

Fischer, M.J. "Structuralism" in
DICTIONARY OF ANTHROPOLOGY TJ Barrow, ed.
Blackwell 1997.

structuralism is a method, an aesthetic-analytic style, and a philosophical temper, articulated most fully by the anthropologist Claude LEVI-STRAUSS, but of importance as part of a larger movement within the modernisms of the twentieth century: formalisms in music (serialism), drama (Becket, Arraud), the novel (Roussel, Perec), and so-called anthropologist philosophy and literary criticism (Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida), which have provided the terrain of so-called poststructuralism.

As a method, structuralism in its Lévi-Straussian (and anthropological) form derives most directly from the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) and Roman Jakobson (1956, 1978, 1987), the Durkheimian sociology of Marcel MAUSS, and information theory, but also, Lévi-Strauss noted, from deep structures in geology, marxism, and psychoanalysis. Saussure argued that units of meaning in language ("langue") are constituted as a system of differences, each unit being given its value by its distinctiveness from other units of the system. This is most easily illustrated by the phonemic system (see PHONOLOGY), but also by difference in SEMANTICS (e.g., French *mouton* versus English differentiation between *sheep* and *mutton*). GRAMMAR and structural LINGUISTIC forms at all levels are not conscious, yet they are systemic: speakers can recognize correct and incorrect forms without being able to articulate the rules. So too, Lévi-Strauss argued, the anthropologist needs a systematic method to uncover the underlying structure of cultural forms,

which are equally systematic. This method relies on a binary mode of description through distinctive features and redundancy, as is most completely developed in information theory. Its force lies on the unconscious level, or more accurately on the level of social facts in the Durkheimian sense. Folk explanations of these forms are illusory because people do not have a conscious grasp of their structure.

Lévi-Strauss (1963a, 1969a) applied his structural method first to ELEMENTARY KINSHIP SYSTEMS (prescriptive systems of marriage in which categories of relationship foreclose who is marriageable and who is not), mainly in Australia, south and southeast Asia, and some PREFERENTIAL MARRIAGE SYSTEMS, arguing that the structural rules of these marriage exchange systems have implications for regional integration of small-scale societies. After elaborating on Marcel Mauss's sociological investigations of exchange theory, which involved a complete reworking of nineteenth-century theories of TOTEMISM (Lévi-Strauss 1963b), and a brilliant reconsideration of classificatory logic (including the theory of proper names as cultural sets, the CASTE system, and a challenge to Sartre and "humanist" history), Lévi-Strauss (1969b, 1973, 1978, 1981) turned to the analysis of some eight hundred South American and North American myths. These tour-de-force analyses, conceived of as a formal harmonic system like a symphony, organized a wealth of detailed ecological, historical, sociological, and semiotic information.

At minimum Lévi-Strauss suggested that the structuralist method is a way to reconstruct the conceptual systems of depopulated and fragmented cultures. Quite stunning is the systemic, almost predictive, nature of many of his analyses, such as those of the masks of the Northwest Coast Indians (Lévi-Strauss 1982) and of the historical relations of neighboring Plains Indians derived from the ways in which neighbors inverted each other's myths, and the ways in which ecological and geographic information is encoded (Lévi-Strauss 1963a: xii). More broadly, the structuralist analyses of myths – pioneered also by the folklorist Vladimir Propp

(1958) and the Indo-Europeanist Georges Dumézil (1970a,b, 1988) – forever changed the way social scientists think about MYTHS: no longer is it credible to identify a god or mythic figure as a personification of a single idea or natural phenomenon; to establish the meaning of any figure within a myth or of a mythic plot one needs to consider the multiple variants of the myth, thereby gaining access to the logic and potentials of the underlying mythic structure. Perhaps the most impressive application of the structuralist method was to Greek classical studies (Vernant 1980, 1982, 1983; Vidal-Naquet 1986; Deienne 1978; Friedrich 1978), but various extensions have also been made to South Asian kinship and social organization (Yalman 1967), dual societies in Amazonia (Maybury-Lewis 1979), Central American mythology (E. Hunt 1977), and modern America and Hawaii (Sahlins 1976a, 1985).

On a more philosophical level, Lévi-Strauss became the key figure in France to challenge the existentialist projects of the early post-war decades presided over by Jean-Paul Sartre, arguing that phenomena such as language and culture cannot be easily changed by the heroic will and consciousness of individuals or political groups. This debate over the nature of history (Lévi-Strauss 1966, 1981) also provided the grounds for the emergence first of STRUCTURAL MARXISM (see CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY) and then of the generation of so-called poststructuralists (see POSTMODERNISM). Although poststructuralists challenge the sometimes mechanical binarism of structuralism as information-theory-based logic, on a philosophical level they continue at least that part of Lévi-Strauss's project that looked to the systematizations that operate against or despite the will of the individual. As more than one commentator has noted, there are two sides to the Lévi-Straussian coin: one is scientific, interested in applying the latest techniques in set theory, chemistry, etc. to unpacking other modes of thought; the other side is a mood of atonement for cultures destroyed by colonialism and modern civilization by way of creating a new talmud, a collection of fragments from the

past together with a critical apparatus that can revivify those fragments as tools for speculative thought.

Although structuralism itself has fallen out of fashion among many anthropologists, other allied initiatives stemming from the information-theory revolution of the 1950s continue apace, in "artificial life" computer simulations in theoretical biology, for instance, and the contemporary investigations of "complexity" and "emergence," which rework the intuitions of Durkheimian sociological theory about emergent levels of organization. One research arena in which these computer and biological theories reapprach anthropology is in the investigation of social and cultural forms mediated by electronic and computer media. Examples include the effects of hyperreality and simulations, and parasitic switching mechanisms between different levels of biological, informational, organizational, and cultural forms (Serres 1982; Latour 1979; Deleuze & Guattari 1977). Others examine the relationships between psychological states of dissociation, multiple personality, and computer-mediated environments and therapeutic programs (Glass 1993; Turkle 1984, 1995). All these arenas belong to what Lévi-Strauss called "hot" (or change-valuing) societies; work on the "cold" (or change-denying) societies to which he devoted most of his own work remains deeply indebted to structuralist analyses even when they are not the only methods used.

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