss concludes the article in thoroughly Maussian terms: 'War, commerce, the system of kinship, and the social structure must thus be studied in intimate correlation'.[103]

In another article Lévi-Strauss argued that reciprocity underlies dual organization even where there are relations of subordination, for 'subordination itself is reciprocal: the priority which is gained by one moiety at one level is lost to the opposite moiety on the other'.[104]

This idea was developed as the basis of an exchange theory of power, first published in 1944[105] in the form of an analysis of chieftainship in Nambikwara society, and, by extension, in other primitive societies. When reprinted in 1947[106] it appeared as a general theory of power, with the term 'chieftainship' replaced by the term 'power' throughout. Much of this article reappears in *Tristes Tropiques*.[107] Although focussed on Nambikwara chieftainship, there is no doubt that even in

1944 the analysis was meant to be the basis of a general theory, for the same idea of a relation of reciprocity between leader and led, or 'mass' and 'elite' is found in an article on the contemporary United States, written in 1944.[108]

The theory of power is, essentially, a functionalist theory. However, Lévi-Strauss objects to that sort of functional analysis which imposes a function on an institution instead of discovering that function within it. The function can 'be reached only through analysis of the underlying principle of the institution'.[109] The reason for looking at power in Nambikwara society is that 'precisely on account of its extreme impoverishment, Nambikwara political structure lays bare some basic functions which may remain hidden in more complex and elaborate systems of government.'[110] This, of course, is to take it for granted that the 'function is always and everywhere the same, and can be better studied, and more fully understood where it exists under a simple form'.[111] This identity of function is founded in the identity of the human mind.

The group needs a leader to organize their travels, to decide on expeditions, to deal with neighbouring bands, to supervize the gardens. But the leader does not emerge as a direct response to this need of the group, the leader is not moulded by the group. The group, rather, is moulded by the leader and takes its character from him. If the leader is inadequate the group will disperse and find new leaders. There is no collective conscience to mould the individual.

Although there is a functional need for a leader, this need does not make itself felt directly. Chiefs do not arise because they are needed, they arise 'because there are, in any human group, men who . . . enjoy prestige for its own sake, feel a strong appeal to responsibility, and to whom the burden of public affairs brings its own reward. These individual differences are . . . part of those psychological raw materials out of which any given culture is made'.[112] There is a function, but the fulfilment of this function must be explained in terms of individual, not collective, psychology. The contrast with Durkheim seems clear and deliberate.

The relation of power is a relation of reciprocity. In exchange for the burden of his office the Nambikwara chief is provided by the group with a number of wives. Polygamy is 'the moral and sentimental reward for his heavy duties.'[113] But on top of this real exchange of valuables, there is a symbolic exchange:

> 'Consent . . . is at the same time the origin and the limit of leadership . . . Consent is the psychological basis of leadership, but in daily life it expresses itself in, and is measured by, a game of give-and-take played by the chief and his followers, and which brings forth, as a basic attribute of leadership, the notion of reciprocity.'[114]

In these early articles we can see a theory developing. Lévi-Strauss is not turning his back on functional analysis of a Durkheimian kind. Trade, co-operation, leadership are all required if society is to be able to satisfy the material needs of its members. These societal functions are all fulfilled by different modalities of the institution, the fundamental social relation, of reciprocity. But the argument so far

is incomplete. For Lévi-Strauss the functional argument cannot stand on its own. Society exists not, as Durkheim might have argued, because it creates its own conditions of existence, but because these are part of the 'psychological raw materials out of which any given culture is made.'[115] If we are to understand how the societal functions are fulfilled, we must introduce an explanation in terms of efficient causes, an explanation in psychological terms. Hence the functional analysis must be rooted in the individual psychology. Society need not have existed. It does exist because the human mind is such as to make it possible for it to exist. Hence, for example, a leader is required if the group is to survive. However, leadership does not exist because the group creates it, but because there are particular kinds of people who are psychologically well-adapted to perform the leadership function.

Although the starting point of the analysis is the material needs of the society, the reciprocity which emerges does not take the form of a utilitarian contract, for the psychological roots of reciprocity give the relation a symbolic dimension. Hence the relation of reciprocity is a total social fact, encompassing both material and symbolic interdependence between the members of society, and rooted, in the last analysis, in the unconscious mind.

Taken individually these early articles treat of different institutions as expressions of a common principle, the principle of reciprocity. When we take the articles together, however, it seems clear that Lévi-Strauss does not see reciprocity as one principle among others, but rather as the key to society, as its condition of existence. It is the relation of reciprocity which integrates the individual into society, which makes man a social animal.[116] In seeking the psychological origins of particular expressions of reciprocity Lévi-Strauss is seeking those properties of the mind which make society possible and which define man as a social being. It is the nature of the mind which lies at the root of reciprocity, and not an obligation imposed from without. The conditions of possibility of reciprocity, which are the conditions of existence of society itself, take the form of psychological *a prioris*. These psychological properties cannot, therefore, be explained genetically, as Durkheim sought to explain them, as emergent properties which belong to society,[117] for they are the starting point from which sociology must begin.

This theory, outlined in the early articles, is more fully developed in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. *The Elementary Structures* is based on a conception of reciprocity as a relational, or structural, principle, which is prior to any institutionalization of reciprocity and prior to the elements which are related by reciprocity. Reciprocity exemplifies the immanence of *relation*, for it is from the beginning a relational principle. This relation is prior to the concrete material on which it is imposed and so its immanence is founded in the mind which imposes it. Thus the notion of reciprocity, for Lévi-Strauss, makes it possible to explain the social relation, and more generally the social structure, by reference, not to a collective conscience, but to the individual unconscious.

5. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*

The Elementary Structures of Kinship represents the full development of the theory of reciprocity which we have already seen in embryo in the earlier articles. Reciprocity marks the dividing line between culture and nature, hence it is the defining characteristic of culture and condition of possibility of the latter. Once again we find, in the first few chapters of the book, that there are material grounds for the claim that reciprocity is the condition of possibility of society in its function of distributing scarce resources.[118] However, the fact that this function is fulfilled cannot be explained by reference to a collective conscience. Instead it must be explained by reference to the nature of the mind which alone can constitute a relation of reciprocity. The source of reciprocity is, therefore, an innate psychological mechanism, product of a biological change in the mind at the moment of the emergence of culture.[119]

In his early articles Lévi-Strauss had applied the theory of reciprocity to a number of institutions, but none of these analyses could establish the universality of reciprocity. The inspiration for applying the theory to the analysis of kinship, 'a language in which the whole network of rights and obligations is expressed',[120] derives from the work of the Durkheimian Sinologist Marcel Granet.[121] Granet had sought to demonstrate a certain hypothesis about the evolution of the Chinese kinship system. While Granet's analysis was deficient, and his evolutionary hypothesis was based on 'facile conjectures', [122] he nevertheless, according to Lévi-Strauss, made a 'decisive contribution to the general theory of kinship systems.'[123]

Granet's work was of paramount theoretical importance for Lévi-Strauss because Granet sought to analyse systems of kinship and marriage as systems of exchange of women between social groups.[124] According to Granet these groups are based on land ownership.[125] The relationships between the groups are constituted on the basis of a system of classification which has both an objective and a subjective form. The objective form is represented by an organization of these groups into classes. The subjective form is represented by the classification of kin, the two classifications being equivalent.[126] These classes are related to one another by alliances sealed by reciprocity, of which marriage is one aspect. The regulation of marriage is secondary with respect to the fundamental question of social organization,[127] the regulation being arranged in such a way that the relations between classes, at the objective level, or categories, at the subjective level, will be maintained.[128] This will contribute greatly to the maintenance of a good order in both mental and social life.[129] Hence the systems of kinship and marriage, for Granet, represent systems which regulate the relations between social groups by prescribing certain forms of marriage which will maintain the stability of the social order.[130] Granet analyses these systems as ideological systems, insisting that it is the social order which is fundamental, class exogamy, for example, being underlain by the exogamy of the landowning unit.[131] Hence Granet's sociological argument offers no place for an intellectualist explanation of the systems of kinship and marriage with which he is

concerned. It is illegitimate 'to transpose a certain arrangement of society into a logical system'.[132]

In putting forward his evolutionary scheme Granet outlines a number of different systems of kinship and marriage, which he arranges in evolutionary sequence, and which he compares with Australian marriage class systems. These different systems are, in embryo, those which Lévi-Strauss reduces to elementary structures of kinship, as the latter acknowledges.[133]. Hence Granet's analysis, empirically inadequate as it may have been, nevertheless opened the way for Lévi-Strauss's analysis of systems of kinship and marriage in terms of exchange. In developing his own analysis Lévi-Strauss rejected aspects of Granet's, but nevertheless retained the principal ideas, and inherited some of the misunderstandings, which characterized Granet's work. Lévi-Strauss rejected Granet's evolutionism and his sociologism. Lévi-Strauss sought to understand marriage not simply as an aspect of relations of political alliance between corporate groups, but as the fundamental social relation constituted by the mind. This led him to reject the social foundation of the kinship system offered by Granet, arguing that marriage by exchange need not be institutionalized in a marriage class system, but can be regulated in relationship terms alone. Deprived of this social foundation, the system can then be explained by reference to the mind.

The Elementary Structures of Kinship thus develops out of Lévi-Strauss's critique of Durkheimianism. The critique consists in the reinterpretation of the Maussian theory of reciprocity in the light of psychoanalysis and of *Gestalt* psychology, and in the reinterpretation of Granet's theory in the light of the revised theory of reciprocity. The theoretical foundation of the 'structuralism' of *The Elementary Structures* is *gestaltist*, the structures themselves derive from the formalization of the analysis of the orthodox Durkheimian Marcel Granet.

The significance of structural linguistics for Lévi-Strauss was not that it offered a concept of structure, which Lévi-Strauss had already developed, but that it offered on the one hand a legitimation of the path he had taken, and on the other a solution to the major problem which his theory still faced, that of developing an adequate psychological theory. In his 1945 article the linguistic analogy is essentially methodological.[134] In the concluding section of *The Elementary Structures* the analogy is based on the common function of communication supposedly shared by kinship and lingustic systems. In an article of 1946 the contribution of 'psychology and linguistics' is related to the need to set up symbolism 'as an *a priori* requirement of sociological thought.'[125] By 1949 this 'symbolic function' was clearly linked to a purely formal concept of the unconscious:

> 'the unconscious . . . is reducible to . . . the symbolic function . . . which is carried out according to the same laws among all men, and actually corresponds to the aggregate of these laws . . . As the organ of a specific function, the unconscious merely imposes structural laws upon inarticulated elements which originate elsewhere . . . these laws are the same for all individuals and in all instances where the unconscious pursues its activities.'[136]

In the 1950 Introduction to Mauss's *Sociologie et Anthropologie* Lévi-Strauss integrates this formalistic interpretation of the unconscious into a systematic critique of Mauss's theory of exchange, in which it replaces the earlier psychoanalytic and *Gestaltist* foundation of the critique. The lesson of linguistics is again not methodological, but substantive, showing the unconscious character of the 'fundamental phenomena of mental life' and making possible an intellectualist psychology, the 'generalized expression of the laws of human thought.'[137] Finally, in an article of 1951 inspired by Sapir, Lévi-Strauss explicitly derives exchange from this new concept of the unconscious. That 'split representation' which is the origin of the symbolic capacity, is also the source of exchange:

'Since certain terms are simultaneously perceived as having value both for the speaker and the listener, the only way to resolve this contradiction is in the exchange of complementary values, to which all social existence is reduced.'[138]

The assimilation of lingustics to Lévi-Strauss's anthropology thus confirms my argument that Lévi-Strauss's structuralism does not derive from the application of a scientifically successful method of analysis to a new field. Rather it derives from the attempt to develop a new social philosophy on the basis of a psychologistic, and subsequently an intellectualist, critique of Durkheimianism. The significance of linguistics in this attempt is not methodological. Its significance is to provide the inspiration for the development of a theory of the unconscious which made possible the transition from psychologism to intellectualism, on the one hand, and to legitimate the scientific claims of this social philosophy, on the other. [139]

Notes

1. SA, p. 279.
2. 1968b, p. 10; c.f. Auzias, 1967, p. 14.
3. 1967b, p. 32.
4. 1966d, pp. 52–3. c.f. 1970e, p. 172; HN, p. 570; SA, p. 337.
5. 'In contrast to formalism, structuralism refuses to oppose the concrete to the abstract, and to accord a privileged value to the latter. The *form* is defined in opposition to a matter which remains foreign to it; but the *structure* has no distinct content; it is the content itself, apprehended in a logical organisation conceived as a property of the real.' (1960f, p. 3).
6. SA, p. 280.
7. Castells and de Ipola (1976) see this as a combination of formalism and empiricism. This combination is, however, characteristic of many variants of positivism.
8. 1966e, p. 36.
9. 1966b, p. 11.
10. The question of the relationship between Lévi-Strauss's epistemology and his philosophy of man is an important one. Recently it has become fashionable to see epistemological questions as being primary. Thus Viet (1965), in his discussion of structuralism, distinguishes varieties of structuralism according to their epistemological differences. Castells and de Ipola (1976), as noted above, characterize structuralism as a combination of formalism and empiricism. There seem to me to be two fundamental problems with such an approach. Firstly, it is essential to distinguish between an explicitly espoused epistemology, and the

methodology implicit in the work in question. Lévi-Strauss espouses a positivist epistemology, although with strong phenomenological resonances, particularly when questions of proof arise (cf. IM, p. xx; 1L, p. 16; 1962d, p. 241; 1966d, p. 53). On the other hand his practice is very different, being essentially scholastic, not to say divinatory, with the status of the knowledge produced being uncertain (c.f. RC, p. 13). Secondly, it is difficult to see how a theory of the knowledge of the object can imply a particular theory of the object, whereas the inverse implication is almost unavoidable, and in Lévi-Strauss's case it is transparent. Epistemology itself only makes any sense at all on the basis of a prior separation of subject and object. Thus Hegel's refusal to make such a separation takes him beyond (or beneath) epistemological considerations. For many Marxists the same is true of Marx. The problem of recovering the unity of subject and object becomes a practical and a scientific problem rather than an epistemological one. Epistemology exists not, as Althusser appears to believe (1970, pp. 52–60), because it seeks *guarantees* of the unity of subject and object, but because it sees the lack of such unity as a philosophical problem in the first place. Althusser seems to abandon the guarantee, but not the problem, and so to relapse into relativism.

For these reasons I prefer to follow Sève (1967, p. 67) in assigning priority to the structuralist philosophy over the structuralist method, seeing the epistemology as deriving directly from the adoption of an 'objectivist' philosophy of man.

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a. ESK, p. 493.
b. 1956b, p. 585. In a personal communication Professor Lévi-Strauss has kindly confirmed that he worked continuously on *The Elementary Structures* from 1943 until its completion in early 1947, so that its first ten chapters may well 'reflect a mixture of my prior unsystematic trends of thought and of the subsequent ones.'
c. 1945c. This article has been devastatingly criticized by Mounin, 1970, pp. 199–214.
d. SA, pp. 36–7.
e. FS, p. 536.
f. c.f. Guillaume (Parain-Vial, 1969, p. 81).
g. Köhler, 1929.
h. ESK, p. 100; Koffka, 1931, p. 644.
j. Asch, 1968, p. 170.
k. ESK, pp. 89–90, 93–4.
l. ESK, p. 411.
m. ESK, p. 100.
n. ESK, p. xxvi.
p. 1962e, p. 143.
q. SA, pp. 324–5.
r. Piaget, 1971, p. 55.
11. Such a presumption is not, in this case, unjustified. Lévi-Strauss acknowledges the decisive character of 'personal particularities and one's attitude to Society' in determining the orientation of one's thought (TT, p. 58); he acknowledges that 'much of these intellectual processes I shared with other men of my generation' (TT, p. 59); that 'it is difficult for me to disengage myself entirely from the ideological milieu in which I was educated' (1972b, p. 79). His early ambition was to understand not other societies, but his own (1973a, p. 35), and his commitment at that time led him so far as to stand as a candidate in the cantonal elections in 1932 or 1933 (1973a, pp. 35–6). His politics were of the Left (1973a, p. 35). Hence, despite his more recently expressed aversion to his own age (1967b, p. 31) and self-assessment as a 'misanthrope' for whom 'there is nothing I dread more than a too-close relationship with my fellow men' (1972b, p. 82), we can be sure that Lévi-

Strauss's early intellectual development bore the mark of his society, and so it is perhaps legitimate to attribute intellectual concerns to Lévi-Strauss on the basis of interpolation from his own works and from the culture of his generation.

12. 'I am probably at this moment nearer than any of my colleagues to the Durkheimian tradition.' (TT, p. 63).
13. TT, pp. 62–3.
14. 1973a, p. 35.
15. The 'revelation' came in 1933 or 1934, when Lévi-Strauss read Lowie's *Primitive Society* (TT, p. 63). Leach (1970, pp. 10–11) suggests that Lévi-Strauss did not read Lowie until 1935, when the first French edition was published. However, Lévi-Strauss was by 1935 a sociologist in Brazil.
16. The greatest debt was owed to Lowie himself, of whose opposition to evolutionism, of whose relativism, and of whose interest in questions of diffusion, we can find many echoes in the work of Lévi-Strauss (see (SA, pp. 307–10) for a more technical acknowledgment). It was also to Lowie, among others, that Lévi-Strauss owed his physical survival in flight from Occupied France (TT, p. 24).
17. '. . . above all in their assiduous fieldwork, their feeling for the natives whom they studied, and their grasp of the experience of the "primitive" ' (1973a, p. 35).
18. (TT, pp. 63–4) Simone de Beauvoir fully appreciated the relation between the French and Anglo-Saxon backgrounds to Lévi-Strauss's work: 'Heir to the French tradition, but starting with American methods, Lévi-Strauss wished to take up again the attempt of his masters while guarding against their failings.' (de Beauvoir, 1949, p. 943); c.f. Kuper (1970, p. 769).
19. TT, p. 55.
20. Morot-Sir, 1971, p. 14.
21. Sartre, 1965, pp. 113–174.
22. Lévi-Strauss, 1967b, p. 30. Lévi-Strauss's criticism of academic philosophy in *Tristes Tropiques* (Chapter Six) is very close to that of Nizan (Nizan, 1932) although the latter is much more polemical and political than the former. Nizan provides a link between Lévi-Strauss and the earlier generation of 'radicals' (Redfern, 1972, Chapter One).
23. Sartre, 1965, p. 229; c.f. Lévi-Strauss, TT. p. 54.
24. Morot-Sir, 1971, p. 15.
25. Morot-Sir, 1971, p. 14.
26. TT, pp. 54–7, passim.
27. TT, p. 55.
28. TT, pp. 54, 56.
29. TT, pp. 54, 59.
30. The philosopher's 'mission (he holds it only until science is strong enough to take over from philosophy) is to understand Being in relation to itself, and not in relation to oneself. Phenomenology and existentialism did not abolish metaphysics: they merely introduced new ways of finding alibis for metaphysics.' (TT, p. 62).
31. Sartre, 1960, pp. 22–5.
32. 'I was brought up a philosopher, and like many in France I came to sociology and ethnology from philosophy. I had in mind to answer philosophical questions.' (1966e, p. 33).
33. TT, p. 59.
34. e.g. TT, p. 61.
35. 1971b, p. 95. There is no evidence that Lévi-Strauss has ever studied either Marx or Hegel seriously. Nor does it seem to me that there is any evidence of significant Marxian or Hegelian theoretical inspiration. In general Lévi-Strauss's references to Marx and Engels are confined to attempts to establish Marxist credentials which frequently require mis-

quotation out of context (cf. 5a, p. 23; 1967a, pp. 519–20 (ESK, p. 451, sense lost in translation); 1963c, p. 9; HN, p. 479).

36. TT, pp. 60–61.
37. TT, p. 61.
38. Lévi-Strauss tells us that he 'first began to worry seriously' about the problem of 'relativism' on his way to the U.S.A. in 1940 (TT, p. 382).
39. 1952a.
40. TT, pp. 60–61.
41. TT, p. 59.
42. TT, p. 59.
43. 1967b, p. 30.
44. TT, p. 63.
45. His appointment was sponsored by Bouglé (TT, p. 49).
46. Its abstraction particularly appealed to Lévi-Strauss (TT, p. 58), an appeal which must have been enhanced when circumstances enforced his prolonged absence from his own society during the war. It also appealed, he has recalled, to a 'certain absolutism' which characterized his thought in his youth (1967b, p. 30).
47. 'Anthropology . . . rejoins at one extreme the history of the world, and at the other the history of myself, and it unveils the shared motivation of one and the other at the same moment. In suggesting Man as the object of my studies, anthropology dispelled all my doubts'. (TT, p. 62). 'Ethnology is nothing less than an effort to explain the complete man by means of studying the whole social experience of man . . . the aim is to isolate, from the mass of customs, creeds and institutions, a precipitate which often is infinitessimal but contains in itself the very meaning of man'. (1953c, p. 70).
48. TT, p. 62.
49. TT, pp. 44–5.
50. '. . . to reach reality we must first repudiate experience, even though we may later reintegrate it in an objective synthesis in which sentimentality plays no part'. (TT, p. 62).
51. Opposition to atomism because the mind imposes a rational coherence, to psychologism and historicism because the explanatory principle is universal.
52. Formalism is linked to French structuralism through Cavaillès. The epistemologies of Bergson and Brunschvig involved a view of the development of knowledge as continuous, cumulative, and progressive. Developments in physics and mathematics undermined such a psychologistic and historicist theory of science, which became unable to provide a stable foundation for scientific truths (Morot-Sir, 1971, p. 84). Cavaillès sought to solve the problem posed by the need to found scientific truths, while recognizing the provisional character of any particular truth. He did this by establishing an absolute logic which progressed dialectically by a permanent critical activity on itself, the result being progress of a necessary but unpredictable kind. The effect of such an epistemology was the transfer of the locus of scientific activity from the consciousness of the scientist to the concept itself. Hence the progress of logic is not an intentional interrogation of consciousness by itself, but an examination of the concept by the concept (Morot-Sir, 1971, pp. 83–9; Dufrenne, 1967, pp. 794–80.)

    Cavaillès work stimulated the important work in the history of science of Koyré, Vuillemin and Canguilhem, and important work in the field of epistemology by Granger and Mouloud (Morot-Sir, 1971, pp. 86–7). From our point of view its importance lies in the development of a 'philosophy of the Concept', on the analogy of Heidegger's philosophy of Being. (Dufrenne, 1967, p. 794). Just as Heidegger sees Being behind every act of man, so the Structuralist philosophers see the Concept. Man thus becomes the instrument of an impersonal thought, for all thought is simply the development of a system of concepts

of which the thinker is not conscious. Thus the formal is 'ontologized' (Dufrenne, 1967, p. 789). Hence for Althusser it is possible to argue that Marx did not know what he was really thinking, while Foucault can argue that the humanist is not thinking at all (Dufrenne, 1967, p. 786). Thought ceases to be an act marked by an intention and becomes simply the positing of a concept. Finally, just as being is set aside, so is reality, for the concept is itself the criterion of truth. Meaning is not based on a relation to the real, but on a relation between concepts. This identification of the concept with the real enables Foucault to argue that the 19th century saw the birth of man because it saw the birth of the concept of man (Dufrenne, 1967, p. 796).

This brand of neo-positivism is not explicitly acknowledged as an influence by Lévi-Strauss. Nevertheless its mark can be found traced through his work. Methodologically, for example, Lévi-Strauss has increasingly tended to evaluate ethnographic data by reference to his 'models', so making the model the measure of the real, rather than vice versa (c.f. HA, pp. 127–8). Theoretically, the increasingly formal emphasis of the analysis of myth is based on just this conception of thought, in this case the myth, unfolding itself on the basis of its unconscious structure, without any reference to the intention of the mythologiser or his culture (RC, pp. 12, 341). Finally, it should be noted that this formalist philosophy is quite distinct from the legitimate activity of formalization, in which scientific language is syntactic, but with a real reference (Marc-Lipiansky, 1973, pp. 283–4). I shall not discuss the influence of neo-positivism on Lévi-Strauss's work any further because he shows no sign of having studied the former in any systematic way.

53. TT, p. 63.
54. 1955f, p. 1216.
55. TT, p. 63.
56. Durkheim differs from German neo-Kantianism in failing to make the distinction, fundamental to the latter, between fact and value. It is this integration of normative and objective to which Lévi-Strauss objects, for the consequence is the glorification of the social group: 'Obviously any social order could take pretence of such a doctrine to crush individual thought and spontaneity. Every moral, social, or intellectual progress made its first appearance as a revolt of the individual against the group'. (FS, pp. 529–30). However, Lévi-Strauss's solution is not to separate fact and value, but rather to seek to found both in the individual. This is the source of the most fundamental problems of Lévi-Strauss's sociology, for while it may be possible to take the asocial individual as the basis of a morality, as Kant sought to do, it is not possible to build a sociology on such a foundation.
57. Kant, 1948, p. 79.
58. Hence Lévi-Strauss is much nearer to Kant than is Durkheim. Indeed he concurs with Ricouer's definition of his position as a 'Kantianism without a transcendental subject'. (1970b, p. 61). Recently he has indicated that the importance of Marx to him was to lead him to Hegel and Kant (1971b, p. 65). Certainly he sees Durkheim as a Kantian (FS, p. 518).
59. Hence Lévi-Strauss's strong objection to any kind of metaphysics (TT, p. 62; SM, p. 255).
60. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: 'This social fact, which is no longer a massive reality but an efficacious system of symbols or a network of symbolic values, is going to be inserted in the depths of the individual. But the regulation which circumvents the individual does not eliminate him. It is no longer necessary to choose between the individual and the collective'. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 115). Lévi-Strauss has, however, renounced Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of his theory (1970b, p. 73).
61. Lévi-Strauss, 1946a.
62. FS, p. 528.
63. FS, p. 518.
64. IM, p. xxvii.

65. FS, p. 518.
66. FS, p. 528. Compare SA, p. 65.
67. FS, p. 508.
68. FS, p. 534.
69. FS, pp. 517–8.
70. '. . . the true and only basis of sociology is social morphology . . . This analytical work, trying to reduce the concrete complexity of the data . . . into more simple and elementary structures is still the fundamental task of sociology.' (FS, pp. 524–5).
71. 'We shall have the hope of overcoming the opposition between the collective nature of culture and its manifestations in the individual, since the so-called "collective consciousness' would, in the final analysis, be no more than the expression on the level of individual thought and behaviour, of certain time and space modalities of the universal laws which make up the unconscious activity of the mind.' (SA, p. 65).
72. '. . . the psychical is both simple *element of signification* for a symbolism which extends beyond it, and sole *means of verification* of a reality whose multiple aspects can only be grasped in the form of a synthesis outside itself'. (IM, pp. xxvi–xxvii).
73. 1943c, p. 178.
74. Mauss is 'undoubtedly the initiator' of the belief that social systems form wholes, the 'veritable *credo* of contemporary ethnology' (1953c, p. 115).
75. FS, p. 528.
76. FS, pp. 525, 527.
77. FS, p. 529.
78. 1943a; 1943b; 1944a; 1944b; 1944c; 1946c was written in 1944.
79. Especially in 1944a. The influence of Lowie seems clear here (c.f. Lowie, 1941).
80. FS, p. 516.
81. 1944a, p. 46.
82. FS, p. 517.
83. 'If history, when it is called upon unremittingly (and it must be called upon first) cannot yield an answer, then let us appeal to psychology, or the structural analysis of forms; let us ask ourselves if internal connections, whether of a psychological or a logical nature, will allow us to understand parallel recurrences whose frequency and cohesion cannot possibly be the result of chance . . . External connections can explain transmission, but only internal connections can account for persistence.' (SA, pp. 248, 258).
84. 1944b, pp. 17–18.
85. 1944b; 1944c.
86. 1944a.
87. 1943a.
88. 1943b. A later article analyses Christmas in terms of the relation of complementarity between generations. Father Xmas is the agent of the transaction between generations, not a mystification inflicted on children by adults (1952d).
89. Mauss, 1966.
90. IM, p. xxxv.
91. Hence 'for the first time in the history of ethnological thought, an effort was made to transcend empirical observation and reach deeper realities'. (IM, p. xxxiii).
92. IM, p. xxxiii.
93. IM, p. xxxviii.
94. Mauss, 1966, p. 80.
95. Lévi-Strauss's criticism is found in IM (1950a). It is, however, already implicit in the ealier analyses of reciprocity.
96. ESK, p. 139.

97. Mauss only had a 'non-intellectualist' psychology available to him. But he would have welcomed 'a psychology which was intellectualist in *another way*, the generalized expression of the laws of human thought.' (IM, p. li).
98. 1948a, pp. 50–5.
99. TT, pp. 294–7.
100. e.g. 1943a, 1944a, 1944c, 1949d, ESK, p. 67.
101. 1943a.
102. 1943a, p. 138.
103. 1943a, p. 139.
104. 1944c, pp. 267–8.
105. 1944b.
106. 1947a.
107. 1955a, Chapter 29.
108. 1946c, pp. 651–2. Hence the notion of reciprocity enables Lévi-Strauss to overcome the problem of the relation between the individual and the collective in his own society. It cannot be resolved in a subordination of the individual to society but only in a relation of *reciprocity* between mass and elite such as is found in the U.S.A.
109. 1944b, p. 18. A typically *Gestaltist* formulation of the concept of function.
110. 1944b, p. 20.
111. 1944b, p. 18.
112. 1944b, p. 31.
113. 1944b, p. 26.
114. 1944b, pp. 28–9.
115. 1944b, p. 31.
116. '. . . the Rule is the affirmation of reciprocity; reciprocity is the immediate mode of integrating the opposition between the self and the other; without such an integration there would be no society.' (de Beauvoir, 1949, p. 945).
117. FS, p. 518.
118. c.f. ESK, p. 312. Reciprocity is stated to be the condition of *possibility* of society on ESK, pp. 31, 101, 136, 490.
119. IL, p. 25.
120. 1971, p. 63.
121. Granet (1939); (1971 1 p. 62).
122. ESK, p. 251.
123. ESK, p. 131. Granet himself omits references. It seems that he derived his ideas from van Wouden (ESK, p. 312), whose work Lévi-Strauss did not discuss.
124. Granet, 1939, p. 2.
125. Granet, 1939, p. 147.
126. Granet, 1939, p. 170.
127. Granet, 1939, pp. 216, 228.
128. Granet, 1939, pp. 42, 83.
129. Granet, 1939, pp. 74–5, 107.
130. Granet, 1939, pp. 158–9.
131. Granet, 1939, p. 148.
132. Granet, 1939, p. 83.
133. ESK, p. 320.
134. Although he does, mistakenly, acclaim Trubeckoj in this article for his breakthrough to the unconscious, C.f. Mounin, 1970, p. 202. The breakthrough is elsewhere attributed to Boas (SA, p. 19).
135. FS, pp. 518, 520.

136. SA, pp. 202–3.
137. IM, pp. xxxi, xxxvi, li.
138. SA, p. 62. I discuss the relationship between structural linguistics and Lévi-Strauss's later work in much more detail elsewhere (Clarke, 1975).
139. Accepted 30.3.77. I would like to thank those friends and colleagues whose comments on earlier drafts of this paper have been invaluable. I would also like to thank Professor Lévi-Strauss for his prompt and generous response to enquiries. He, least of all, bears any responsibility for the argument of the paper.

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Abbreviations used for Lévi-Strauss's works:

ESK = *The Elementary Structures of Kinship,* 1969f.
FKS = *The Future of Kinship Studies,* 1965f.
FS = French Sociology. 1946a.
HA = *From Honey to Ashes.* 1973b.
HN = *L'Homme Nu.* 1971a.
IL = *The Scope of Anthropology.* 1967l.
IM = Introduction to M. Mauss: *Sociologie et Anthropologie.* 1950a.

RC = *The Raw and the Cooked.* 1969c.
SA = *Structural Anthropology.* 1968k.
SM = *The Savage Mind.* 1966h.
TT = *Tristes Tropiques.* 1961h.

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