

**FROM NATURE TO SIGNATURE:
AN ENCOUNTER WITH LÉVI-STRAUSSIAN ANTHROPOLOGY**

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation titled "FROM NATURE TO SIGNATURE: AN ENCOUNTER WITH LEVI-STRAUSSIAN ANTHROPOLOGY" submitted by Ms. ANJALI BHATIA is in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

PROF. M.N. PANINI
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One of the papers during the M.Phil course work was 'Gender and Society' offered by Dr. Patricia Uberoi. I opted for this paper, and subsequently, I worked on the theme 'Nature, Culture and Gender' for the term-paper assignment.

The present exercise, I regard as the culmination of an interest generated during the 'production' of the term paper on 'Nature, Culture and Gender'. From the time of its 'inception', I knew that I was interested in the theme. I have always been fascinated with Nature; with animals; with the rain; with the 'smell' of the Earth bathed in the first shower and even with the 'sound' of the leaves rustling in the breeze.

The selection of the theme to work on for the M.Phil Dissertation was easy and was guided naturally. I was interested in exploring the relationship between Nature and Human Beings. However, I was unable to focus my interest 'specifically'. It was a classic first hand experience of what is known as a 'wild goose chase'! I knew what 'I was seeking', but the 'object' sought was most elusive and deceptive. Its experiential unity with the Self, imbued the 'quest' with a range of emotions and lyricism, which no research in social science can afford to encourage and legitimize.

What I desperately needed was guidance to enable me to focus and narrow down my concerns which, at the initial stages were unguided and ill-directed. And it is this very guidance, which I was fortunate to get from my supervisor Dr. Patricia Uberoi. She helped me to focus my attention on one specific view point which is concerned with the problem between Nature and Culture. This is the view point of Claude Lévi-Strauss whose entire paradigm revolves around the concern with Nature and Culture whether he is talking of Kinship, Totemism, Myth or Masks.

I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Patricia Uberoi without whose guidance, I would have never been able to orient my concerns so specifically. Also without her support I would have never dared to trespass the 'tabooed' frontiers of the theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss, which is like an intimidating and imposing colossus, and moreover, I would have never been able to even think of seeking a UNITY in the theory of a Modern Master, which has, almost unscrupulously been 'torn-apart'.

I felt comfortable once my concerns were directed; for, I acquired the optic with which to focus on the theme which interested me. However, that was not the end of 'complexities'. This was the first time, that I was dealing with a

project of this nature. I was only a novice, who had to encounter a theory which has not only immense psychological repercussions, but which also took a heavy toll on my physical reserves. And this is not the easiest task at hand, especially when one has to run a race against time! One can be easily demoralized and misled. It is at this stage that one needs the support of 'Experience' and it was through Nat that I heard the 'Voice of Experience'. He has been 'indispensable' at each and every stage involved in the accomplishment of this task. I do not have enough words to express my gratitude for the help and concern I received from Nat. Even as I am writing this 'acknowledgement' page I know that he is at A.P. Computers, correcting the draft of this dissertation, painstakingly and unassumingly.

The suggestion that I approach A. P. Computers for the typing and printing of this script, was given to me by Nat. And today, when I look back, this suggestion was a blessing in disguise. After having gone through the entire process of typing and printing, I can say, very categorically that no other team could have accomplished the task of typing and printing this script given the constraint of time with such precision and personal involvement. The typing of this script was undertaken by Mr. A.K. Seth. He has been most accommodating, with the style of the script. In spite of it being a very 'trying-job', to say the least, he has tackled it with immense degrees of patience. I am indebted to him for the invaluable experience he has expended even during the course of printing of the script. And also, if it were not for him escorting me from home to A. P. Computers (and vice-versa) at almost unearthly hours, I could not have dreamed of completing this trying 'physical task' within the postulated time.

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When one is involved in such a task (I mean the physical production), at times it tends to get monotonous and mentally draining. What one really needs at such a stage is Laughter which is the best medicine.

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An, 'other home' however presupposes 'the home', for there is always a coming back.' My Home and parents have looked after me during the entire course of this task. I am indebted to them for their care and their patient accommodation with the 'irregularities' (which are instituted in the normal functioning of a household) concomitant with this long process.

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I am indeed indebted to the Inspiration. Friends and well-wishers have that wonderful quality of making you believe that 'you can, if you think you can'. I faced a crises of time and confidence at a most crucial stage and it is at this stage that I can recall the in-substitutable Inspiration which enabled me to carry-on.

Thankfully, one crises was averted! I mean the 'cash- crises'. Given the staggering expenses involved in such a task, I could not have accomplished it without the support of UGC.

Having completed this dissertation there is one thing which I have learnt at least for posterity. The text bears the name of only one author; however this must not make one believe that there is only one author; for there are the 'others' who are co-authors, who are related to the 'author' by virtue of their presence and involvement in her/his living experience. And undoubtedly it is the presence of the 'other' which enables the author to identify with his/her 'self'.

'Creation' is the classic confluence of Man and Nature. What would have I done without 'Hero' - a member of the natural species - who sat beside me unceasingly when I was working on this dissertation - comforting me with his silent support - ever ready to listen to 'His-Master's-Voice'.

Anjali Bhatia

PREFACE

This is an encounter with Lévi-Straussian Anthropology. Claude Lévi-Strauss is a living exponent of the French intellectual tradition and is, perhaps better known for his association with the **Structuralist** movement in France. In fact he is also referred to as the founder of **Structuralism**.

Structuralism can be said to have its formal beginnings in the theoretical and methodological programmes concerned with linguistic studies. In connection with Language, Structuralism refers to the manner in which the individual elements of Language are arranged in relations of mutual dependence. In another sense, as perceived by Lévi-Strauss, Structuralism is coterminous with **Semiology** i.e. the **Science of Signs**.

Thus, Structuralism has an independent existence without an explicit relationship with anthropology. Yet Lévi-Strauss, a Social Anthropologist par excellence and a modern master, to say the least, has been associated with Structuralism most vocally. In fact his two major works, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and *Structural Anthropology*, are two cases in point. What then is the connecting thread between Lévi-Straussian Anthropology and Lévi-Straussian Structuralism? Can we afford to look at Lévi-Strauss only as an exponent of Structuralism?

Our answer to these questions is that in viewing Lévi-Strauss only as an exponent of Structuralism is to miss out on the most fundamental questions his lush anthropology asks and tries to resolve. For we believe that it is insufficient to know that he is associated as a pioneer with Structuralism. The question we need to ask is 'how this anthropologist arrived at Structuralism?' What was the impelling issue that drove Lévi-Strauss to seek refuge in Structuralism? We shall try to answer this question in the following section.

THE PROBLEM OF ANIMALITY

The past few decades have seen a burgeoning of international and national bodies which concern themselves with environment and wildlife related issues. Some of these are 'The Green Peace', 'Friends of the Earth', 'World Wildlife Fund', 'Chipko Movement', 'Kalpavriksha' and 'Traffic India'.

A recent 'spectacle' related to these very issues was witnessed at Rio in the Earth Summit under the aegis of The United Nations Conference For Environment and Development (UNCED). Our attention is captured by the sheer dimensions assumed by these issues concerned with the Rights of Nature. Gradually, but steadily, they have become global and universal concerns, as demonstrated by the scores of polemic writings, heated political debates, legislations, ethos of vegetarianism etc. Rights of Nature thus, are claimed universally by ideologies, media and subaltern studies. And among these claims, there is one specific claim which is voiced almost vociferously, that is, the claim for Animal Rights.

Animals almost present society with ambiguities, on the one hand, they are related to human beings as companions, entertainers, providers of food and clothing, whereas on the other hand, they also demand compassion, abstinence and kindness. They disgust and please us at the same time: we can do with them as we please, yet we pull back with horror, when faced with open cruelty towards animals.

In any case, animals make claims upon us! These claims affect the way we relate to and understand animals, especially in the way we make claims for animal rights.(Tester)

The question is that, in acknowledging the claims for Nature's Rights in general, and for Animal Rights in particular, and in voicing these issues globally, do human beings and humanity in general, have something at stake?

To render the question more comprehensive, let us pose it specifically. Assuming, hypothetically that 'something' is at stake for humanity, when it concerns itself with these issues, let us ask

- i. What is at stake for humans and
- ii. What is at stake of humans?

The first part may be answered as follows. Society of humans could not have been possible without humans multiplying their relations with Nature, for Nature gives Man the means of subsistence and is also at Man's disposal in the pathway to progress. Thus, when Nature is exploited, Man's reaction to this exploitation is expected. In the destruction of Nature, Man's very existence and his society are at stake.

However, today, Man does not find himself in a position of total dependence on Nature. This is because the use-value of nature has diminished considerably, now that the task of *manufacturing progress* lies in the hands of Culture. Therefore, in claiming Nature's or Animal Rights, Man cannot be concerned merely with the use-value and economics of Nature; the concern has to be even more fundamental than with use-value: it is a concern having symbolic significance, and an anthropological perspective gives us rich insights into it.

Anthropologist such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mary Douglas and Edmund Leach - to name only a few - advance a thesis of the classificatory tendency of the human mind. Their suggestion is that the human perception of the Natural world seeks to make the universe intelligible, by its subsequent taxonomic ordering. Humans classify almost anything and everything, whether it is living things, non-living things, colours, smells, directions, seasons etc. However, the *terms* in the classificatory scheme have no meaning if considered *individually*. They acquire meaning only when they are related to other terms: the set of *relations* between these terms constitutes a *classificatory system*.

At this stage, we shall not go into the nature of the relationships between the terms. It is sufficient to know that *meaning is acquired only in a relation*.

One slot in the system of classification is reserved for what is Human, which differs from other slots of non-human viz. animals and other non-living non-humans. Anthropologists have shown a keen interest in the categories of Human and Animal. They advocate that the Human and Animal categories in the classificatory scheme are originally rooted in the perception of the natural world and the subsequent taxonomic ordering of this perception, thus implying that the Animal is a material a priori in so far as it is a living object perceived as non-human; but the precise meaning of the concept Animal is something to be decided by social acts and the place of the perceived body in the taxonomic code. The Animal is a concept which is meaningful only because it is the *structural opposite* of the Human. (Tester)

Thus, if it is the classificatory ordering of the perceived world which defines an Animal and a Human, it is certainly the *relationship of opposition* which is posited between them in the entire classificatory scheme, which accords a symbolic significance to the two categories: Animal has meaning only when it is related to Human in a classificatory scheme. And by inverting this statement we arrive at one which has a fundamental bearing on this discussion i.e. *Human has meaning only when it is related in an opposition to Animal*.

Implicit in the classificatory scheme is an *anthropocentrism*, which creates Human, and it is this same anthropocentrism, which creates a 'humane' Human by claiming the Rights of Nature or the Rights of Animals. The voicing of these Rights, then, is part of a social project to classify and define Humanity. These issues are of importance for Man to be able to think human, for Human has meaning, only in so far as it is opposed to Animal. Thus, when humans very vociferously claim rights of nature, it is because their very Humanity is at stake.

The need to differentiate animals from humans, and subsequently, Animality from Humanity, then is the central concern of contemporary claims for Animal Rights.

The issue of the boundary between Animal and Human, in fact has roots in antiquity. It has confronted philosophy in the form of a problem of *continuity and discontinuity* between the Natural and Cultural orders. The fundamental question is 'Where does Nature end and Culture begin?' Are we any different from animals? If yes, then how?

Anthropology then had to answer these questions before it could make further advancements in theory and methodology. The subject of anthropology is Man, but how can one define Man!

It was an important feature of much of the speculation in sociology and social anthropology of the later part of the nineteenth century that it ignored the principle that theories of society or culture should be constructed on the basis of the specific differences between human and biological systems. The overwhelming evidence of the physical continuity between homo sapiens and other animal species accumulated by the late 1860s seemed to many to support the view that anthropology, the Science of Man, would be but a sub-branch of zoology. Thus we find, for example, this definition of the science by Tylor:

Anthropology (the science of man...) denotes the natural history of mankind. In the general classification of knowledge it stands as the highest section of zoology or the science of animals, itself the highest section of biology or the science of living beings... Not only are these various sciences (anatomy, physiology, psychology, sociology, etc.) concerned with man, but several among them have suffered by the almost entire exclusion of other animals from this scheme. It is undoubted that comparative anatomy and physiology, by treating the human species as one member of a long series of related organisms, have gained a higher and more perfect understanding of man himself and his place in the universe than could have been gained by the narrower investigation of his species by and for itself. It is to be regretted that hitherto certain other sciences - psychology, ethics, and even philology and sociology - have so little followed so profitable an example. (Tylor, 'Anthropology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed. 1875).

[John Mepham in Robey 1972:111]

The notion of evolution thus strived to account for the resolution of the problem of animality without positing a break between the two orders i.e. Natural and Cultural.

TOWARDS A SOLUTION

The Influence Of Rousseau

The anthropologist Lévi-Strauss was thus confronted with this basic problem, the resolution of which has perhaps been the fundamental concern of all philosophy.

Philosophical concerns with this issue are perhaps best exemplified in the philosophy of Rousseau, for according to Lévi-Strauss, Rousseau can be regarded as the Founder of the Sciences of Man. It follows that in the view of Lévi-Strauss, Jean-Jacques Rousseau succeeded in resolving this problem as he arrived at the 'Science of Man'.

Rousseau advocated the resolution of this problem as having taken place in the **Triple Passage** (which is but one) from Nature to Culture, Animality to Humanity and Emotion to Reason. The underlying idea is that, in Man there is an awareness of an *otherness* within himself and therefore, he is born with the germ of the Social, for Social minimally entails the presence of an Other besides the Self. This Other within the Self can extend itself into an exteriority: Man encounters many Others, who are other living beings. Further, he is able to identify with all the General Others because he possesses the faculty for Compassion. In the state of Nature, this faculty is imbued with an emotive content; however in a state of Culture which is marked by an organic increase in the number of men thereby culminating in Society, Man feels the need to differentiate himself from Others in order to retain and reiterate an identity. Emotion is overpowered by Reason, and Man, by virtue of a dialectical encounter between his Nature - which seeks

identification - and a demand of Society - which seeks differentiation - transforms the existing contradiction between Human and Animal, for he acquires a conscious knowledge of his social existence, which he can reflect in cultural representations and according to Rousseau, Language is the most important representation, which *re-produces* Humanity on its plane and in its way. We shall discuss the ideas of Rousseau in greater detail in course of Chapter I.

The Influence Of Mauss

Before we can talk about an influence of Marcel Mauss on Lévi-Strauss, we feel that it is imperative to pause and examine Durkheim's resolution of the same problem confronting all philosophy.

Durkheim conceived of the same problem in a different way. He was concerned with resolving the problem by locating the specifically human qualities of morality and cognition in Society as a constraining force standing over and imposing itself on the individual, thereby introducing a fundamental division between the Individual and the Society. Durkheim established Society as a reality *sui generis* and constituted the Social as an independent category. The social nature of human individuals was ascribed to a *collective-conscience*, which was almost a metaphysical entity, far removed from the human individual (Clark 1981: 36-7).

Durkheim lost track of the 'individual' in his endeavour to search for human qualities and morality. Also, as Lévi-Strauss says, he was unable to transcend the opposition between the individual and the collective as he did not conceive of a 'real' difference which exists between Culture and Society. Durkheim defined Culture in *The Rules of Sociological Method*, as a set of '*ways of being that leads to a kind of concretization of these ways of doing that constitutes society.*' (emphasis mine) Hence, there is a paradox 'in Durkheimian thought that social facts are to be treated as things, except in the case where they really are' (Lévi-Strauss 1987b: 17).

Lévi-Strauss was then faced with the task of recovering the individual from Durkheimian metaphysics and also of recovering the place due to cultural

representations which Durkheim reduced to the Social. As Lévi-Strauss says, Durkheim reduced specificities such as Language, Logic, Art, and Religion to mere projections of the Social (Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 6).

It is at this stage that one can perceive the influence of Marcel Mauss. Mauss' conception of the Total Social Fact enabled Lévi-Strauss to seek in the *principle of reciprocity* the Social which is embedded in the *individual unconscious*, and also to account for all cultural representations in the totality of the social fact.

The Total Social Fact Mauss locates in the individual unconscious, which enables it to retain links with the biological and physiological in Man. However, the *principle of reciprocity*, as developed by Mauss in *The Gift* was a specific *system of attitudes*, which could account not only for the material existence of man as a social being, but also for the symbolic existence of man as a cultural being.

Exchange, according to Mauss, set Society and its institutions into motion; these institutions were at once juridical, economic, religious and aesthetic. It was the idea of reciprocity in all its symbolic manifestations, which made humans truly Human and this is where Man differed from Animal without realizing a break from Nature, as the idea of exchange was rooted in the unconscious categories of the human mind.

• In the second chapter, we shall be concerned with an examination of the symbolic representation of the incest prohibition which determines the related individuals in terms of categories of kinship: it is seen as a system of representations. And we shall also see, in keeping with the spirit of Marcel Mauss, that the Social is located in the unconscious categories of the Individual himself.

The Influence Of Saussure

The problem of Animality was perhaps laid to rest with Saussure's formulation of the Science of Signs i.e. Semiology. The assumption was that the system of representations such as Language (to which Lévi-Strauss added Myth,

Ritual, Art, Religion etc. for Social Anthropology was a branch of Semiology), which were embedded in the unconscious categories of the human mind, thereby accounting for the *structure* of these representations, rendered the universe as imbued with *meaning* and it was this *meaning* which determined our conduct and choices at a conscious level.

Saussure gave Language its *object* viz. the *SIGN*, which comprised of an *image* and a *concept*. This conception combined with the function of Language, which is to communicate, rendered the function of semiological codes to be that of communication through Signs whether they are Myth, Ritual, Art etc.

This enabled Lévi-Strauss to accord everything in Culture a symbolic value: the Social which resided in Man could articulate dialectically with Culture so as to communicate and thus render Culture definable as a *symbolic- saturation of space*, vis-a-vis Nature, which allows only a '*sensory-saturation of space*' (e.g. 'auditory saturation' in case of birds and 'olfactory saturation' in case of mammals) [Lévi-Strauss 1987b: 19].

Lévi-Strauss thus could tackle the problem of animality by attributing to Man a unique capacity for symbolic- communication. We shall consider this aspect in the third chapter.

STRUCTURE AS A SOLUTION

Structure for Lévi-Strauss can thus be seen as a 'refuge' in as much as it enables him to locate in the unconscious category of the human mind a receptacle which serves to *mediate* between Human and Animal and between Nature and Culture. For, the Social (which requires differentiation) can be conceived of as having a spatial and chronological continuity with Nature, by nevertheless residing in the individual and further, the Individual, through the Social which is present in him, can articulate his 'nature' with Culture, through the mediation of the *structure* in the mind, which is capable of symbolically representing the continuity of Man with Animal.

CULTURE AND THE NEED FOR DIFFERENCE

Through the notion of *Structure*, Lévi-Strauss can aspire towards the *unity of man*, since structure is the universal and invariant truth about Man. This notion as we can see is the guiding factor in the programme he reserves for his anthropology.

His anthropology thus, disdains any sort of categorization of Man as primitive or civilized or any mentality as savage or domesticated. The categorizations of societies into primitive and civilized, according to Lévi- Strauss, is a creation of anthropology reeling under the colonial hang-over, as it is a creation of the colonizers who could assert their superiority only in relation to the Other - the primitive or the savage, who was inferior, beastly and who needed to be 'tamed'. Ethnocentrism, thus sought to acquire legitimacy for itself by seeking refuge in notions of 'cultural-discontinuity', of 'peoples - without - history' and a (warped) notion of progress.

Lévi-Strauss discounts these notions and advocates an anthropology which can account for the universal and invariant Man, irrespective of diversities of cultures. In fact, he advocates an optimum diversity among cultures as a necessary condition of their existence and perpetuation. Diversity, for him, does not defeat the purpose or pace of progress of Man. In his remarkable essay, 'Race and History', he very categorically states:

Humanity is constantly struggling with two contradictory processes. One of these tends to promote unification while the other aims at maintaining or re-establishing diversification... The latter is seemingly the negation of the former. But to say - as one might feel like saying - that humanity defeats itself at the same time as it makes itself would still stem from an incomplete vision. For, on both planes and at two opposite levels, we are dealing with two different manners of making oneself.

The necessity of preserving the diversity of cultures in a world threatened by monotony and uniformity has certainly not

remained unnoticed by international institutions... It is the fact of diversity which must be saved, not the historical content given to it by each era... The diversity of human cultures is behind us, around us, and ahead of us. The only demand we may make upon it... is that it realize itself in forms such that each is a contribution to the greater generosity of the others.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 361-2]

The notion of Diversity in no way refutes his position on the universal and invariant mind, for the mind itself can account for it. As he says, '*Man has always been thinking equally well; the improvement lies, not in an alleged progress of man's mind, but in the discovery of new areas to which it may apply its unchanged and unchanging powers*' (Lévi-Strauss 1972: 230).

Aim Of This Exercise

Culture, then, for Lévi-Strauss is attainable only via *Structure*. Therefore, when we talk of Lévi-Straussian Anthropology, we are in fact striving to find out the reasons which can account for the birth of *Structuralism* in Lévi-Strauss work.

Our encounter with Lévi-Straussian Anthropology thus, seeks the symbolic representations of this *Structure* in systems of representation which in fact reflect the concerns of this Structure to project an image of Human which is based on a fundamental *Difference* vis-a-vis Animal and also with a **Symbolic Communication of this Difference**.

CHAPTER I

A DEMAND FOR DIFFERENCE

SUMMARY

This chapter examines a 'perspective view' by Lévi-Strauss on Jean-Jacques Rousseau who is termed as the Founder of the Sciences of Man.

We focus on two postulates, which have an axiomatic power and which defy all attempts directed towards their refutation. These are:

- i. *I EXIST and*
- ii. *SOCIETY EXISTS.*

The first postulate establishes the necessity of an Other within an individual, and the second postulate establishes the necessity of a multiplicity of Others external to the individual.

In a state of Nature, Man can 'identify' with all Others who live; however, with the coming into being of Society, Man has to learn to 'differentiate' himself from the Others. This knowledge necessitated by the contingency of Society, is consciously acquired by Man and he employs it to establish his identity, by Cultural markers in all systems of representation especially Language.

With this Rousseau's quest for the essence of Man ends; so is accomplished the triple passage, (which is one) from Nature to Culture, Animality to Humanity and Affectivity to Rationality.

*Us and Them,
And afterall, we're only ordinary men.
Me and You,
God only knows, its not what we would
choose to do.*

(Pink Floyd in *Us and Them*)

How then are we to conceive, firstly, the triple passage (which is really one) from animality to humanity, from nature to culture, and from affectivity to intellectuality.

(The central anthropological problem posed by Rousseau, and quoted by Claude Lévi-Strauss in [Lévi-Strauss 1963: 101])

Have we really come a long way from the central concern of Jean-Jacques Rousseau or do we, even today, hear it echo in a masterpiece by the cult rock-group of late 1960s?

In this introductory chapter, we shall be focusing on a 'perspective-view' of Rousseau by Lévi-Strauss, (Lévi- Strauss 1987a) titled 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man'.

Before we delve into the intricacies of the afore- mentioned essay, may we cite our own reason for introducing our concerns in this manner.

We feel that such an introduction is the most appropriate for through it, we can hear not only 'Echoes of Rousseau' but also the 'Voice of Lévi-Strauss', so much so that through this particular essay and in this particular essay, one can, at least, catch a glimpse of the entire landscape painted by Lévi-Strauss, on a canvas provided by Rousseau.

Rendering Rousseau's concerns, as voiced by Lévi- Strauss, the status of a 'field', being acted upon by both centripetal and centrifugal forces and the net resultant of which is a movement of all the central themes of Lévi- Strauss, within this field, may perhaps seem to be too idiosyncratic an endeavour. However, even if we are accused of this short-coming, one 'victory' which none can deny us, is a demonstration of the tenacity with which the *subject clings on to life amidst all the proclamations of its death.*

'Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man' - this we recall, is the title of the essay, which we shall be 'pampering' in the course of the next few pages.

Perhaps, we would not have taken the trouble to quote the title *in toto* had we not felt the need to draw attention to the connotations of 'Founder' and 'Sciences of Man'.

A 'Founder' automatically entails a 'Proof' which should bear testimony to his achievement and 'Sciences of Man', in the least entails a specific 'Object' of study to be followed by an olla-podrida of tools and methods to be employed. Thus we shall proceed, keeping in tune with the spirit which the title instills in us.

It is indeed to a remarkable foresight of the Founder that one can attribute the founding of the Science of Man : this one leap (in foresight) proved to be a *giant leap for mankind.* For.

Without fear and contradiction it can be affirmed that - a whole century, before it first made its appearance - he had conceived, willed and announced this very ethnology which did not yet exist, placing it first among the already established natural and human sciences.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 33-4]

Thus, the remarkable foresight gave birth to Ethnology, which is the Sciences of Man, and placed it in a position, among natural and human sciences, which demanded a near reverence! This Ethnology acquired a supreme status, also when, through its Founder it announced a revolutionary transformation of mankind :

The ethnologists' debt towards Rousseau is increased because, not content to place a science yet unborn with extreme precision in the scheme of human knowledge... (he has) by his work, by the temperament and character expressed in it, by each of his accounts, by his person and his being - provided for the ethnologist the paternal comfort of an image in which he recognizes himself and which helps him to understand himself better; not as a purely contemplative intelligence, but as an involuntary agent of a transformation conveyed through him. In Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the whole of mankind learns to feel this transformation.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 35]

Thus is announced, the last of Man as a contemplative - intelligence - and the last of Descartes' 'Cogito'. Man in the Ethnologist is rendered a mute means of conveying a transformation. And wherein lies this transformation? Before that, wherein lies the Proof proclaiming this transformation?

The Proof which bears testimony to the achievement of the Founder can be found in his most prophetic of all writings:

Rousseau did not restrict himself to anticipating ethnology: he founded it. First in a practical way by writing the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality*, which poses the problem of the relation between nature and culture and in which one can see the first treatise of general ethnology. Next, on the theoretical plane, by distinguishing with admirable clarity and concision, the object proper of the ethnologist from that of the moralist and historian: 'When one wants to study men, one must first learn to look around oneself; but to study man, one must first see differences in order to discover characteristics' (Rousseau).

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 35]

The practical Proof has thus to be sought in the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality*.

However, for our purpose, the value of this treatise lies in its theoretical implication. It is the theoretical implication which we have to seek in order to get to the Object of the Science of Man.

A close look at the passage quoted above throws light (even if it is only in passing) on the theoretical implication which amounts to the relation between Nature and Culture: this has been posed as the fundamental problem of Ethnology. And it is this theoretical implication which leads us to the Object of the Sciences of Man (this Object is different from that which is the central concern of Sciences of Morality and History).

The Object of the Sciences of Man, needless to say, is Man; however this Man has no identity when scrutinized closely from too near a proximity. In order to capture this Man, one needs to maintain from it an *optimum distance* and further, one needs to view a fundamental difference *within* this Man, in order to arrive at the true characteristics of him.

Given, as thus, the quest for the Object of the Science of Man seems no less than a wild-goose chase! However, one fact helps us get a clearer focus of our Object and this is a technique, which is advocated in the same passage i.e. Distance.

Looking at the Object from a Distance in fact, has been conceived of as a methodological tool, in order to arrive at the truest knowledge of Man. Well, then, how are we to relate this paradoxical conception?

The methodological rule which Rousseau assigns to ethnology and which marks its advent also makes it possible to overcome what, at first glance, one would take for a double paradox: Rousseau could have simultaneously, advocated the study of that particular man who seems the closest - himself; and secondly that, throughout his work, the systematic will to identify with the other goes hand in hand with an obstinate refusal to identify with the self. These two apparent contradictions, which resolve themselves into a single reciprocal implication must be resolved, at one time or other, in every ethnological career.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 35]

The paradoxical conception we have pointed at is in fact two-fold:

How can one simultaneously study

'A Particular man who is closest i.e. a himSELF (we can recall, that *within* this man, one has to look for a fundamental difference in order to arrive at true characteristics of him): there is an implication of *Identification with SELF?*' and

'Any General Other, implying an *Identification with the OTHER* while at the same time denying identification with the Self?'

We can confront the paradox at two levels viz. the Particular and the General. At the level of the Particular, identification with the Self entails an identification of a Him within the Self; and at the level of the General a denial of identification with the Self entails an identification with the Other.

Can we then say, that the paradox confronts us in the form of a relation at two levels :

- i. Relation between a Him and an I *within* the Self; and
- ii. Relation between Self and Other *without* the Self.

(At this juncture, one is reminded of another relation which was talked about some time back: this is a relation between Nature and Culture which we said was the fundamental concern of the Sciences of Man. Now the question is 'Can we, at this stage, think of a Relation between these two sets of relation?' Let us keep this relation(s) question in mind, as we proceed along.)

Probably, we are justified in positing a relation of *reciprocal implication* between the Him and the I on the one hand, and between the Self and the

Other, on the other i.e. a relation of reciprocal implication between the Particular and the General, for as Lévi-Strauss puts it, the two-fold paradox can be resolved through this reciprocal implication.

We had stated that the methodological tool which would help us keep our Object in focus was Distance. At this stage we can logically hypothesize that this tool in fact, amounts to the conception of a Difference between the entities which are Distanced, because we are invoking a reciprocal relation by implication of the two entities on each other. A case in point is a remark, which has already been quoted: 'When one wants to study man (Self), one must first look into the distance (Other); one must first see Differences in order to discover characteristics.'

Thus, we can almost state that the paradox confronting the Ethnologist can be resolved in the conception of a Difference at two planes viz. the Particular and the General.

In order to arrive at the truth of Man, a truth which is beyond all paradoxes, a Demand is made on man's conception of Man. This Demand is for a Difference within Man and between One Man and Another Man. Further, this truth about Man postulates that this Demand For Difference be such that it may *relate these differences*, thereby locating the truth about Man in Relations Of Difference (only after establishing a Relation of Difference!).

May we recall here a question we posed at the near beginning of this discussion viz. wherein lies the *transformation* which is felt by mankind through Rousseau and the Ethnology which he advanced?

We feel that, at this stage we are in a position to answer this question, for we have acquired the knowledge of the necessary Proof which generated this transformation by the technique it advocated and we have also acquired the knowledge of the Object which is illuminated through this Proof and which in a theoretical way elucidates this transformation.

This transformation lies in a conception of ones own Self as composed of a *relation* between I and He who are Different and in a conception of any Other Self only in *relation* to One Self (or vice versa): the existence of a Self is rendered meaningless and deceptive and the only reality which leads to truth and to eventually a knowledge of an identity of a Man as a Man is a Relation which is based on Difference. Therefore, in a fundamental sense, what identifies Man is the *immanence of a relation* with the Other who is different.

This transformation can be conceived of at two levels: (i) Particular and (ii) General. We may really not be over stretching the argument for the sake of argument, by focusing on these two levels independently (first) and then eventually tracing a relation of reciprocal implication between the two levels. For, we believe that in tracing this development we shall in fact be realizing the axiomatic force of two postulates (which stand almost invincibly before all attempts at refutation). These are :

- i. I EXIST and
- ii. SOCIETY EXISTS.

Let us then begin by considering the first postulate: I EXIST.

To Montaigne's 'What do I know' (from which everything stems). Descartes believed it possible to answer that 'I know that I am, since I think'. To this Rousseau retorts with a 'What am I?' without a definite solution, since the question presupposes the completion of another, more essential one: 'Am I?'

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 37]

This passage amply illustrates the distance traversed between these two questions: (i) What do I Know? and (ii) Am I? And the journey undertaken to traverse this distance has been a 'violent' one indeed, for somewhere along the way, it 'murdered' Descartes Cogito.

We are indeed, as the passage quoted above reveals, confronted with the most fundamental of all questions i.e. *Am I?* Let us further explore as to how Rousseau answers this question.

'I exist... this is the first truth which strikes me and WITH WHICH I AM FORCED TO AGREE...

Do I have a separate feeling of my existence, or do I only feel it through my sensations? This is my first doubt, which is, for the present, impossible to resolve (italics added). But it is in Rousseau's strictly anthropological teaching - that of the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* - that one discovers the foundation of this doubt. It lies in a conception of man which places the other before the self, and a conception of mankind which places life before man.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 37]

Thus, the answer which Rousseau gives to the most fundamental question he poses lies in an experiential inference for as he remarks:

Even the conciliatory intention of the savoyard vicar does not succeed in concealing the fact that for Rousseau, the notion of personal identity is acquired by inference, and that its ambiguity remains unmistakable.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 37]

So much for an experiential inference of one's existence. However, the question has been dealt with in a scientifically more rigorous manner, for it is the anthropological optic which has been held responsible for the focusing of the 'doubt' regarding Man's existence as it has provided a receptacle which has supported its foundation.

This doubt as we see is founded on a conception of Man which places the Other before the Self and a conception of Mankind which places Life before Man.

Once again what stands out in the implication is an Immanent Relation (at the most Particular level) which has the potential for an extension from a Particular Self (stemming from a conception of Man) to the most General Other (stemming from a conception of Mankind). Further, this extension to the General Other is stretchable, so as to subsume within its field all that which has Life.

Before delving into the consequences arising from an extension of the Immanent Relation to the General Other, may we pause and examine the import of this development for Lévi-Strauss' personal concerns.

To Rousseau we owe the discovery of this principle, the only one on which to base the sciences of man. Yet it was

to remain inaccessible and incomprehensible as long as there reigned a philosophy which, taking the COGITO as its point of departure, was imprisoned by the hypothetical evidences of the self and which could aspire to founding a physics only at the expense of founding a sociology and even a biology.

Descartes believes that he proceeds directly from man's interiority to the exteriority of the world, without seeing that societies, civilizations - in other words, worlds of men - place themselves between these two extremes. Rousseau by so eloquently speaking of himself in the third person (sometimes even going so far as to split it, as in the *Dialogues*, for instance), anticipates the famous formula 'I is another.'

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 37]

It is veritably the end of the Cogito which Rousseau proclaims, in putting forward this bold solution. For until his time the question was mostly to put man out of the question, to be assured, from humanism, of a transcendental retreat.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 38]

Thus, undeniably and most obviously, the cogency with which Lévi-Strauss has made these statements has a bearing on his very personal concerns which reflect the philosophy of his time. Implicit in these statements is an attempt to put forward his own philosophical standpoint.

May we now recall that we were leading ourselves in a direction seeking to gain an insight into the consequences arising from an *extension* of the Immanent Relation to the General Other.

In reproaching Descartes for believing in a continuity of Man's interiority into the exteriority of the world, Lévi-Strauss has made a crucial remark by suggesting that in between these two extremities of a (postulated) 'continuity', there are potentialities for 'discontinuity' for the supposed

continuum is disrupted with the existence of societies, civilizations and worlds of men.

Thus, when the Immanent Relation is extended to the General Other, it confronts the most Particular Man (the ethnologist, as Lévi-Strauss would say), as these Other Societies, Other Civilizations and Other Worlds of men.

Based on this theoretical argument, Lévi-Strauss knits an entire fabric which can be used to fit the spirit of a true ethnological investigation.

...in ethnographic experience the observer apprehends himself as his own instrument of observation. Clearly, he must learn to know himself as ANOTHER to the I who uses him, an evaluation which will become an integral part of the observation of the other selves. Every ethnographic career finds its principle in 'Confessions', written or untold.

{Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 36}

Stemming from the Self, an *otherness* within the Self of the ethnographer (epitomized in the principle of *Confession* wherein the Self is in dialogue with itself) extends into an exteriority and shapes the entire ethnographic experience.

This point is established very cogently in the following perspective view by Lévi-Strauss on Rousseau:

'Here they are', he says of his contemporaries, 'unknown strangers, non-beings to me since they so wished it! But I detached from them and from everything, What am I? This is what remains for me to seek' (First Walk). Paraphrasing Rousseau, the ethnographer could exclaim as he first sets eyes on his chosen savages, 'Here they are, then, unknown strangers, non-beings to me, since I wished it so! And I, detached from them and everything, What am I? This is what I *must* find out *first*.'

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 36]

The principle of *Confession* gains a firmer footing in the following remark:

To attain acceptance of oneself in others (the goal assigned to human knowledge by the ethnologist), one must first deny the self in oneself.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 36]

Thus, the Immanent Relation implicit in the principle of *Confession*, which anticipates the famous formula *I is Another* (Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 37) has a tremendous bearing on Lévi-Strauss' conception of anthropology vis-a-vis its scope and its programme. And it is by a consideration of these conceptions that one can find the demonstration of consequences (for the anthropologist) stemming from the extension of a Particular concern to a most General field.

So far we have been concerned with the *establishment* of the formula *I is Another*. This we have seen as established at two levels. The first level has been that of the Particular, as implicit in the principle of *Confession* and the second level has been that of the General, as explicit in the ethnographic experience:

Ethnographic experience must establish this formula before proceeding to its demonstration: that the other is an I.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 37]

Thus what remains for us to do is to *demonstrate* this same formula i.e. *I is Another*, which now confronts us in a form arrived at by a simple transposition of its terms i.e. *The Other is an I*.

Now, before we proceed in the direction of a *demonstration* of the same, let us pause, at this stage and recall the loose ends in the discussion conducted so far.

One such unattached thread consists of the thematic-yarn, conveying the idea of a transformation undergone by mankind at two levels: the level of the Particular, by an awareness of an Immanent Relation of Difference and, the level of the General, by an extension of this Relation to an exteriority of the world. We have set ourselves to a task of tracing a relation of reciprocal implication between these two levels.

The second unattached string pertains to a hypothesis, which, very vaguely, indicates a possible relation between two sets of relations viz. between Self and Other on one hand, and between Nature and Culture on the other.

Thus we have to trace a relation of reciprocal implication between Particular and General, and we have to search for a possibility, if it exists, of conceiving of a relation between Self and Other on one hand, and Nature and Culture on the other.

And, we also have in our bag, the axiomatic power of two postulates: (i) I EXIST and (ii) SOCIETY EXISTS.

In brief, the set of relations we have which are yet to be knitted into a meaningful fabric (if the possibility exists) are:

- i. Self (Particular) and Other (General);
- ii. Individual and Society (We arrive at [ii], given the postulates that I EXIST and SOCIETY EXISTS and along with the relation conceived of between the Particular and the General, for we can recall that this General is comprised of Other societies, civilizations and worlds of men); and
- iii. Nature and Culture (for, the central concern of anthropology is with the problem of Nature and Culture).

One thing to be kept in mind, at this stage, is a *relation of reciprocal implication*, which is a *necessary relation*, as it resolves the two-fold paradox at the most fundamental level confronted in a simultaneous concern with identification with Self and denial of identification with the Self, amounting to an identification with an Other Another. If we succeed in knitting the given set of relations into a meaningful fabric, we would have logically established a relation of reciprocal implication between the terms of all the sets.

Thus, having recalled the themes which still have to be given their place in a meaningful whole, let us get back to the task at hand i.e. a *demonstration* of the formula *I is Another* the terms of which have been transposed to take the form, *The Other is an I*.

If it is possible to believe the demonstration of the DISCOURSE - that a three-fold passage (from nature to culture, from feelings to knowledge and from animality to humanity) occurred with the appearance of society - it can only be by attributing to man, even in his primitive state, an essential faculty which moves him to get over these three obstacles. It is a faculty which possesses originally and immediately some contradictory attributes, although not precisely within itself; which is both natural and cultural, affective and rational, animal and human; and which (provided only that it become conscious) can transform itself from one plane to the other.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 37-8]

If one is to make any sense of this first step in our demonstration, one has to acknowledge the axiomatic power of the second postulate i.e. SOCIETY EXISTS.

However, we have also to acknowledge the truth of the suggestion that Society has not existed as such since antiquity. In fact, the concept of Society is introduced as parallel to appearance of a Faculty.

The appearance of Society is realized through a Faculty or a capacity which triggers off a journey across a three-fold passage: Nature to Culture, Affectivity to Rationality and Animality to Humanity.

Before we can throw more light on this three-fold passage (which is but one) we shall, for the present, focus our attention on the Faculty which is credited with the capacity of generating this passage.

The passage cited above brings forth to our attention the following facts regarding this Faculty:

- i. The Faculty exists in Man even in his most primitive state.
- ii: The Faculty is not contradictory within itself.
- iii. The Faculty has certain contradictory attributes.
(The contradiction arising from the simultaneous bearing of three sets of two planes on this Faculty. These planes being Natural and Cultural or Affective and Rational or Animal and Human.)
- iv. The Faculty has an unconscious mode of existence, enmeshed in which it is unable to come to terms with its contradictory attributes.
- v. The Faculty also has a conscious mode of existence, which enables it to come to terms with its contradictory attributes not by shifting from one plane to another, but, in fact, by *transforming* itself from one plane to another.

The most legitimate question to pose at this juncture is, 'What is this much-talked about Faculty?'

This faculty - Rousseau did not neglect to repeat - is compassion, deriving from the identification with another who is not only a parent, a relative, a compatriot, but any man whatsoever, seeing that he is a man, and much more: any living being seeing that it is living. Thus man begins by experiencing himself as identical to all his fellows.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 38]

Deriving from the postulate I EXIST, we arrive at the formula *I is Another* because the true identity of Man is realized only in the principle Confession and expressed by an Immanent Relation based on a *demand for difference*.

At the root of the formula, *I is Another* is a conception of Man which places the Other before the Self, and which is located in a capacity in Man of Compassion. Thus, the foundation of the formula *I is Another* rests on a *Primary Identification* wherein Man begins by experiencing himself as identical to all his fellows. And this identification subsumes all relatives, parents and in fact all of life: a conception of Mankind places Life before Man, so that even the most of all Other becomes an I.

We are tempted to reconsider a sentence from the passage quoted above:

Thus man begins by experiencing himself as identical to all his fellows.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 38]

We feel that this particular idea is carrying a fundamental message(s). In one sense, we can say it suggests the advent of Humanity in an experience felt by a Self (Particular) which identifies with all the Others (General), in spite of an acknowledgement of the fact that they are Others i.e. different (Naturally). In a second sense, we can say that implicit in the sentence is the notion of a Particular, based on a confounded identity, merging itself with the Other, at least at the most particular of all levels, in the first stage.

Can we combine the messages conveyed by these two senses and say that identification consists in a conception of a Totality, or more specifically a living Totality, which nevertheless is ridden with Fundamental Difference which may be regarded as an extension of the demand for difference which presents itself in an Immanent Relation between the Self and the Other?

So much of premium is laid on the experience of the primary identification that one cannot hope to proceed fruitfully in the chosen direction without keeping a track of its ramifications.

Thus man begins by experiencing himself identical to all his fellows. And he will never forget this primitive experience, despite demographic expansion which plays in Rousseau's anthropological thought the role of a contingent event, one which could not have happened but which we must admit did happen since society is.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 36]

Once again, we witness the axiomatic power of the postulate SOCIETY IS.

Society is an entity which is not Individual (thereby, Society, Social and Individual have a meaningful relation between them), which moreover entails the occurrence of, what has been referred to as a contingent events i.e. demographic expansion. One is almost led to believe that the fact SOCIETY IS is necessary in as much as it assumes a contingency.

The paragraph quoted above is leading us to two conclusions:

- i. Man retains the primitive experience of identification even amidst the onslaught of a contingency which amounts to a multiplication of Others in an ever-expanding Totality of living beings.

This implies that the primary identification experienced by Man leads him to conceiving as a Totality Himself and Other Selves even though they are Different.

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- ii. The existence of Society demands as a contingency demographic expansion i.e. that there be a multiplication of the (Different) Others in a society. There is also a suggestion to the effect that, this contingency in the guise of demographic expansion takes a toll on the primitive experience of Man.

Let us proceed further:

This demographic expansion will have forced him to diversify his way of life, adopting himself to the different environments through which his increased numbers forced him to spread. It will also have forced him to know how to differentiate himself, but only in as much as a laborious apprenticeship instructed him to discern the others, that is animals by species, humanity from animality, myself from other selves. The total apprehension of men and of animals as sensitive beings (in which identification consists) precedes the awareness of oppositions - oppositions first between common characteristics, and later between human and non-human.



[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 38]

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So far, what we have discerned is a double movement - to and fro: the range having at its two extremes the most Particular and the most General. The movement itself may be termed as a *totalizing movement*; the two modes of its operation being a *detotalization* and a *retotalization*.

The mode of retotalization amounts to an operation which entails conceiving as continuous a Totality (comprised of living beings) which is nevertheless composed of (Naturally) Different elements. (This mode derives from the experience of primary identification.)

The mode of detotalization, on the other hand, amounts to an operation which derives from the 'contingency' stemming from demographic expansion (which must have happened since Society is) which implies that there would be an increase (multiplication) of all those which are Others. Hence, there would be an increase or multiplication of differences (given Naturally). This event amounts to the shaping of a conception in Man of a Totality (which is also continuous), which is being increasingly differentiated (Naturally) into more numerous elements : it is continuously detotalizing itself, by virtue of a cause which is most Natural.

The paragraph quoted above (Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 38) goes a step further, for it leads us into the effects triggered by a most Natural cause i.e. of demographic Expansion. These effects, in a nutshell, amount to diversification of modes of life (which stem from a diversification of environments, given in Nature).

Now these diversifications (which are forced upon Man) confront man as demands, for they almost force him to know how to differentiate himself.

Thus, a new dimension is added to our conception of a Totality, which we believe is naturally differentiated, and this new dimension stems from *demands for diversification* (whether they be of modes of living or men themselves) which have to be met at a conscious level, for Man has to know, how to differentiate himself (now from a multiplicity of Others).

Of course, Man had been Naturally instructed to discern differences through the faculty of compassion, which by identifying with these differences, did not rupture the Totality of living beings, by introducing a discrete element.

May we recall, at this stage, by a reference to a prior discussion on this Faculty that:

- i. This Faculty has certain contradictory attributes.
- ii. This Faculty has an 'unconscious' mode of existence, enmeshed in which it is unable to come to terms with its contradictory attributes.
- iii. This Faculty also has a 'conscious' mode of existence, which enables it to come to terms with its contradictory attributes not by 'shifting' from one plane to another, but, in fact, by 'transforming' itself from one plane to another.

Based on this recapitulation, our present discussion is led to a formulation according to which we can put forward the suggestion that Man had been instructed to discern differences (which were not discrete) by virtue of an 'unintentionality' of which he was not conscious.

However, the advent of Society demanded from Man (men) an 'intentional' conception of the Natural differences: it required a 'conscious' knowledge (know-how) of *instituting diversification* by means which presented themselves to Man in either a *concrete* or *abstract* form. (We are using the term 'intentionality' with a certain amount of reserve here, for it is perhaps a 'non-sensical' notion as far as Lévi-Strauss is concerned.)

Thus, we can say that the Faculty of compassion undergoes a transformation, when it consciously (due to a 'necessity' of Social which leads to a contingency of demographic expansion amounting to a multiplicity of the individual) acknowledges the demand to *institute differences* (by means - whether they be concretely present or abstractly conceived - which are at Man's disposal) in order to diversify the Totality (of all that lives), into discrete elements. This mode of existence of the Faculty can be contrasted with its unconscious mode of existence wherein it merely acknowledged the demand for difference without invoking the necessity of concretely living this difference, abstractly thinking this difference and literally or metaphorically communicating this difference.

In undergoing this transformation, contradictions (as per the attributes of the faculty) have been surmounted! By consciously instituting the discrete element in an unconscious differentiation of a totality, this Faculty of compassion which had abounded in the affective content, acquires a content imbued with rationality and hence, in a way epitomizes Reason - a further defining feature of which is its dialectic *modus operandi*. Further, this transformation, entails a surmounting of contradictions on the planes of (i) Animal and Human and (ii) Nature and Culture, regarding which it is sufficient to point out at this stage that in case of (i), the transformation is

effected by the incest prohibition and in case of (ii) the same transformation is effected by communication [employing Signs or complementary values].

Nevertheless, one fact remains unchanged: whichever plane is focused upon the demand for difference which is immanent, does not shirk from consciously instituting the discrete element in the Totality. Further, these Differences are expressed in relations having reciprocal implications (for, in effect each difference acquires meaning only through the Other difference).

Referring back to the paragraph quoted, we have yet to tackle the nature of the 'know-how', which serves as 'means' of instituting differences among men. We have already stated that Nature itself had instructed man to discern differences via the Faculty of compassion. However, now our focus lies on the plane of Culture, which is concerned with accentuating the discerning of these Natural differences employing Cultural 'markers'. A clue to this effect lies in the introduction of the category - Species - which enables Man to discern the differences between animals. This, we feel, is a classic demonstration of the fact that Nature gives only differences in attributes of these animals which can be conceived by Man in the first instance. However it is Culture which consciously 'marks' these differences by employing categorical distinctions: Species. The primary identification of Man tends to identify with common characteristics: 'sensitivity' between living beings whereas it is a social demand (conceived of as 'necessary') which compels Man to acknowledge the ever-multiplying Other 'identities' and what stemmed from a primary relation of difference between the Self and the Other, acquires multiple dimensions - so that it becomes necessary to manage and organize these multiple relations, and these multiple differences employing 'conscious categories', which serve as a conceptual support for differentiation.

The passage from nature to culture depended upon demographic increase, but the latter did not produce a direct effect, as a natural cause. First it forced men to diversify their modes of livelihood in order to exist in different environments, and also to multiply their relations with nature. But in order that this diversification and multiplication might lead to technical and social transformation, they had to become objects and means of human thought:

"This repeated attention of various beings to themselves and to each other must have naturally engendered in man's mind the perception of certain relations. These relations which we express by the words big and little, strong and weak, fast and slow, bold and fearful, and other such ideas which are compared as occasion demands and almost without thinking about them, eventually produced in man a kind of reflection, or rather an automatic prudence which indicate the precautions most necessary to his safety. (Rousseau, Discourse)"

[Lévi-Strauss 1963:100]

We have established the 'sense' in employing cultural markers: categories serving as conceptual support for differentiation. And earlier on, in the course of this discussion we had mentioned that the means available to Man to institute difference can be concrete or abstract. We can see for ourselves now that this formulation makes sense. For, perhaps the plane, across which the passage towards the greatest degree of differentiation, and thereby organization, occurs in a most concrete manner is that of Animal - Human.

Before man became a social being, the instinct of procreation, "a blind urge produced no more than a purely animal act".

[Lévi-Strauss, 1963: 99]

The prohibition of incest more than elucidates this claim. Therefore, the category of species which serves to 'mark' differences in animals appears to us to be the most concrete category. Another reason for according the category of Species the status of a 'special operator', is that it is through Species that Man apprehends of certain relations given in Nature: Species serves as a 'means' to this apprehension whereas at the same time retaining the status of 'objects', which are related through difference. Species serve as generators of relations of difference and also it is the relation of difference between them which are generated and which subsequently subsume in the ambience of their range, the most Particular and the most General.

Further as objects of human thought, they are the *natural signifieds* and as means of human thought, they become *cultural signifiers*.

Thus, though being the most concrete category, the 'specific operator' has the potential to become a most abstract category, when it becomes the 'food for human thought'.

This, we may recall, has been a social demand which itself results from an individual act of procreation leading to demographic increase.

At this stage, we can re-capitulate the sets of relations which we had arrived at some time back in this discussion. These were:

- i. 'Self and Other',
- ii. 'General and Particular',
- iii. 'Individual and Society', and
- iv. 'Nature and Culture'.

We can try to knit together these four sets of relations by invoking a principle which is applicable to all four sets. This principle consists in *instituting differences* (consciously) for this is a demand Society makes upon all individuals: Man who has been instructed by Nature to discern differences between Self and Other extends this relation from a most Particular to a most General level, by employing cultural markers in such a way that the markers themselves acquire the status of Signs (as they shift from the concrete to the abstract), thereby transforming a 'Natural Communication of Differences' into the 'Cultural Communication of Signatures'.

Further, the modes of retotalization and detotalization imply a 'giving and receiving' of differences from a general to a particular level: we can conceive of the terms of these sets of relations as implicating each other in a reciprocal rhythm of EXCHANGE OF DIFFERENCES.

By attributing to the 'specific-operator' the potential for becoming an abstract category, we find that there is a dissolution of the emotive and affective content attached to Species which were 'objects' of human thought, with a concomitant birth of a logic which effects a transformation in the status of the Species (animals which differ from each other): the faculty of compassion acquires a new form by the development of a conceptual support for differentiation, marking the advent of Rationality which is epitomized in logical operations.

In the Discourse Rousseau, [like Radcliffe- Brown and Bergson] sees the apprehension by man of the 'Specific' character of the animal and vegetable world as the source of first logical operations, and subsequently of a social differentiation which could be lived out only if it were conceptualized.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 99]

A further elucidation of the transformation effected in the faculty of compassion which enables man to apprehend the specific character of the animal and vegetable world is also found in the following remark:

For Rousseau... affective life and intellectual life are opposed in the same way as 'pure sensations from the simplest forms of knowledge'. This is true to the extent that he sometimes writes, not of the state of society, in opposition to that of nature, but of the state of reasoning.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 100]

Needless to say, the first set of logical operations derive from a state of reasoning which can be opposed to the state of nature. In other words, as we have already discussed, the transformation of the faculty of compassion entails the advent of reason, which coincides with the advent of Culture.

The advent of culture thus coincides with the birth of the intellect. Furthermore, the opposition between the continuous and the discontinuous, which seems irreducible on the biological plane because it is expressed by the seriality of individuals within the species, and in the heterogeneity of species among each other, is surmounted in culture which is based on the aptitude of man to perfect himself, ...a faculty which... remains with us, in the species as much as in the individuals; and without which an animal is, after a few months, what it will be all its life, and a species, after a thousand years, what it was in the first year of the thousand. (Rousseau)

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 100-1]

The birth of the intellect, entailing the birth of Reason, which never rests, basking in the glory of its perfectibility - for there is always a scope for further perfection - is the true condition for what we have been referring to as Culture.

However, the advent of Culture, of Humanity and of Rationality is constantly nagged by a question which wants to know how far and to what extent is Culture, Humanity and Rationality 'continuous' with Nature, Animality and Affectivity or, when does it and how does it become 'discontinuous' with respect to the same? In a way then, 'continuity' and 'discontinuity' are conceived of as being in an *opposition vis-a-vis* the apprehension of a reality.

Now, when, as on the biological plane, the reality lends itself to an apprehension, as being comprised of a seriality of individuals within the species and a heterogeneity of species within the many species, the opposition between the 'continuous' and 'discontinuous' cannot be specified as the reality itself is 'shifting' in a seriality, which is continuous yet which can be conceived of as being discontinuous with each particular limit.

Thus, the non-specificity of 'continuity' and 'discontinuity' can pose a fatal risk, for it consents to a confounded 'identity' between 'Nature and Culture', 'Animal and Human', and 'Affective and Rational'.

Therefore, the problem between 'continuity' and 'discontinuity' has serious philosophical repercussions. And it is no surprise that many a thinker has tried to resolve it.

Perhaps one of the ways of resolving the problem is to locate the 'nodal' points of the series, the discontinuity between which is deemed fundamental: the two discontinuous series, each having its 'nodal' point can be conceived of as a binary series and the 'nodes' of which can be conceived of a 'binary opposites', standing in a relation of binary opposition.

That this way of resolving the problem of 'continuous and discontinuous', has found expression in the philosophy of the Founder of the Sciences of Man, is clearly expressed in the following passages:

How then are we to conceive, firstly, the triple passage (which is really one) from animality to humanity, from nature to culture and from affectivity to intellectuality, and secondly, the possibility of the application of the animal and vegetable world to society, perceived already by Rousseau, and in which we see the key to Totemism? For in making a radical separation between key terms one runs the risk (as Durkheim was later to learn) of no longer understanding their origin.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 101]

In this passage, the fundamental question of the passage from Nature to Culture, from Animality to Humanity and from Affectivity to Intellectuality, is followed by a logically secondary question, which is concerned with the integration of an opposed series into the social series.

However, in between these two questions lies a fact of methodological importance. This fact pertains to logic underlying opposition of binary series and then their integration (The necessity of a Relation - be it of 'opposition' or 'integration' (identification) - stems from the fact that taken individually the terms of any series have no meaning). Put simply, the fact of methodological importance points at the necessity of a *relation of opposition*, before a *relation of integration*, in order to realize the triple passage.

The import of this 'necessity' lies in the need to resolve the contradiction between the 'continuous' and 'discontinuous' for once we can relate the 'nodal' terms of fundamentally strategic series (Social and Specific in this case) as

relations of opposition, we can also conceive of surmounting this opposition by a mediation.

Now, we can re-examine the questions posed in the preceding paragraph, quoted from Lévi-Strauss. From this re-examination, it follows that:

Rousseau's answer consists in defining the natural condition of man, while still retaining the distinctions, by the only psychic state of which the content is indissociably, both affective and intellectual, and which the act of consciousness suffices to transfer from one level to the other, viz. compassion, or, as Rousseau also writes, identification with another, the duality of terms corresponding, up to a certain point, to the above duality of aspect. It is because man originally felt himself identical to all those like him (among which, as Rousseau explicitly says, we must include animals) that he came to acquire the capacity to distinguish HIMSELF as he distinguished THEM, i.e. to use the diversity of species as a conceptual support for social differentiation.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 101]

Thus the origin of the relations of binary opposition lies in the fundamental duality between himself (Self) and them (Other), which in turn derive from a duality of 'aspect' which is present in every self i.e. affective and rational (intellectual). This is because Man first identifies, then he opposes - and this is accomplished by Compassion - in two modes of its existence - 'unconscious' and 'conscious'.

This recognition of duality *within* the Self and *between* Self and Other realizes itself as a relation of binary opposition at a higher level of organization.

The philosophy of an original identification with all other creatures... enables him (Rousseau) to form an extraordinarily modern view of the passage from nature to culture, and one based... on the emergence of a logic operating by means of a binary opposition and coinciding with the first manifestations of symbolism. The total apprehension of men and animals as sentient beings, in which identification consists, both governs and precedes the consciousness of oppositions between firstly, logical properties concerned as integral parts of the field, and then, within the field itself, between "human" and "non-human".

For Rousseau this is the very development of language, the origin of which lies not in needs but in emotions, so that the first language must have been figurative.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 101-2]

The passage from Nature to Culture is thus effected by the emergence of a logic which operates by means of binary opposites: this binary relation is rooted in the duality of 'aspect' - of 'identification' and of 'denial of identification'. This binary logic can oppose terms (which do not have any meaning in themselves) which relate attributes or which relate series (because it has the potential for an extension into an exteriority from a most concrete to a most abstract level).

Now, also mentioned in this paragraph is the coincidence of the emergence of symbolism and the emergence of binary logic, and the ability to make binary distinctions as the very development of Language. The development of language is governed, in the first instance, by a mutual 'identification' of all attributes, thus rendering it figurative.

This is to say, that in Nature, one cannot conceive of any form of Language (except may be animal communication). It is only in a state of Culture that one can conceive of communication, one mode of which is

Language. However, in its first stage, because of identification, language was figurative and because Man was induced to speak, impelled by 'emotions', the first utterances were tropes. This first stage was followed by that of reasoning and reasoning, we know, consists in an ability to logically oppose terms which in a way amounts to

the introduction of the discrete, discontinuous and combinatory components into the non-discrete continuum of nature.

[Anthony Wilden 1984: 245]

One is struck by the introduction of the idea of development of Language as epitomizing the passage from Nature to Culture. Another passage which expresses the same idea is the following:

As described by Rousseau in *On the Origin of Language* (1967) the process of language reproduces in its way and on its plane, the process of humanity. The first stage is that of identification, here that of the literal sense and the figurative sense: the true name gradually comes out of the metaphor which merges each being with other beings.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 39]

Thus Language epitomizes the passage from Nature to Culture in two ways:

- (i) It *re-produces* humanity in 'its way' by striving for a unity of 'sensible' and 'intelligible' thus employing all-enveloping metaphors for communication;
- (ii) It *re-produces* humanity, on 'its plane', by employing analytically reduced relations and combinations for communication.

From this it follows that Language consists in a unification of a sensible image drawn from a concrete reality with an intelligible concept: they can be utilized as 'values' in poetry, which simultaneously exploit the intellectual significance and aesthetic properties of words, before they are reduced to a status of Signs by the mechanism of Language which seeks to strive for discretion, and thus move further away from the concrete level to an abstract level, where the sensible images are represented as simple binary operations.

Thus, in reproducing humanity on its plane, Language undergoes a transformation wherein words which are employed by Language are no longer 'pure' i.e., they do not have a 'value'; in fact, in the process of communication, they undergo a series of operations dictated by a need for discontinuity and discretion thereby becoming very vulnerable to those codes which seek to translate the values of words by converting them into Signs.

Culture thus communicates with Signs. And these Signs are motivated by the demands of Culture, which we have looked at in the course of this exercise.

The coming into being of Society, as we have seen, demands that men differentiate themselves. But before Society can demand thus, it is essential for Man to seek his identity in order to conceive of a different Other *within* him.

It is with the recognition of this difference between Self and Other, that we can hope to resolve the problems which arise due to the 'continuous' yet 'discontinuous' conception of 'Individual and Society', 'General and Particular', and 'Nature and Culture'. This is because the relation of difference stemming

from a social demand has the power to project itself on that very plane of Language which is known to reproduce humanity by its mechanism of opposition and correlation (of difference).

Thus, having introduced Language as re-producing humanity 'on its plane' and 'in its way', we shall go on to explore the *modes* of this re-production and the *codes* of communication of that which is reproduced.

CHAPTER II

A STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENCE

SUMMARY

Section 1

We begin by focusing on the Social in Man, for the Social triggers a passage from Nature to Culture. Thus leading to human universals and human invariants. Having established the Social as a stepping stone to Culture, we try to locate it in Man: we locate it in his sexual life.

This sexual life we view as regulated by the incest prohibition: at the level of the individual it amounts to a prohibition of sexual relations with kin who are related.

The incest prohibition represents the passage from Nature to Culture: it changes the conception of the relations given in Nature and necessitates the imposition of Alliance - as expressed in the institution of Marriage - over the fact of consanguinity. It is thus viewed as a rule deriving from a social demand.

Section 2

Here we deal with the Social element of incest as it confronts a group.

It confronts the group in the institution of marriage which requires an Other-group: the static modality of the incest prohibition is transformed into its positive and dynamic counterpart viz. Exogamy.

The notion of Exchange is introduced. This rhythm of giving and taking is already present in Nature, in the form of heredity, and consanguinity. However, it is transformed into alliance in Culture, which is based on exchange and consequently sharing of women between groups: the nature of

give and take is oriented towards the group, towards greater organization and a greater determination.

Exchange of women is viewed as only one mode of exchange, which in fact is a total social fact as represented by a system of attitudes e.g. Potlatch, wherein exchange is not for profit, but for a mysterious advantage it has for the group.

Section 3

This section seeks to answer two fundamental questions: 'What is the need to regulate the relations between sexes?' or 'what is the need to regulate the relations between certain degree of kin?'

*The answer lies in the meaning and modus operandi of the Principle of Reciprocity. This principle derives from the difference between sexes and the difference between degrees of kin, which it regulates. It does so because the sexes bear a sign - by virtue of the value accorded to the woman - and a marriage exchange necessarily entails an exchange of these Signs. The transaction creates creditors and debtors who have **rights** and **obligations** respectively.*

*The modus operandi of the Principle of Reciprocity can be seen in the form of a Structure of Reciprocity or the Structure of the Cross-Cousin Marriage, which we have also called the **Structure of Difference**.*

Cross-cousin marriage, as we see it, entails the incest prohibition and exogamy and serves to provide the most elementary form of kinship structure which is possible and which is recognizable globally.

This we see as being based on four kinship terms viz. Brother, Sister, Father and Son and on three attitudes viz. Consanguinity, Alliance and Descent.

*We focus on the cross-cousin marriage as a Structure of Difference deriving from **Difference between sexes** and from **Difference between creditors and debtors**.*

Section 4

This section invokes the spatial and chronological continuity between the Natural and the Cultural orders: the representation of the social element of incest can be perceived as represented even on the plane of Language because both derive from the laws of 'general functioning' of the mind.

With this we perceive the passage from Nature to Culture as a capacity to oppose and co-relate terms whether of kinship attitudes or of phonemes: operational comparabilities are conceived between Language and Culture.

*The **Structure** deriving from these oppositions and co- relations then is conceived of as a structure arising from opposition and co-relation of **differences**.*

Section 5

This section sums up the arguments advanced in the chapter and introduces the next chapter briefly.

SECTION 1

In the last chapter we have been concerned with the Immanent Relation of difference which exists between the Self and the Other and the postulates which are concomitant with the existence of this Difference. These postulates are:

- i. I EXIST, and
- ii. SOCIETY EXISTS.

We find that the first postulate realizes itself in the principle of Confession and the second postulate realizes itself in the passage from Animal to Human. Affectivity to Rationality and Nature to Culture.

In fact the postulate that SOCIETY EXISTS triggers off a Demand for Difference: in order to subsist socially, Man has to differentiate himself as he differentiates natural species.

Thus, we took the postulate SOCIETY EXISTS as an axiom. Now, without questioning or doubting its axiomatic power, we shall delve deeper into the nature of this Society, rather, the nature of the Social.

We take this step assuming the important bearing it has on our concern with difference, which we have established as essentially a SOCIAL DEMAND.¹

We have just stated that the postulate that SOCIETY EXISTS realizes itself in the passage from Nature to Culture (Recall the triple passage is but one). At this juncture we must recall that we conceived of the passage in terms of Dialectical Reason which also triggered the passage from Animal to Human as realizing itself through the incest prohibition and we also mentioned in a passing way, the passage from Nature to Culture as entailing a recognition of *distinct* differences and a signification of these differences using Cultural 'markers'.

Now these are three modes which lead to the same 'result'. And this result really is a signaling of the advent of Man - of Human - who is definable and characterizable in terms of exclusive capacities.

The very notion of Human or Man, subsumes in its very prevalence, certain *universal* and *invariant*² characteristics, which mark it as different from Animal or that which belongs to the realm of Nature.

This search for invariants and Human - universals, in fact lies at the heart of what Lévi-Strauss conceives of as the Social. For him, these two notions are so much inter-twined with the Social that, it is almost impossible to separate them.

Thus the postulate SOCIETY EXISTS, realizes itself in the passage from Nature to Culture by imposing a Social *demand for difference*, which is an Invariant and a universal Human trait according to Lévi-Strauss. However, what we have stated almost casually in this paragraph requires an elaboration and explanation which deserves the attention we shall be according it, for it is demanded by the sheer genius reflected in its cogency and conception.

In order to delve into the nature of the Social, we propose to begin by asking a fundamental question: 'Where does Nature end and Culture begin?' [Lévi-Strauss 1969 : 4] which is also the kernel of Lévi-Straussian brand of anthropology, as elaborated in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*.

The fact that, in order to discover the nature of the Social, we are posing a fundamental question, is fully justified as a look at this passage shall reveal:

In fact it is impossible to refer without contradiction to any phase in the evolution of mankind, where without any social organization whatsoever, forms of activity were nevertheless developed which are an integral part of culture.

Further,

Above all, it is beginning to emerge that the distinction between nature and society (Nature and Culture seem preferable to us today) while of no historical significance, does contain a logic fully justifying its use by modern sociology as a methodological tool.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 3]

These passages reveal that a consideration of social organization and Society can in no way be dissociated from our concern with a passage from Nature to Culture. In fact the Social seems to be almost a stepping-stone towards Culture.

Man is both a biological being and a social individual. Among his responses to external or internal stimuli, some are wholly dependent upon his nature, others upon his social environment.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 3]

There is thus something about Man which is different from his purely biological and individual existence, and which is his SOCIAL existence. Essentially, Man is a social animal. Can we locate this social existence of Man in Man himself?

Man's sexual life is itself external to the group, firstly, in being the highest expression of his animal nature, and the most significant survival of instinct and secondly in that its ends are to satisfy individual desires, which, as is known, hold little respect for social conventions, and specific tendencies, which although in another sense, also go beyond society's own ends.

However, if the regulation of relationships between the sexes represents an overflow of culture into nature, in another way *sexual life is one beginning of social life in nature, for sexual life is man's only instinct requiring the stimulation of another person.* (emphasis mine)

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 12]

Our attention now has been focused on man's SEXUAL LIFE. Let us see, what are the distinctive features of man's sexual life?

- i. It is external to group because (a) it is a highest expression of man's *Animal* nature and (b) it is a specific tendency which seeks to satisfy *individual* desires.
- ii. It represents an overflow of Culture into Nature (a) if it is *regulated* and (b) if it is conceived of as requiring the stimulation of an Other person.

Looking at these two points, we can arrive at a hypothesis according to which, the advent of Culture is signaled by REGULATION and the presence of an Other in man's life.

The import of this hypothesis is that,

...it does give one reason why the change can and must necessarily take place in the field of sexual life above any other.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 12]

(The change here undoubtedly refers to the passage from Nature to Culture, which, as we can see, has to be viewed from the point of view of the Social which in turn has been located in man's sexual life.)

The next thing to do is to seek this REGULATION in the sexual life of man, which at once has contradictory attributes: (i) being an expression of Animal and Individual (external to group) and (ii) being a harbinger of Social life and REGULATION.

Lévi-Strauss finds the essence of this regulation in the INCEST Prohibition.³

As we have already stated that *by its very existence* as a universal rule, the incest prohibition gives us one normative reason for the regulation of sexual life of man:

The incest prohibition is at once on the threshold of culture, in culture and in one sense, as we shall try to show, culture itself.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 12]

However, we cannot be satisfied with the static explanation of the advent of Culture; for what is the incest prohibition except being a proscription. We have to look into the essential Social and dynamic explanation of the incest prohibition if we are to locate the social existence of Man in Man himself, i.e. in the need of the different Other, as demanding an imposition of this regulation.

The Social element in incest emerges very powerfully because

There is no point in forbidding what would not happen if it were not forbidden.

Therefore,

the origin of the prohibition of incest must be sought in the existence, or in the assumed existence, of this danger for the group, the individuals concerned or their descendants.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 18]

Essentially, the incest prohibition is a

Rule sanctioned by human authority.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 24]

and

If these rules have arisen it is because they satisfy other demands and fulfill other functions.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 22]

Thus, in seeking the Social element in the incest prohibition

The problem is to discover what profound and omnipresent causes could account for the regulation of the relationships between the sexes in every society and age.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 23]

It is Lévi-Strauss' claim that,

Even if the incest prohibition has its roots in nature it is only in the way it affects us as a social rule that it can be fully grasped.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 29]

Here we can discern an attempt on the part of Lévi- Strauss to attribute the essentially Cultural attribute of the incest prohibition to a universe of RULES which reflects the Social which, as we have already stated is a demand for difference.

Thus, before we can go on to discover the profound and omnipresent causes which account for the regulation of the relationship between the sexes, we perhaps have to focus our attention on this universe of RULES which allows us to locate the Social (demand for difference) in the sexual life of man, by regulating the sexual relations between the sexes.

Thus proceeding, we focus our attention on one fact stated by Lévi-Strauss (based on empirical evidence).

...the prohibition (of incest) is not always expressed in terms of degrees of real kinship but refers to individuals who use certain terms in addressing one another. It is the social relationship more than the biological tie implied by the term father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister that acts as the determinant.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 30]

From the passage, it clearly emerges that it is the Social relationship over and above the biological tie which determines the group of individuals who come to be *classed* as father, mother, son, daughter, brother, and sister. This amounts to saying that individuals per se (as biological beings) have no identity and they acquire an identity only as part of a *relationship*. This hypothesis merely echoes the one we advanced in the previous chapter regarding the *immanence of the relation* for realizing the identity of an individual.⁴

For Lévi-Strauss, the transition from Nature to Culture entails a passage in the *mode of conception* of these relations:

Considered from the most general point of view, the incest prohibition expresses the transition from the natural fact of consanguinity to the cultural fact of alliance.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 30]

Thus fundamentally, Man begins by the conception of the *relationship* stemming from the fact of alliance (as opposed to consanguinity) which finds its culmination in marriage.

We find that the fact of alliance leading to marriage has been accorded a fundamental role in this exercise which began by posing the following question: Where does Nature end and Culture begin? It is thus imperative to delve into the meaning of alliance and subsequently of marriage which is so much of a fundamental concern with Lévi-Strauss⁵.

SECTION 2

Nature by itself already moves to the double rhythm of receiving and giving, which finds expression in the opposition of marriage and descent. But, although present in both and in the same way bestowing a common form upon them, this rhythm does not display the same aspect in both nature and culture.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 30]

Perhaps, this paragraph contains the essence of the meaning of *marriage, alliance* and *Culture* as opposed to *descent, consanguinity* and *Nature*. Further, we are introduced to a rhythm of giving and taking, which till now has been foreign to our discussion. (Of course, we can recall having mentioned an Exchange of Differences as part of our previous discussion. However it was mentioned only in passing.)

We shall soon see that it is around this rhythm of 'giving and taking' that the theoretical contradictions between Culture and Nature, Alliance and Consanguinity, and Marriage and Descent resolve themselves.

The first fact which confronts us regarding this rhythm is that it occurs in both Nature and Culture (as far as its 'form' is concerned). However it displays different aspects on these two planes, which amount to an opposition between marriage and descent. (The opposition between Nature and Culture now can be translated into the opposition between descent and marriage.)

What is the nature of the rhythm on the plane of Nature and in what way can it be considered homological with descent? Let us explore.

The characteristic of nature is that it can give only what has been received - *heredity* expresses this permanence and continuity.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 30]

What does *heredity* entail?

Nature assigns to each individual determinants transmitted by those who are in fact his parents, but it has nothing to do with deciding who these parents will be. Consequently, from the point of view of nature heredity is doubly necessary, firstly as a law - there is no spontaneous generation - and secondly as a specification of the law, for nature not only says that one must have parents, but that one will be like them.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 30-1]

Thus *heredity* entails BIOLOGICAL KINSHIP which can be regarded as BIOLOGICAL DESCENT⁶. Descent and Nature are thus necessary for generation of the Human species and necessary also for the specific characteristics which are acquired by the child by virtue of its biological

kinship. But does Nature 'determine' the biological kinship? To this, Lévi-Strauss' reply is:

If the relationship between parents and children is strictly determined by the nature of the parents, the relationship between male and female is left entirely to chance and probability.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 31]

Biological kinship which stems from the relationship of the male and the female among themselves and their relationship to their child is said to be left to serendipity.

Thus, mutations aside nature contains one solitary principle of 'indetermination', revealed in the arbitrariness of marriage.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 31]

Thus, the nature of the rhythm of giving and taking as occurring on the plane of Nature is arbitrary and indeterminate; further it can also be regarded as being in equilibrium vis-a-vis the give and take as it occurs in case of heredity. However it appears to be representing a very random (and unequal) distribution of attributes and sexes.

Now, let us explore further into the nature of this rhythm on the plane of Culture.

In keeping with our conception of the relation between Nature and Culture (between which there is no juxtaposition and super-imposition; instead there is a continuity which by virtue of a dialectic movement transcends itself), we have to examine the manner in which the transformation of this rhythm occurs between Nature and Culture.

If, in keeping with the evidence, nature is acknowledged as being historically anterior to culture, it can be only through the possibilities left open by nature that culture has been able to place its stamp upon nature and introduce its own requirements without any discontinuity.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 31]

The pivot at which the transformation from Nature to Culture takes place is located in a possibility which is left open by Nature. What is this possibility?

Culture yields to the inevitability of biological heredity... But culture, although it is powerless before descent, becomes aware of its rights, and of itself, with the completely different phenomenon of marriage, in which nature for once has not already had the last word.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 31]

Culture thus becomes aware of itself through marriage. Now, what is the meaning of marriage? The meaning of marriage becomes clear

When nature's indifference to the modalities of the relations between the sexes is acknowledged [it can be witnessed by the entire study of animal life] for it is precisely alliance that is the hinge, or more exactly the notch where the hinge might be fixed. *Nature imposes alliance without determining it, and culture no sooner receive it than defines its modalities.* (emphasis mine)

[Lévi-Strauss 1969 : 31]

Nature, thus, satisfies itself by affirming the law of marriage through the necessity of sexual union (for 'generation') which is yet unregulated and indeterminate, whereas Culture does not remain indifferent to the 'contents' of this law for it goes on to define its modes of application. But before Culture can go on to define the modes of application of the content of marriage, it imposes alliance by the prohibition of incest.⁷

The fact of being a rule completely independent of its modalities, is indeed the very essence of the incest prohibition. If nature leaves marriage to chance and the arbitrary, it is impossible for culture not to introduce some sort of order where there is none.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 32]

We have thus established the essential meaning of the incest prohibition; however, we may recall, that we are seeking a dynamic and social element of the incest prohibition. And a clue to the same can be glimpsed in a perceptible shift in the 'motive' of Culture (from being satisfied with merely prohibiting marriage) when it seeks an order.

The prime role of culture is to ensure the groups existence as a group, and consequently, in this domain as in all others to replace chance by organization.⁸

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 32]

The rhythm in Nature, which is in equilibrium (i.e. repetitive), indeterminate and arbitrary, is replaced by a rhythm which has to be guided by concern for the group's existence and which consequently has to seek an order and organization. This organization is sought by virtue of the incest prohibition:

...it is intervention over and above anything else; even more exactly, it is the *intervention*.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 32]

The shift in the motive of Culture is thus attributable to an intervention which is guided by a concern for the group. Now the next question is that from the point of view of the group when is an intervention required?

The problem of intervention... is raised and resolved in the affirmative, every time the group is faced with the insufficiency or the risky distribution of a valuable of fundamental importance.

Thus,

We are prompted to see collective-intervention, when it affects commodities vital to our way of life...

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 32]

According to Lévi-Strauss, then, intervention from the point of view of the group becomes imperative when the concern is with the distribution of a valuable which is accorded the status of a commodity which is either scarce or unequally distributed. What we have, then is

The system of the scarce product. [constituting] an extremely general model.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:32]

This system of the scarce product acquires a fundamental value for the group, for, the collective measures which are expressed by the group vis-a-vis its control and distribution constitute

procedures which are familiar to primitive societies and necessary to the group if its coherence is not to be continually compromised.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 32]

Thus, in our quest for the Social element of the incest prohibition, we are moving towards its role as a *collective-measure* for controlling and distributing the valuable commodities of the group in order to maintain the group's coherence.

Also, in striving to explore the nature of the rhythm of give and take on the plane of Culture, which is expressed in marriage (entailing its concern with the modalities of the regulation of the relations between the sexes), we can discern the dependence of this rhythm on the manner in which marriage and alliance classes individuals as proscribed or prescribed from the point of view of marriage. The fact of alliance thus entails two things. These are: (i) Marriage Prohibitions and (ii) Marriage Preferences.

A marriage prohibition like the incest prohibition, should essentially be concerned with the control and distribution of valuable commodities. In fact, as Lévi-Strauss says,

It is impossible to approach the study of marriage prohibitions if it is not thoroughly understood from the beginning that such facts are in no way exceptional, but represent a particular application, within a given field of principles and methods encountered whenever the physical or spiritual existence of the group is at stake.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 32]

Marriage prohibitions can thus be seen as principles which a group encounters or implements when its own existence is at stake. These prohibitions thus should control and distribute valuables and commodities which are absolutely essential for the group to exist and perpetuate itself. What are these commodities?

The group controls the distribution... of women,

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 32]

along with other valuables: marriage prohibitions become methods of regulating and controlling the distribution of women.

It is almost as if women as commodities pass through a radical uncertainty of their production, that Culture has to intervene and regulate their supply by means of the marriage prohibitions.¹⁰

Thus, the model of the system of the scarce product applies to women (as it applies to other scarce commodities).¹¹

The rhythm of give and take as it occurs on the Natural plane is a process which is repetitive. However, when transposed on to the plane of Culture, it is replaced by what Lévi-Strauss refers to as accumulation.

Therefore in the sphere of culture, the individual always receives more than he gives and gives more than he receives.

Seen thus, the problem of transition from nature to culture is reduced to the problem of introducing the accumulatory process within the repetitive process.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 30]

Essentially, the accumulatory process, would arise in a *family* due to

...the greater intimacy of its inter-individual contacts.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 41]

And were it not for marriage or alliance, or what Lévi-Strauss calls the collective intervention,

every family would automatically maintain a monopoly of its women.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 41]

However, it is the Cultural fact of alliance as expressed in marriage which keeps the Social concern much above the institutional (familial) concerns and advocates a sharing of women.

Thus, the Social element of the incest prohibition lies in the fact that it entails alliance and marriage which are seen as crucial for the groups existence and perpetuation as a group. Sharing - which reflects a Social demand at this stage - gains priority over Accumulation. (We shall keep in mind that, we are talking of that first step-triggering the passage from Nature to Society via the commandment of the incest prohibition, the dynamic form of which lies in exogamy, which renders alliance and marriage as necessary conditions for society to exist.)

The question may now be raised that what of Culture? Or how different is our conception of Society from our conception of Culture? To this our answer is that Culture essentially presupposes a social organization. Hence, before we can start speaking in terms of Culture, we have to develop

the normative and logical necessity of this social organization which is amply demonstrated by the discussion of the social element of the incest prohibition as prevalent in the existence of alliance and marriage, which we have in turn attributed to a Cultural rhythm of give and take (we can use the term exchange for the same). Thus, the Social element of incest lies in the need for exchange. This need confronts us almost as deriving its strength from the fact of it being a *rule*. The *rule* then is to exchange (before accumulating for accumulation goes against the demands of society).

By establishing a general rule of obedience, whatever this rule may be, the group asserts its jural authority over what it legitimately considers an essential valuable.

It refuses to sanction the natural inequality of the distribution of sexes within the family, and on the only possible basis, it institutes freedom of access for every individual to the women of the group. This basis is, in short, that neither fraternity nor paternity can be put forward as claims to a wife, but that the sole validity of these claims lies in the fact that all men are in equal competition for all women, their respective relationships being defined in terms of the group, and not the family.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 42]

So far, we have concentrated our attention on the Social element of the incest prohibition as it confronts individuals; it prohibits individuals from having claims on the women of their family by virtue of the demand levied by the Society itself so that Society can be generated and perpetuated. And we have also seen how this Social Demand entails the fact of alliance (over consanguinity) and subsequently the act of marriage (over decent) as necessary for the passage from a state of Nature to that of Society. In effect,

we have located the Social rule of exchange in the individual. for the notion of Society is implicit in the nature of the demands of his sexual life. Further, it is this Social Demand which requires a conscious recognition of a differentiation between the sexes which it regulates (via incest prohibition) in order to exchange this difference.

Now we shall assign ourselves the task of looking into the manner in which this Social Demand operates at the collective level (at level of group) and the repercussions it generates.

Passing from the study of a rule as a rule to the study of its most general characteristics, it now has to be shown how the transition from an originally negative rule to a collection of entirely different stipulations was accomplished.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 44]

Thus in moving from explanation from a individual to a collective level, we are infact moving from the consideration of a negative rule (the prohibition) to the consideration of its positive modalities.¹²

This also amounts to the fact that:

... marriage rules do not always merely prohibit a kinship circle, but occasionally also fix one within which marriage must necessarily take place.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 45]

The positive modalities of the incest prohibition are subsumed by Lévi-Strauss under the general term: EXOGAMY.¹³

Because women have been decreed as valuable from the point of view of the group, the group intervenes in marriage. According to Lévi-Strauss, the group does so in two ways:

(a) Firstly in the form of a 'rival' who, through the agency of the group, asserts that he had the same right of access as the husband, a right upon which the union is conditional and which must be shown to have been respected and

(b) Secondly, through the group as a group, which asserts that the relationship which makes the marriage possible must be social, that is defined in group terms and not in natural terms having all the consequences incompatible with collective life.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:43]

This means that at the individual level, the group conjures the idea of the Other who is a rival and at the collective level, it demands the establishment of relations which are important for the perpetuation and cohesiveness of the group.

Just as,

marriage is an *eternal triangle*, not just in vauville sketches, but at all times and in all places, and by definition...

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 43]

at the individual level, through the agency of the rival, similarly,

a group within which marriage is prohibited immediately conjures up the idea of another group, with clearly defined features.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:51]

This means that at the collective level also it becomes obligatory to enter into a relation with another group:

The prohibition on the sexual use of a daughter or a sister compels them to be given in marriage to another man, and at the same time it establishes a right to a daughter or sister of this other man. In this way, every negative stipulation of the prohibition has a positive counterpart. The prohibition is tantamount to an obligation, and renunciation gives rise to counter-claim.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 51]

Thus when examined from the point of view of the group, the prohibition of incest no longer remains merely a prohibition. By its positive modality as expressed in exogamy, it entails a wider social application: it becomes a RULE OF RECIPROCITY for it is an obligation to renounce, which in turn gives rise to a counter-claim.

As Lévi-Strauss says,

...the formal characteristics of prohibition of incest and exogamy are in effect identical.

and therefore the social element of incest as expressed in terms of the group lies in the fact that

The content of the prohibition is not exhausted by the fact of the prohibition: the latter is instituted only in order to guarantee and establish directly or indirectly, immediately or mediately, an exchange.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 51]

Lévi-Strauss has repeatedly drawn our attention to Marcel Mauss' conception of the TOTAL SOCIAL FACT.¹⁴ The essence of the conception of the Total Social Fact lies in

that this primitive form of exchange is not merely nor essentially of an economic nature but is what he aptly calls A TOTAL SOCIAL FACT, that is, an event which has a significance that is at once social and religious, magic and economic, utilitarian and sentimental, jural and moral.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 52]

The manifestation of this Total Social Fact in day-to-day transactions lies in reciprocal gifts:

These gifts are either exchanged immediately for equivalent gifts or are received by the beneficiaries on condition that at a later date they will give counter-gifts often exceeding the original goods in value, but which in their turn bring about a subsequent right to receive new gifts, surpassing the original ones in sumptuousness.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 52]

This is seen by Lévi-Strauss as the institution of POTLATCH, which according to him is a Universal mode of Culture [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 52]¹⁵. Thus, Lévi-Strauss has converted a localized institution of the POTLATCH into what may appropriately be termed as a SYSTEM OF ATTITUDES. For the characteristic feature of the Potlatch lies not in the goods exchanged but in the *attitude* towards exchange of goods. And because it is as an attitude, it can be seen as permeating every transaction:

It permeates every transaction, ritual or profane, in which objects or produce are given or received.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 52]

This attitude towards transaction entails a *destruction of the profit motive* and renders the Potlatch a means towards ends which have attached to them - a 'mysterious advantage' [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 55].

Implicitly or explicitly, the double assumption is found everywhere that reciprocal gifts constitute a means - normal or privileged, depending on the group - of transforming goods, or certain goods, and that these gifts are not offered principally or essentially with the idea of receiving a profit or advantage of an economic nature.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 54]

Even when profit motive prevails,

The profit is neither direct or inherent in the things exchanged as in the case of monetary profit or consumer gain.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 54]

This is to say that,

In primitive thought there is clearly something else in what we call a 'commodity' that makes it profitable to its owner or its trader. Goods are not only economic commodities, but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order, such as power, influences, sympathy, status and emotion.¹⁶

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 54]

Therefore,

The idea that a mysterious advantage is attached to the acquisition of commodities, or at least certain commodities, by means of reciprocal gifts, rather than by individual production or acquisition, is not confined to primitive society.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 55]

The attitude towards potlatch as we can see also entails a near taboo in the self-production or self-acquisition of certain commodities which are better suited for the purpose of gift-giving.¹⁷ That is, the commodities which are associated with having a mysterious advantage are suited only to be exchanged and further there is a taboo attached to individual consumption of these commodities, which Lévi-Strauss explains in the following manner:

It seems that the group confusedly sees as a sort of 'social incest' in the individual accomplishment of an art which normally requires collective-participation.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 58]

This conception of social incest is seen by Lévi-Strauss as a GENERAL MODEL, which can be applied to any kind of exchange.¹⁸

In a nutshell then, it is a System of Attitudes as embodied in the institution of the Potlatch which triggers exchange as essential for:

- i. prohibiting incest at the level of individual and at the level of society; and
- ii. accumulation of Social Values (whether these values are use values or whether they are exchange values).

Based on the preceding discussion, we have with us the following facts:

- i. The passage from Nature to Culture as triggered by the fact of society.
 - ii. The Social element of the incest prohibition as expressed in the rule of alliance culminating in the institution of marriage and entailing an exchange of valuable commodities viz. women.
 - iii. The positive modality of the incest prohibition (having consequences for the group) as expressed in exogamy: the negative modality of the incest prohibition entails an awareness merely of a relation of difference and the positive modality of the incest prohibition exogamy entails an awareness of a group with well defined features [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 51] into which a daughter may be given in marriage, which means, that there is an awareness of a class.
 - iv. The universality of Potlatch thus rendering its perception as a GENERAL MODEL legitimizing and expressing the PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY as a Total Social Fact and entailing a system of attitudes that serve the two fold purpose of
 - a. prohibiting individual and social incest and
 - b. enabling the accumulation of social values (use-values or exchange-values).
 - v. The mysterious value accorded to the commodities which are exchanged.
-

SECTION 3

At this juncture, we feel the need to recall the hypothesis presented in the introductory chapter.

We recall that the problem of existence of Man can be resolved only by involving an Other who is different from one Self and with whom one is tied up in a relation, which is therefore immanent. Thus, this Immanent Relation expressing a fundamental DEMAND for DIFFERENCE lies at the inception of Man and so of Society, for a relation by itself entails an Other.

It is this argument which we examine within the perspective offered by the incest prohibition which seeks at the most elementary level a regulation in the sexual life of Man. The question we raised at an earlier part of this discussion was:

The problem is to discover what profound and omnipresent causes could account for the regulation of the relationship between the sexes in every society and age.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 23]

The basic relationship is that which exists between a male and a female individual.¹⁹ Now given the fact of descent as given in Nature, we can say that a consideration of collaterals implies that,

the brother-sister relationship is identical with the sister-brother relationship

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 128]

And so is the case with the relation between brother and brother and sister and sister, which are also identical with one another. Thus, on the plane of Nature the difference which is given is expressed in the relationship between the sexes, which is the fundamental relationship.

From here let us move on to the plane of Culture, which entails a state of Society, and consequently to the fact of alliance (and marriage), deriving from a PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY.

We know that Culture requires (a) to be generated and (b) to be perpetuated and further that it requires these conditions to be fulfilled not by virtue of 'serendipity', but by virtue of 'organization' and 'order'.²⁰ And the first step taken by culture is the prohibition of incest by the fact of marriage and alliance.²¹ Thus, on the plane of Culture, the fundamental relationship is not based on the difference given in nature (between the sexes), but is based on the difference (between a Self and a rival), who have claims over the commodity which has to be exchanged between them. And, this difference itself is a condition of Society [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 43].

Now, if we simultaneously consider these two relations of difference i.e. (between sexes) on the plane of Nature and (between the partners in an alliance) on the plane of Culture, we arrive at what we can call the basic STRUCTURE OF RECIPROCITY which is in fact a STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENCE by virtue of its foundations.

We have accorded the incest prohibition two modalities viz. negative and positive, which nevertheless are capable of being interpreted from the point of view of the Principle of Reciprocity. Both the incest prohibition and exogamy

constitute substantially identical rules, and they differ from each other only in secondary characteristics viz. that reciprocity, present in both cases, is only inorganic in the first, while it is organized in the second.

In case of the incest prohibition entailing an inorganic reciprocity,

Unlike exogamy, exchange may be neither explicit nor immediate, but the fact that I can obtain a wife is, in the final analysis, the consequence of the fact that a brother or father has given her up. But the rule does not say in whose favour the person shall be given up, on the contrary, the beneficiary or the beneficiary class is delimited in the case of exogamy. The only difference is then that in exogamy the belief is expressed that the classes must be defined so that the relationship may be established between them, while in the prohibition of incest the relationship alone is sufficient to define continually in social life a complex multiplicity, ceaselessly renewed by terms which are directly or indirectly solidary.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 61-2]

An instance wherein class awareness is the decisive factor in defining potential spouses is found in Dual Organization.²²

In the form of Dual Organization Levi-Strauss sees the operation of the fundamental characteristic of marriage which lies in the notion of exchange.

...the essential thing as we see it, is not dual organization but the principle of reciprocity of which it constitutes in some way the codification.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 72]

Classificatory systems (e.g. Dual Organization) are thus seen as an essential consequence of the Principle of Reciprocity. And the essence of this Principle of Classification [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 75] lies in the fact that a partner is immediately identifiable [Lévi-Strauss 1969:73].

Thus now we are confronted with two modes in which the incest prohibition organizes its message: one mode is organizing individuals in a *relationship* whereas the other mode is organizing groups of individuals into *classes*. And these we can say are complementary ways of perceiving the Principle of Reciprocity [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 119].

Recalling the two relationships, we derived (i) on the plane of Nature, between the sexes, and (ii) on the plane of Culture, between the Self and rival. We can think of relating, by implication, these relationships with the two others which we have derived from the two modes of organization of the 'message' of the incest prohibition:

- i. *Incest prohibition* implies *difference between sexes*, and
- ii. *Exogamy* (Dual Organization) implies *difference between marriage classes* (stemming from a difference between partners in alliance).

But one also needs to delve briefly on the manner in which this transformation from one to the other is brought about. For this, one has to examine the Cross-Cousin Marriage and its meaning, as elaborated by Lévi-Strauss. The significance of Cross-Cousin Marriage lies in the fact that it is

one special case in which both aspects of the principle of reciprocity co-exist, or rather have the same relative importance, and where they overlap exactly and cumulate their effects... In this, more than any other, the class and the group of individuals determined by the relationship are co-extensive.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 119]

Cross-Cousin Marriage can be seen as a pivot between the incest prohibition and exogamy. It shares characteristics of being simultaneously a relationship and a class with the incest prohibition and exogamy respectively and at the same time it can be distinguished from both.

It can be distinguished from the prohibition of incest

in that the latter employs a system of negative relationships, and the marriage of cross-cousins a system of positive relations. The incest prohibition says who cannot be married, while the other establishes which spouses are preferred.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 119]

It can also be distinguished from dual organization (which is the simplest mode of exogamy).

in that the latter has an automatic procedure (unilineal descent) for sorting out individuals into two categories, while the other has a discriminatory procedure which it applies to each individual.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 119]²³

The outstanding characteristic of the Cross-Cousin Marriage emerges in its discriminatory procedure for sorting out individuals in the generation same as the ego and the sorting out of these individuals on the basis of their sexes (which we shall see results from the application of the relation of difference between the sexes, as is given in Nature). As Lévi-Strauss says:

The interest of cross-cousin marriage lies especially in the fact that the division that it establishes between prescribed and prohibited spouses cuts across a category of relatives who, from the viewpoint of biological proximity, are strictly interchangeable.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:121]

Thus, keeping at its base the differences between the sexes, we find that the Cross-Cousin Marriage, by employing the discriminatory procedure of sorting individuals in the same generation - who further, are biologically proximate - is already moving towards instituting differences between the alliance partners. To discern this 'movement' clearly, one needs to examine the basis of cross Cousin Marriage. And for discerning this basis, one needs, fundamentally, to understand

WHY degrees of kinship, which are equivalent from a biological point of view are nevertheless considered completely dissimilar from the social point of view.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 122]

But before we go on to discern this basis, let us look at concrete instances wherein equivalence from a biological point of view is considered as 'non-equivalence' from a social point of view.

- i. Relation between brother-sister is not identical to relation between brother-brother and sister-sister.
- ii. The distinction between collaterals of the same degree (according to kinship) is established through a relative of the same or of different sex [Lévi-Strauss 1969:128].
- iii. Nephews and nieces are distinguished according to whether they are the children of my sister (if I am a man), or my brother (if I am a woman), or according as they are the children of my brother whose brother I am, or of my sister, whose sister I am i.e. an uncle does not have the same status for his nephews if he is the brother of a father who is his own brother, or the brother of a mother who is for him a sister, and it is same with the aunt [Lévi-Strauss 1969:128].

Following this,

Finally, a female cousin or a male cousin, the child of a brother's brother or a sister's sister, [who is are referred to as a parallel cousins] he or she, becomes something else [i.e. cross cousin] entirely, perhaps even the person farthest removed from a kinsman i.e. a spouse.

Thus, one can see that relations which are considered biologically equivalent are rendered socially non- equivalent, with a mere change of SEX.

According to Lévi- Strauss,

In a very great number of societies there are consequences ranging from a mere difference in terminology to a transformation in the whole system of rights and duties, following the fact that there is or is not a change of SEX in passing from the direct line to the collateral line.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:128]

To expose the basis of Cross-Cousin Marriage, Lévi- Strauss invokes The Principle Reciprocity. He sees Cross- Cousin Marriage

as the elementary formula for marriage by exchange
[and he sees marriage as a]
bilateral act and a symmetrical institution.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 129]

Thus essentially *marriage by exchange* entails a gift and a counter-gift; a move and a counter-move; a female and a male; a female and (minimally) two males i.e. a difference in sex and a difference in self (giver) and rival (receiver). (Note: that in either implication, a relationship is necessary and immanent).

We have already said that women who are exchanged by men are valuable commodities.²⁴ And to grasp the essence of marriage by exchange, the elementary formula of which can be seen in the Cross-Cousin Marriage,

one needs to view this exchange of the group's most valuable commodities i.e. women. The best way of doing so, perhaps would be to view it from the optic of the group.

The group views related women (i.e. the difference given in nature) as women lost and at the same time, it views women brought in by marriage as women gained [Lévi- Strauss 1969:130].

Now as such there should be no difference whatsoever between women who are lost to the group and women who are gained by the group. For 'women are biological individuals, that is natural products naturally procreated by other biological individuals'. Further, if the OTHER groups are regarded as sections practicing exogamy, we can say that 'women of different sections or sub-sections all belong to the same natural species' [Lévi-Strauss 1976: 123]. Why is it that there exists a difference between women who are related thereby lost and women who are unrelated, thereby gained?

We can recall from our discussion in the introductory chapter, the contingency, by the fact of Society, which demands of men, that they differentiate themselves from each other, the basic level being the differentiation between partners in the alliance.

No society could allow itself to 'act nature' to this extent or it would split up into a whole lot of independent, hostile bands, each denying that the others were human.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976 :119]

Hence, as we have already remarked Culture renders contingent a difference between partners in a marriage alliance. However, the new dimension revealed is that Culture renders 'contingent' the creation of a difference between partners in an alliance, through the agency of the woman (i.e. through a natural relation of difference):

Women are alike so far as nature is concerned and can be regarded as different only from a cultural angle...

and

Women certainly have to be exchanged since they have been decreed to be different.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 124]

And we find that this difference is created between women lost and gained by assigning them an 'exchange value' or a sign: the woman who is exchanged between one group to the other renders the 'givers' a positive (+) sign and accords him the place of a creditor, for from a future perspective he has a right to 'receive' other women. Similarly, the group which gains a woman through a son, acquires a negative (-) sign and is obliged to give a woman from a future perspective and change his status from that of a debtor to creditor. Thus

Each family descended from the marriages thus bears a 'sign' which is determined, for the initial group, by whether the children's mother is a daughter or a daughter-in-law.

Families descended from a daughter and son-in-law result from an impoverishment of the group, and, from the initial group's viewpoint, have a credit to their account.

Families which derive from the marriage of a son and daughter-in-law are families of acquisition and since they have gained, they must give.

The foundation of this creditor-debtor relationship lies in the fact that,

The sign changes in passing from the brother to the sister, since the brother gains a wife, while the sister is lost to her own family.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:130]

Because the difference given in Nature entails a gain of rights and obligations (with a concomitant loss of the same) from a future perspective, so that the relation of difference between the sexes acquires a fundamental significance. The consideration of a future perspective is highlighted in the following statement:

But the sign also changes from passing from one generation to the next (It depends upon whether, from the initial group's point of view, the father has received a wife, or the mother has been transferred outside, whether, the sons have a right to a woman or owe a sister.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:130]

The awareness of a future perspective in marriage simply entails that marriage by exchange, cannot be

isolated from all the other marriages, past or future, which have occurred or which will occur within the group. Each marriage is the end of a movement, which, as soon as this point has been reached, should be reversed and developed in a new direction. If the movement ceases, the whole system of reciprocity will be disturbed. Since marriage is the condition upon which reciprocity is realized, it follows that marriage constantly ventures the existence of reciprocity.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 488-9]

The exchange by the group of its most valuable commodities - women - is triggered off by the exchange value created in women: by exchanging its women, the group can gain in rights which may be considered as an attitude par excellence from the point of view of social wealth and consequently power or status. Further this group constantly fluctuates through a cycle of gain of rights or gain of obligations, in course of the functioning of marriage by exchange.

We may recall here, that the group by a collective intervention seeks to regulate the distribution of its valuables. Hence marriage intends to neutralize this system of rights and obligations by invoking mutuality and reciprocity, but in fact it never succeeds in doing so, for if,

'its movement ceases the whole system of reciprocity will be disturbed'.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 488-9]

Thus, we can conceive of the Principle of Reciprocity as taking the form of a basic STRUCTURE which subsumes the relationship necessary for its generation (i.e. relations of rights and obligations as given in the relation of difference between the sexes) and the relationships necessary for its perpetuation (i.e. relationships of rights, obligations, mutuality and reciprocity).

This basic STRUCTURE OF RECIPROCITY stems from a fundamental difference between two individuals viz. a 'Self and a Rival' as given in a relationship between giver and receiver, or between two groups viz. a 'Giver Group and a Receiver Group'. This basic STRUCTURE requires for its very existence and subsequently for its perpetuation DIFFERENCES, whether

given or else created. And, as we know that the transformation from incest prohibition to exogamy, which amounts to a *transformation from given difference to created difference* is realized through Cross-Cousin Marriage therefore, in order to examine the basic structure of reciprocity (which we claim is the basic structure of difference, one must look into the STRUCTURE of Cross-Cousin Marriage).

In the final analysis, cross cousin marriage simply expresses the fact that marriage must always be giving and receiving, but that one can receive only from him who is obliged to give and that the giving must be to him who has a right to receive, for the mutual gift between debtors leads to privilege, whereas the mutual gift between creditors leads inevitably to extinction.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 131]

Thus, what are the relationships which can express the essence of Cross-Cousin Marriage, which entails the following attributes:

- i. marriage is a giving and receiving;
- ii. one receives from him who is 'obliged' to give;
- iii. one gives to him who has a 'right' to receive; and
- iv. marriage does not entail the creation of privileges (which culminate in extinction thereby betraying the very essence of marriage); hence

'mutuality' between creditors and debtors is against the norm of marriage. At most mutuality can be conceived only as representing a 'movement' of the act of exchange in two subsequent generations: a creditor in one generation is repaid in the subsequent generation.

Thus, in essence Cross-Cousin Marriage entails four attitudes (may we recall, at the juncture the statement we made when discussing Potlatch as a universal mode of Culture):

The universality of Potlatch, thus rendering its perception as a GENERAL MODEL legitimate, as expressing the PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY as a Total Social Fact, and entailing a system of attitudes that serve the two-fold purpose of (a) prohibiting individual and social incest and (b) enabling the accumulation of Social Values (use values or exchange values).

The idea is to render the Principle of Reciprocity as entailing a system of attitudes which necessitates reciprocating rights and obligations.

These four attitudes, which Lévi-Strauss refers to as A SYSTEM OF BASIC ATTITUDES [Lévi-Strauss 1972 :49] are:

- i. Attitude resulting from reciprocal exchange of prestations and counter-prestations amounting to RECIPROCITY, which bears the sign (\pm) (Recall, marriage is a giving and receiving).
- ii. Attitude of creditor, representing RIGHTS which bears the sign (+) (Recall, one receives from him who is obliged to give).

- iii. Attitude of debtor. representing OBLIGATIONS, bearing the sign (-) (Recall, one gives to him who has a right to receive).
- iv. Attitude of affection, tenderness, spontaneity, representing MUTUALITY, bearing the sign (=) (Recall, mutuality stands for the movement of the act of exchange in two subsequent generations: a creditor in one generation is repaid in the subsequent generation).

Following this listing of the SYSTEM OF ATTITUDES, we can arrive at the RELATIONSHIPS, which can underlie the 'Structure' of 'Cross-Cousin Marriage'. These relationships are:

- i. Relationship between brother and sister implying a RELATION OF CONSANGUINITY, which is the basic relationship of difference.
- ii. Relationship between creditor and debtor implying a RELATION OF ALLIANCE, which is the relationship of difference in one generation.
- iii. Relationship between creditor and debtor implying a RELATION OF DESCENT, which is the relationship of difference in two subsequent generations.

Following this, we can say that the terms required to realize these relationships are: (i) BROTHER, (ii) SISTER, (iii) FATHER, and (iv) SON. With these four terms, we can arrive at all the three crucial relationships (consanguinity, alliance and descent) which express the System of Attitudes entailed in Cross-Cousin Marriage, and which, thereby, can be used for arriving at the STRUCTURE OF RECIPROCITY, which according to Lévi-Strauss is 'the most elementary form of kinship that can exist. It is the unit of kinship' [Lévi-Strauss 1972 : 46].

This unit of kinship has been expressed by Lévi-Strauss as follows:

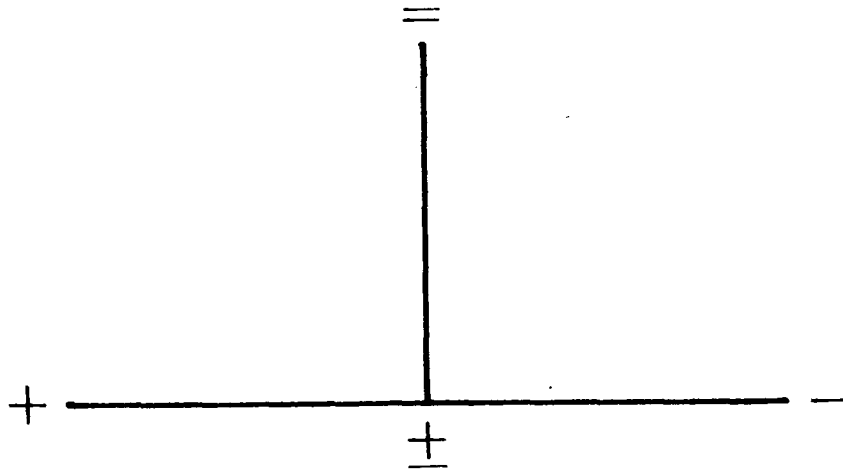


FIG. 1 - STRUCTURE OF RECIPROCITY

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 49]

This representation as we can see for ourselves, fulfills Lévi-Strauss idea of marriage being,

... an ETERNAL TRIANGLE, not just in vauville sketches, but at all times, and in all places, and by definition.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 43]

That this triangle represents the STRUCTURE OF RECIPROCITY is highlighted and validated by the fact that all the four attitudes (those of mutuality, reciprocity, rights and obligations) are in a reciprocal relation.

And for our purpose, this structure of reciprocity is conceived as a STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENCE since it bases itself on a fundamental difference given in Nature and then proceeds on to elaborate this difference by creating differences in one term of this fundamental difference - in order to base Culture on DIFFERENCE.

SECTION 4

In the preceding section, we had given ourselves the license of using a very technical term - STRUCTURE -in an almost callous way. We almost took a giant leap in taking the discussion from a consideration of a System of Attitudes to the consideration of the elementary STRUCTURE OF KINSHIP.

However, we shall soon see that in between the System of Attitudes and the Structure of Kinship there lies a philosophy of Lévi-Strauss which almost as an ode to Mauss' conception of the TOTAL SOCIAL FACT strives towards discerning a relationship of the individual with the cultural, the synchronic with the diachronic, the physiological with the psychological, and the objective with the subjective i.e. the SELF and the OTHER.

The underlying quest of this endeavour is no doubt to resolve the *problem of invariance* [Lévi-Strauss 1987 : 24] by being concerned with the universality of human nature.²⁵ This no doubt pre-supposes that we are Human as distinct from Animal and that there has taken place a transformation in the course of the passage from Nature to Culture.

The consideration of the passage from Nature to Culture gives anthropology its basic concern which lies with Man; however it is this same passage. 'as and how' it is realized that gives anthropology its concern with STRUCTURES.

To get across this idea, Lévi-Strauss remarks,

'Anthropology should be in no hurry to claim as its own any phenomena which can be called social'.

(And this remark has a bearing on the question 'how far can we regard the structure of reciprocity or the basic structure of kinship as a reality sui generis?')

The social facts which we study are manifested in societies, each of which is a total, concrete and cohesive entity. We never lose sight of the fact that existing societies are the result of great transformations of mankind which occurred at given moments of pre-history and at given points on earth, and that an uninterrupted chain of real events link these facts to facts which we can observe.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 14]

This is to say, that Kinship can be observed as a social fact in concretely existing societies; but we have to keep in mind that these very societies have resulted from a transformation which occurred at a most fundamental level between Nature and Culture: there must be an uninterrupted chain of REAL events which must be linked to a REAL transformation, the results of which can be observed in REAL SOCIAL FACTS.

The chronological and spatial continuity between the natural order and the cultural order... explains why anthropology, affirms its solidarity with physical anthropology.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 14]

The Kinship Structure we arrived at thus has to be chronologically and spatially continuous with a *fact* of Natural order, which is the subject matter of physical anthropology.

Even if social phenomena must be provisionally isolated and treated as if they belong to a specific level we know very well, that - de facto and even de jure - the emergence of culture remains a mystery to man. It will so remain as long as he does not succeed in determining, on the biological level, the modifications in the structure and functioning of the brain, of which culture was at once the natural result and the social mode of apprehension.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 14]

Even if the Kinship Structure has been conceived of as a consequence of Social phenomena of reciprocity, provisionally, we must not lose sight of the fact that in order for there to be a spatial and chronological continuity with a fact of natural order, one has to conceive the Kinship Structure, only as a mode of apprehension - Social in this case - of the structure of the brain, which is a fact of Natural order and which comprises the subject matter of physical anthropology.

At the same time, culture created the inter-subjective milieu indispensable for the occurrence of a transformation both anatomical and physiological, but which can be neither defined nor studied with sole reference to the individual.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 14]

Lying in between the structure of the brain and the Social mode of its apprehension lies a transformation which bridges the gap between the past and present i.e., the Diachronic and Synchronic, the Physiological and the Psychological, the Objective and the Subjective and the Individual and Social. This bridge does not collapse either aspect of the continuum, but it merely relates these aspects creating thus a milieu of intersection which on its new transformed plane and in its own way realizes the passage from Nature to Culture.

The Kinship Structure, which is the basic structure of reciprocity, thus is only the Social mode of apprehension of a still more basic structure i.e. the STRUCTURE of the BRAIN. We are thus faced with a perspective in which to perceive Kinship as a STRUCTURAL phenomena.

But before we do so, let us pause and examine the idea of a milieu of inter-section of subjectivities which is created by Culture, and which requires a reference, not to one individual, but to individuals. Getting the cue from Rousseau, we can say that this inter-subjective milieu is provided by Language. We can recall, as described by Rousseau, in *On the Origin of Language* that, 'The process of language reproduces, in its way and on its plane, the process of humanity' [Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 38].

Language thus bears the closest relation to the structure of the brain. Hence logically we must first seek to find a relation between Language and the structure of the brain, after which we must seek a relationship (if there is any) between Kinship and Language. If we are able to do so, we would have been faithful to the perspective in which we have to perceive kinship as a structural phenomena.

The first step is to seek a relationship between Language and the structure of the brain. This we shall take as given for the purpose of this exercise, sufficing with conceiving Language as a system of oppositions and co-relations.

Following this, we have to seek a relationship between Language and Kinship. The relationship between Language and Kinship which is a part of Culture can be derived on two levels which are OPERATIONAL and SUBSTANTIVE. As Lévi-Strauss says, that there exist, 'not only *operational* but *substantial* comparabilities between language and culture' [Lévi-Strauss 1972: 62].

The OPERATIONAL similarities between Language and Kinship can be derived by virtue of the extension of the same method to both of them. The very fact that both can be analyzed using the same method, speaks a great deal about the commonality between them which is SUBSTANTIVELY comparable²⁶.

As we have already specified, Language provides an inter-subjective milieu:

Language can said to be a condition of culture because the material out of which language is built is of the same type as the material out of which the whole culture is built: logical relations, oppositions, correlations, and the like. Language, from this point of view may appear as laying a kind of foundation for the more complex structures which correspond to different aspects of culture.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 68-9]

Conceding to this, we can say that Kinship - as an aspect of Culture - is also made up of logical relations, oppositions and co-relations. And hence, the Kinship structure or the basic structure of reciprocity, too, is founded on the the structure of Language:

The first problem has to do with the level at which to seek the correlation between language and culture, and the second one with the things we are trying to correlate.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 72]

After having established that the Kinship Structure has its basis in the structure of Language, we have to isolate the LEVEL at which this co-relation between Language and Culture exists (and then we have to isolate the THINGS to be co-related).

Since.

Both language and culture are the products of activities which are basically similar.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 71].

one has to locate them in the human mind i.e. at the level of the unconscious. Lévi-Strauss says very categorically that.

much of linguistic behaviour lies on the level of unconscious thought [for]. when we speak, we are not conscious of the syntactic and morphological laws of our language. Moreover we are not ordinarily conscious of the phonemes that we employ to convey different meanings, and we are rarely, if ever, conscious of the phonological oppositions which reduce each phoneme to

a bundle of distinctive features. The absence of consciousness moreover, still holds when we do become aware of the grammar or the phonemes of our language. For, while this awareness is the privilege of the scholar, language as a matter of fact, lives and develops only as a collective construct, and even the scholars linguistic knowledge always remains dissociated from his experience as a speaking agent, for his mode of speech is not affected by his ability to interpret his language on a higher level.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 56-7]²⁷

Language which has its foundation in the unconscious becomes a suitable starting point for any analysis of complex Kinship Structure because

among all social phenomena, language, alone has thus far been studied in a manner which permits it to serve as the object of truly scientific analysis, allowing us to understand its formative process and to predict its mode of change. This results from modern researches into the problems of phonemics, which have reached beyond the superficial conscious and historical expression of linguistic phenomena to attain fundamental and objective realities consisting of systems of relations which are the products of unconscious thought process.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972 : 58]

These remarks by Lévi-Strauss amply illustrate the fact that the LEVEL at which the co-relation between Language and Culture can be discerned is that of the unconscious²⁸. Further, they enable one to approach cultural phenomena such as Kinship through the method of analysis applied by linguistics, since it is truly scientific and very advanced.

Linguistics occupies a special place in social sciences because of its two-fold achievement (1) formulation of an empirical method (2) understanding the nature of data.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 31]

Because linguistics has achieved an understanding of the nature of its data, it is the best suited for solving the second problem i.e. to isolate the THINGS which are being co-related in Language and Kinship.

Thus, an examination of the nature of THINGS co-related in Language and Kinship will help us to discover the OPERATIONAL comparabilities between Language and Kinship.

Our focus now rests on discovering the nature of THINGS co-related by Language and Kinship.

'In one programmatic statement he [here, Lévi-Strauss is referring to N. Troubetzkoy, the illustrious founder of structural linguistics] reduced the structural method to four brain operations. First structural linguistics shifts from the study of *conscious* linguistic phenomena to study of their *unconscious* infrastructure; second, it does not treat *terms* as independent entities taking instead as its basis of analysis the *relations* between terms; third, it introduces the concept of the *system*... finally, structural linguistics aims at discovering *general laws*, either by induction 'or... by logical deduction, which would give them an absolute character'. Thus, for the first time social science is able to formulate necessary relationships.²⁹

[Lévi-Strauss 1972 :33]

The linguist thus proceeds in order to discover GENERAL LAWS, the assumption being that in the case of linguistics (as also in the case of kinship)

the observable phenomena result from the action of laws which are general but implicit.³⁰

And how do we arrive at these general laws?

By now, it is a well-established fact that

the variety of sounds which can be articulated by the vocal apparatus - and which are actually produced during the first months of human life,

are almost unlimited.

Each language, however, retains only a very small number among all the possible sounds, and in this respect linguistics raises two questions : Why are certain sounds selected? What relationships exist between one or the several of the sounds chosen and all the others?

[Lévi-Strauss 1972 : 40]

Conceding to the fact that the answer to the first question as to why certain sounds are selected should be left to linguistics, we can go on to the second question, as to the relationships between the sounds chosen.

These relationships are discerned using structural analysis, wherein

the linguist analyzes phonemes into 'distinctive features', which he can group into one or several 'pairs of oppositions'.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972 : 35]

Thus, the sounds which are chosen can be grouped together into pairs of oppositions which are essentially binary by virtue of co-relating and opposing their distinctive features.³¹

Recalling the remark quoted by Lévi-Strauss [Lévi- Strauss 1972 :33] and seeing it in the light of the 'generation' of sounds which itself results from the co- relation and opposition of binary constituents, we can say that, the THINGS, which are co-related in Language are:

- i. *Distinctive Features* formed by a grouping of pairs of binary-oppositions.
- ii. *Phonemes* formed by a grouping of distinctive features: these phonemes acquire the statue of TERMS in a language.
- iii. *Meaningful sentences* formed by a grouping of these phonemes: these sentences acquire the status of RELATIONS between terms.³²
- iv. *System* formed by a grouping of these sentences in a manner which is cohesive so that if a change is effected in any one of these sentences, it would trigger off a corresponding change in other sentences and also the system would tend towards a *structure*.³³

Now, the structural property provides a sound proof as per the syntactic and morphological laws, as also the grammatical laws of the *system* as present in Language.

The next thing to do is to find out the THINGS co-related by Kinship. We have already recognized that Kinship as an aspect of Culture is also made up of logical relations, oppositions and co-relations, by virtue of which the Kinship structure or the basic structure of reciprocity, too, is founded on the structure of Language. Following which, we are seeking operational comparabilities between Language and Kinship.

How should we begin this operational comparison? In other words, we have to isolate comparable entities in the kinship structure vis-a-vis phonemes in language, so that these entities can be broken down into their respective distinctive units. We need, then to isolate entities which can be subjected to the same 'formal' treatment as phonemes.³⁴

Logically, at first sight it seems that one can formally compare 'Kinship Terms' (of address) to 'Phonemes', for as Lévi-Strauss says

In the study of kinship problems, the anthropologist finds himself in a situation which formally resembles that of structural linguistics. 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.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 34]

Phonemes thus appear to be comparable to Kinship Terms by virtue of they being elements of meaning: they can be integrated into systems of meaning.³⁵

However, Lévi-Strauss says that,

It is incorrect to equate kinship terms and linguistic phonemes from the viewpoint of their formal treatment.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 35]

For, the essential procedure in structural analysis is that they have to be fragmented further into their distinctive units.

However, an anthropologist cannot break the kinship terms analogously.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 35]

The reason for this is that, at the level of Kinship, what the anthropologist can do is (instead of breaking down Kinship Terms):

ask what relationships are expressed and, for each term of the system, what connotation - positive or negative - it carries regarding each of the following relationships: generation, collaterality, sex, relative age, affinity etc.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 35]

This is to say that an analysis of Kinship Terms howsoever 'in-depth' cannot discount the relationships immanent in these very terms. And it is this characteristic of the immanence of a relationship which cannot lend Kinship Terms to a formal treatment analogous to that of the phoneme.

Lévi-Strauss says,

Linguistics teaches us precisely that structural analysis cannot be applied to words directly; but only to words previously broken down into phonemes. *These are no necessary relationships at the vocabulary level.* This applies to all vocabulary elements including kinship terms.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 36]

Now, since, at the vocabulary level, there are no necessary relationships, and we have seen that at the level of kinship vocabulary, a relationship is immanent, hence, in order to apply structural analysis to Kinship, one has to isolate a level within the field of Kinship, on which there

are no necessary relationships but nevertheless, which does not diverge from the requirements which render it comparable to Language.

Thus, if *relationship* is not the requirement for this comparability, what is the other requirement? According to Lévi-Strauss:

In the first instance there can be no question as to function; we all know that language serves as a means of communication. On the other hand, what the linguist did not know and what structural linguistics alone has allowed him to discover is the way in which language achieves this end. The function was obvious, the system remained unknown.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 36]

Thus structural analysis helped in the unfolding of the *systemic nature* of Language, whereas the *function* of Language (which is to communicate) was already known to the linguist. From this, it follows that the requirement of Language, as we are told at this stage, is two-fold: (i) serving the *function* of communication and (ii) serving the requirements of a *systemic nature*.

Now, as is the case with Kinship Terms we know that they are elements of meaning which presuppose a relationship, which can be integrated into Kinship Systems. Thus, in comparison with the linguist,

the anthropologist finds himself in the opposite situation. We know, since the work of Lewis H. Morgan, that kinship terms constitute systems, on the other hand, we still do not know their function.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 36]

That is, we still cannot pin-point the function of the Kinship terms.

To overcome this paradox, what needs to be done is to locate in kinship systems an ORDER which is not necessarily based on any relationship but whose *function* is known, so that what we would have in the realm of Kinship are two *orders*. One order fulfills the requirement of having a systemic nature (and this is already known to us to exist in Kinship Terms) and the other fulfills the requirements of having a known function. The two together satisfy the requirements of language and thereby validate the operational comparabilities between Language and Kinship.

Lévi-Strauss has done just this by conceiving,

what is generally called a 'Kinship System'

as comprising of

two quite different orders of reality. First, there are terms through which various kinds of family relationships are expressed. But kinship is not expressed solely through nomenclature. The individuals or classes of individuals who employ these terms feel (or do not feel, as the case may be) bound by prescribed behaviour in their relations with one another, such as respect or familiarity, rights or obligations, and affection or hostility. Thus, along with what we propose to call the *system of terminology* (which strictly speaking, constitutes the vocabulary system), there is another system, both psychological and social in nature, which we shall call the *system of attitudes*. Although it is true that the study of systems of terminology places us in a situation analogous, but opposite, to the situation in which we are dealing with phonemic systems, this difficulty is 'inversed', as it were, when we examine systems of attitudes. We can guess at the role played by

systems of attitudes, that is, to insure group cohesion and equilibrium, but we do not understand the nature of the interconnections between the various attitudes, nor do we perceive their necessity. In other words, as in the case of language, we know their function, but the system is unknown.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 37-8]

The other order in the Kinship systems which does not require the necessary relationship, or mutual inter-connections between its units is the *system of attitudes*, the function of which is nevertheless known.³⁶

Having isolated that the System of attitudes is suited for structural analysis, the next step is to find a 'unit' analogous to the phoneme in the system of attitudes, which can be formally treated in the same way as the phoneme. To do this, one has to 'tap' the striking analogy between the common problem confronting Linguistics and Kinship, which is to arrive at GENERAL LAWS. And this quest for general laws entails an invariability with regard to space and with regard to time whether they are applied to language systems or whether they are applied to kinship systems. In case of language we have established that these general laws pertain to co-relations and oppositions of distinctive units of phonemes. Thus by the same logic these general laws should pertain to co-relations and oppositions of distinctive units of one basic attitude.

The unit of the system of attitudes, analogous to the phoneme, which is isolated by Lévi-Strauss is the attitude towards the AVUNCULATE or the maternal uncle which for our purpose is the basic attitude.

Lévi-Strauss has treated the two basic questions confronting Linguistics, as essentially linked with the attitude toward the avunculate. As he says,

Our sketch of the historical development of the avuncular problem is at precisely the same stage. 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.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 40]

The avunculate thus entails certain attitudes which remain the same throughout the most varied cultures and thus have to be a result of a combination of certain units. Throwing more light on the idea of the avunculate, Lévi- Strauss says that.

In order to understand the avunculate we must treat it as one relationship within a system, while the system itself must be considered as a whole in order to grasp its structure. The structure rests upon four terms (brother, sister, father, son), which are linked by two pairs of correlative oppositions in such a way that in each of the two generations there is always a positive relationship and a negative one.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987: 46]

We are thus led towards a re-consideration of a structure which rests on four terms - brother, sister, father, and son - which in turn are linked together into four relationships viz. those of mutuality, reciprocity, creditor,

and debtor. This indeed is the structure of reciprocity which on being analysed, can be seen to result from a co-relation of two pairs of binary oppositions, viz:

- i. *receivers* and *givers* (i.e. co-relation between creditors and debtors).
- ii. *exchange* and *neutralization of exchange* (i.e. co- relation between reciprocity and mutuality).

The distinctive units of the structure of kinship are in fact *attitudes* which are present as binary oppositions in the structure of kinship which is the structure of reciprocity.

Thus, the ELEMENTARY STRUCTURE OF KINSHIP, which is the Unit or the Atom of Kinship, has been seen in the light of structural analysis which establishes it as resulting from most general laws viz. structural laws of co-relation and opposition.

AVUNCULATE thus has been established as resulting from a *universal structure* which bases itself on a distinction between creditors and debtors i.e. a distinction between a Self and a Rival as

In human society, a man must obtain a woman from
another man who gives him a daughter or sister...

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 46]

thus, implying the necessary presence of the maternal uncle (from the point of view of the sisters son).³⁸

It is thus the fundamental and immanent relation of difference which lies at the core of Kinship structures.³⁹ Thus in moving from a System of attitudes to a structure of kinship, we have relegated the demand for difference to the level of the *unconscious*, and as governed by general laws. In doing so, the study of Kinship as a cultural fact (or, we may recall, as a social mode of apprehension of the transformation from Nature to Culture) has been accorded the status of a structural phenomena having comparabilities - operational and substantive - with Language.

The idea that kinship must be interpreted as a structural phenomena and not simply as the result of a juxtaposition of terms and customs, is not new.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 124]

In the preceding discussion, we had invoked the incest prohibition and exogamy as representing the difference given in Nature and the difference created by Culture respectively, and we had attributed it to the tendency towards Cross-Cousin Marriage. Now we have reached a stage, wherein we can say that the tendency towards Cross-Cousin Marriage assumes the form of the basic STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENCE which occurs universally. Further (keeping in mind the fact that the incest prohibition entails the identification of a spouse by virtue of a 'relationship' and dual organization - as a mode of exogamy - entails the identification of a 'class' to which a spouse may belong), we can say that the STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENCE entails an *organization of others* at a most Particular level of a Relationship or at a most General level of a Class.⁴⁰

The structure of difference, as arrived at, using the linguists' method of structural analysis, thus defines,

certain very general frameworks of social life with which that universal institution, the prohibition of incest, and the various systems for regulating marriage, which are its modalities might be connected.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 84]

This structure comprises the following criteria which account for its universality in frameworks of social life. These are:

- i. The exigency of the rule as a rule:
- ii. The notion of reciprocity regarded as the most immediate form of integrating the opposition between the self and others; and
- iii. And finally, the synthetic nature of the gift in that the agreed transfer of a valuable from one individual to another makes those individuals into partners, and adds a new quality to the valuable transferred.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 84]

Thus, this structure of difference essentially represents a transition from Nature to Culture, which is rendered contingent on man's ability to think of biological relationships as systems of oppositions:

- i. oppositions between men who own and women who are owned;
- ii. opposition among the latter, between wives who are acquired and sisters and daughters who are given away;

- iii. opposition between two types of bond i.e. bonds of alliance and bonds of kinship;
- iv. opposition in the lineages, between the consecutive series (composed of individuals of the same sex) and alternate series (where the sex changes in passing from one individual to another);

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 136]

and exchange is the contingent result of these pairs of oppositions.

SECTION 5

Let us sum up what we have attempted in the chapter.

We had established the passage from Nature to Culture as being a result of the contingency of the Society coming into being. We had also established a *demand for difference* as a social demand.

Thus, we went on to capture the Social mode of apprehension of this demand for difference, which we located in the *principle of reciprocity*. This principle in turn found expression in *marriage* and *alliance*.

Marriage and alliance triggered off another difference between the partners of an alliance, so that it was accompanied by a *system of terminology* and *system of attitudes*.

The system of attitudes could be conceived of as a *structure of reciprocity* (entailing the unit of Kinship) which was based on *individual differences* and *class differences*.

We thus drew operational comparabilities between Language and Kinship and developed the *universal structure* which is located in the unconscious and regulated by *general laws*, thus validating the claims for arriving at invariants and human universals.

In effect, we conceived of the passage from Nature to Culture as being realized in a structure based on differences (between sexes and between alliance partners) which gives rise to global institutions where classes are formed and which too are based on a demand for difference.

One aspect we examined briefly was that these global institutions are bound together in an *exchange* of valuables and commodities (i.e. women). The individuals who are members of these institutions exchange in order to differentiate themselves. The commodity they exchange requires a dual perspective for its identification for it is a Value as well as a Sign.

This issue (along with related ones) shall be the focus of our concern in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. We have thus specified the phenomenon which concerns us. Without doubt, we are concerned with what we have termed SOCIAL, for it expresses 'that which pertains to society'.

It is deemed essential to establish this phenomenon specifically. In the words of Lévi-Strauss,

In any field of human thought and activity, one cannot ask questions regarding nature or origin before identifying and analyzing phenomena, and discovering in what measure the relations uniting such phenomena are sufficient to explain them. It is impossible to discuss an object, to reconstruct the process from which it arose, without knowing first what it is, in other words, without having exhausted the inventory of its internal determinants.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 6]

Now it remains for us to look out for the inventory of the *internal determinants* of the phenomena, we have termed SOCIAL. Further, we have to focus on the *relations* uniting such phenomena.

Thus, the *object* of study which confronts us now in an almost ready-made fashion is SOCIAL. However we must keep in mind that this object SOCIAL, itself has been arrived at by herculean intellectual efforts, and can still be thought of as a 'concept' subject to a variety of interpretations.

Lévi-Strauss himself, has traced the development of this concept and has given it a meaning, which according to him makes the most sense. Let us briefly, look into the development of this concept as traced by Lévi-Strauss.

Lévi-Strauss, draws our attention to Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method*, which he says, is the demonstration of an endeavour which is not devoid of partiality, as far as constituting certain PRINCIPLES of sociological method go.

He refers to them in order to constitute the social as an independent category, but without taking heed that this new category entails all sorts of specificities corresponding to the various aspects through which we apprehend it. Before maintaining that logic, language, law, art and religion are properties of the social, would it not have been wise to wait until the particular science had thoroughly examined the

mode of organization and the differential function of each of these codes, thus facilitating the nature of their inter-relation.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 6]

This paragraph almost reproaches Durkheim for the error he committed by constituting the Social as an independent category. According to Lévi-Strauss, the category Social entails various other specificities which in turn correspond to the various aspects through which we can apprehend the Social.

These aspects are conceived as *codes* wherein each of these codes has (i) its particular mode of organization and (ii) differential functions with respect to the other.

In spite of the 'particularities' of these codes they are thought to be inter-related by virtue of the fact that they are different ways of apprehending the same specific object i.e. SOCIAL.

Lévi-Strauss refers to a particular science which no doubt is ANTHROPOLOGY or the SCIENCE of MAN and he assigns it the task of examining, the mode of organization and differential functioning of each of these codes, following which, it has to establish the nature of the inter-relations between these codes.

Thus, the germ of the concept of Social, Lévi-Strauss finds in the work of Emile Durkheim. However, there is a hesitation on the part of Lévi-Strauss to adopt the Durkheimian concept of Social *in toto*. What then does he think about Social?

We find that Lévi-Strauss acknowledges the work of Marcel Mauss and his notion of the Social. Let us examine the notion of Social as given by Mauss.

The category of Social as conceived by Mauss, is personified in the notion of THE TOTAL SOCIAL FACT [in *The Gift*].

... the notion of totality is less important than the very particular manner in which Mauss conceives it. It is a foliated conception, one might say, composed of a multitude of distinct and yet joined planes. Instead of appearing as a postulate, the totality of the social fact is manifested in experience - a privileged instance which can be apprehended on the level of observation - in well defined situations, and in which 'the totality of society and its institutions... is set in motion'. But this totality does not suppress the specific character of phenomena, which remain, as Mauss says in

The Gift [Mauss 1969], 'at once juridical, economic, religious and even aesthetic, morphological'. Thus the totality resides finally in the network of functional inter-relations among all these planes.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 6]

In Mauss' conception of the Total Social Fact, the totality is less important, when compared to the manner in which he 'conceives' this totality.

The totality is conceived as a 'composite' [foliated] totality, which comprises of many planes which are distinct, yet joined. Further this totality is not postulated as an abstraction, but, it is in fact manifested in experience, which can be 'apprehended' and 'observed' in live and well-defined situations. Needless to say that these well-defined situations are SOCIAL.

A further defining characteristic of this totality is that it does not erase the 'specificities' of the phenomena occurring on the different planes, for it has meaning only when considered from the point of view of the functional relations among these different planes. One can suggest at this juncture that keeping to the terminology of Talcott Parsons this totality can be compared to the EMERGENT PROPERTY of a SYSTEM: the whole is not the sum of its parts.

We can attempt to depict the conception of the Total Social Fact as given by Mauss in Fig.2.

Mauss, thus establishes the notion of the Social as a 'totality' and as an 'emergence' which requires the network of functional relations in order to become accessible to observation. Thus the lesson Mauss has taught us is that,

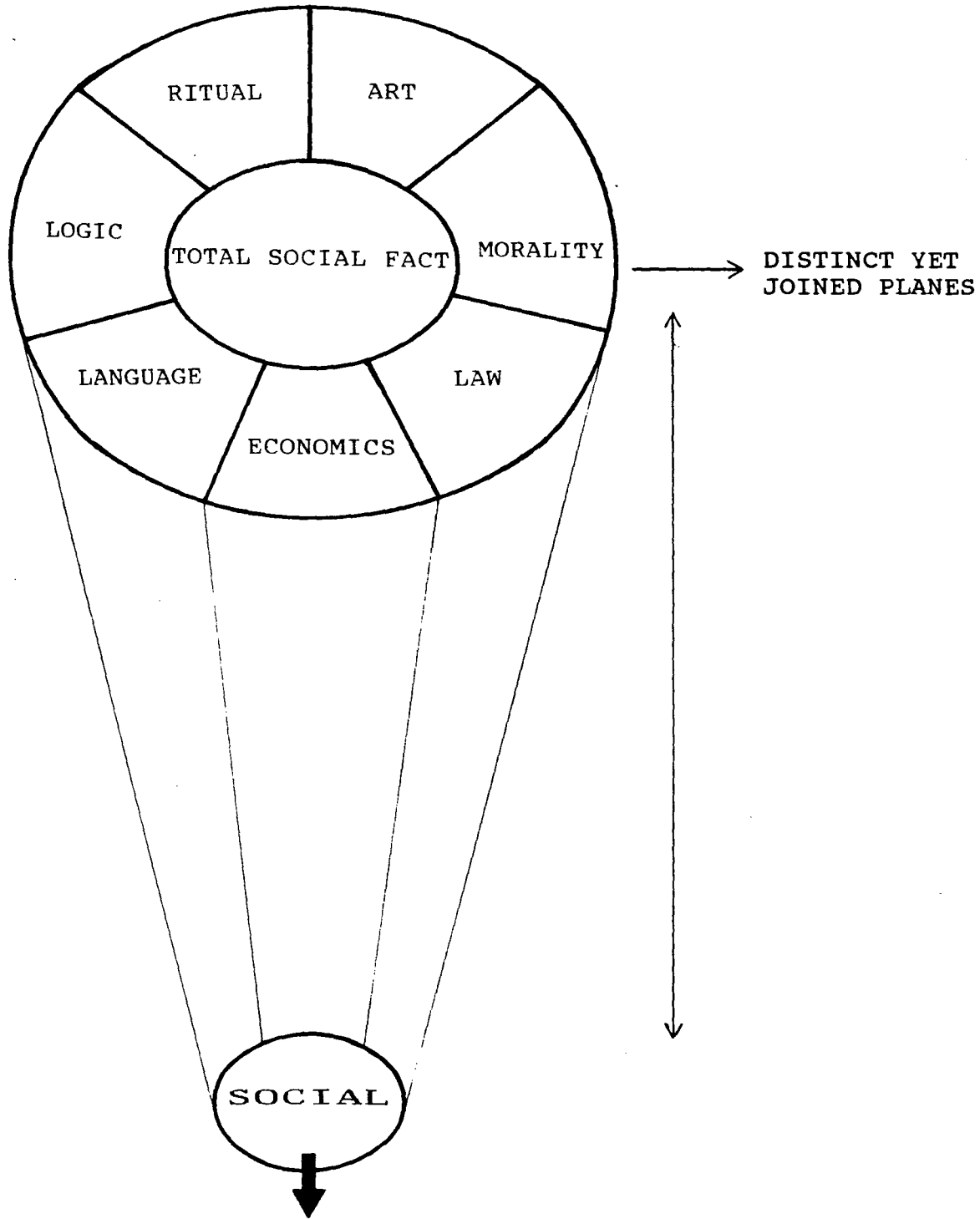
Social facts are not reducible to scattered fragments: they are lived by men, and this subjective consciousness is as much a form of their reality as objective characteristics.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a:7-8]

2. In fact the concern with Invariance and Human Universals can be said to be a central concern of all sciences which seek to discover or explain HUMAN NATURE [we find that Nature itself entails the attributes of Invariance and Universality].

...[this problem of invariance] which like other sciences, social anthropology attempts to resolve, but which it sees as the modern form of a question with which it has always been concerned-that of the universality of human nature.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 24]



(DEMAND FOR DIFFERENCE)

FIG. - 2 MAUSS' CONCEPTION OF THE TOTAL SOCIAL FACT : MODE OF APPREHENDING THE SOCIAL

Thus the focus of social anthropology is on what 'men have in common'.

3. The manner in which Lévi-Strauss conceives the Incest Prohibition as the *regulating principle* of the sexual life of man has considerable repercussions on the manner in which he conceives of the relationship between Nature and Culture and the relationship between biological being and social individual..

Let us look at the manner in which he conceives of the relationship between Nature and Culture.

Culture is not mere juxtaposed to life nor superimposed upon it, but in one way *substitutes* for life, and in the other, uses and *transforms* it, to bring about the synthesis of a new order.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 3]

Here it is stated that Nature and Culture are not two superimposed or juxtaposed orders. They are related in a dialectical fashion: there is a 'transformation' and 'synthesis' of a new order.

How can one determine the transition from Nature to Culture?

No empirical analysis then, can determine the point of transition between Natural and Cultural facts, nor how they are connected.

...An illusory continuity between the two orders cannot be asked to account for points of contrast.[Lévi-Strauss' thesis is that the],absence of rules seems to provide the surest criterion for distinguishing a natural from a cultural process. Nowhere is this suggested more than in the contrast between the attitude of a child, even when very young whose every problem is ruled by clear distinctions, sometimes clearer and more imperative than for the adult, and the relationships among members of a simian group, which are left entirely to chance and accident and in which the behaviour of an individual subject today teaches nothing about his congener's behaviour, nor guarantees anything about his own behaviour tomorrow.

In fact, a vicious circle develops in seeking in nature for the origin of institutional rules which presuppose, or rather, are culture, and whose establishment within a group without the aid of language is difficult to imagine.

Strictly speaking, there is consistency and regularity in nature and in culture, but these features appear in nature

precisely where in culture they are the weakest, and vice-versa. In nature this is the field of biological heredity, and in culture, that of external tradition.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 8]

Rules established with the aid of Language are then the turning point from Nature to Culture. According to Lévi-Strauss, no doubt Nature gives these rules in the field of heredity, but our focus is on rules given in external tradition of 'articulated language' in Culture.

The most valid criterion for social attitude, thus lies in,

'...the presence or absence of rules in patterns of behaviour, removed from instinctive determination'.

[Lévi- Strauss 1969:8]

Why is it that, in rules Lévi-Strauss sees a successful transformation from Nature to Culture as being accomplished? [We may recall here that for Lévi-Strauss Nature and Culture are not superimposed or juxtaposed].

May be we can find the answer in the following remark:

Wherever there are rules we know for certain that the cultural stage has been reached, likewise, it is easy to recognize universality as the criterion of nature, for what is constant in man falls necessarily beyond the scope of customs, techniques and institutions whereby his groups are differentiated and contrasted.

Failing a real analysis, the double criterion of norm and universality provides the principle for an ideal analysis which, at least in certain cases and within certain limits, may allow the natural to be isolated from the cultural elements which are involved in more complex synthesis.

Let us suppose then that everything universal in man relates to the natural order and is characterized by spontaneity, and that everything subject to a norm is cultural and is both relative and particular.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 8]

Thus, we can see that Lévi-Strauss is looking for a double criterion one of which is provided in rules and the other in universality, which would enable him to give an explanation of the manner in which the passage from Nature to Culture, is accomplished. Rules are posited as possessing dual-dialectical attributes.

Rules thus are a harbinger of Culture just as universality signifies Nature. Now these particular elements of Culture and Nature (respectively), have to dialectically resolve themselves into an 'order' of complex synthesis. And it is this synthesis, which Lévi-Strauss finds in the *Incest Prohibition*.

We refer to that complex group of beliefs, customs, conditions, institutions described succinctly as the prohibition of incest, which presents, without the slightest ambiguity, and inseparably combines, the two characteristics in which we recognize the conflicting features of two mutually exclusive orders.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:8]

The distinctive 'synthetic' feature of the incest prohibition is that,

It constitutes a rule, but a rule which, alone among all the social rules, possesses at the same time a universal character [Lévi-Strauss 1969:8-9]

[Thus, the incest prohibition is], a phenomenon which has the distinctive characteristics both of Nature and of its theoretical contradiction, Culture. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 10]

[Also], This rule is at once social, in that it is a rule, and pre-social, in its universality and the type of relationships upon which it imposes its norm. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 12]

The incest prohibition, thus, mediates between man's biological existence and his social existence, without being an exclusive part of either realm, nevertheless, uniting them.

But this union is neither static nor arbitrary, as soon as it comes into being, the whole situation is completely changed. Indeed it is less a union than a transformation or transition. Before it, culture is still non-existent; with it nature's sovereignty over man is ended. The prohibition of incest is where nature transcends itself. It sparks the formation of a new and more complex type of structure and is superimposed upon the simpler structures of physical life through integration, just as these themselves are superimposed upon the simpler structures of animal life. It brings about and is in itself the advent of a new order.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 25]

4. However, from a social point-of-view, terms: mother, daughter etc. cannot be regarded as defining isolated individuals, but relationships between these individuals and everyone else. Motherhood is not only a mother's relationship to her children, but her relationship to other members of the group, not as a mother, but as a sister, wife, cousin or simply a stranger as far as kinship is concerned. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 482]

This remark implies that identity is acquired only in a *Relationship*.

5. Social anthropology has been conceived of by Lévi-Strauss as a branch of Semiology. This semantic starting point for social anthropology renders, the study of 'meaning' as a fundamental concern of social anthropology.
6. Henceforth, the employing of the term Descent should be taken as implying Biological Descent.
7. With this imposition,

The apparent contradiction between the regulatory character of the prohibition and its universality is then resolved. The universality merely expresses the fact that culture has at all times and at all places filled this empty form, as a bubbling spring first fills the depression surrounding its source. For the moment, let it be enough to state that the content with which culture has filled it is the rule, the permanent and general substance of culture, without asking yet why this rule exhibits the general characteristic of prohibiting certain degrees of kinship, and why this general characteristic seems so curiously varied. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 32]

8. Culture 'organizes' by classifying thought, action and modalities of exchange.
9. When Lévi-Strauss talks of the incest-prohibition, he refers to it as varying 'greatly from group to group'. Lévi- Strauss 1969:29]

However he maintains that in all cases, the function it fulfils is the same.

10. Symbolic relation has been posited between Food and Women [specially because both of them are subject to uncertainties of supply]. The following remarks illustrate the demonstration of this posited relation:

Primitive thought unanimously proclaims that food is something that has to be shared... But this is because, from

season to season, the native lives in accordance with the double rhythm of abundance and famine, passing through the whole range of sensations from inanition to repletion.

In view of this radical uncertainty ...it is not unusual that primitive thought should be incapable of regarding food as something which could be produced, owned and consumed by one individual alone.

Between it and women there is a whole system of real and symbolic relationships. [Lévi-Strauss 1969:33]

In a great majority of human societies, two problems [regarding control and distribution of food and women] are set on the same plane, since, with love as with food, nature presents man with the same risk. The lot of the satiated man is just as liable to excite emotion, and is just as much an excuse for lyrical expression, as the lot of the loved man. Food is completely riddled with signs and dangers: 'warmth' can be the common denominator of states as deferent for us as anger, love or repletion. Repletion, in its turn, hinders communication with the supernatural world.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 36]

11. At this juncture, it is crucial to examine the argument presented by Lévi-Strauss regarding 'woman' who is considered to be a 'scarce commodity. product'.

He begins by focusing on *Primitive Societies*, which according to him are societies characterized by a very small degree of social unity.

There is biological equilibrium between male and female births consequently, except in societies where this equilibrium is modified by customs, every male should have a very good chance obtaining a wife. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 37]

In the case of the Natural Rhythm of give and take, one cannot talk about woman as a scarce commodity. That is to say, that as many women are 'available' to men, and hence the idea of monogamy is non-existent.

Social and biological observation combine to suggest that, in man, these tendencies [Polygamous] are natural and universal, and that only limitations born of the environment and culture are responsible for this suppression. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 37]

Thus, when polygamy is a natural and universal tendency, how can one account for the prevalence of monogamy in 'primitive' societies?

Lévi-Strauss' answer is that, in societies which otherwise appear to be at the most primitive economic and technical level, monogamy prevails because,

At the archaic levels, it is the difficulties of daily existence, and the obstacles they present to the formation of *Economic Privileges* [which in more highly evolved societies, are easily recognizable as still providing the substructure of polygamy], which limit the cornering of women for the benefit of a few. [Lévi-Strauss 1969:37]

Thus, it is the low level of daily existence, which is not conducive for the formation of economic privileges and, which is responsible for monogamy in these societies: Monogamy is thus seen as a 'limit' of polygamy because in these societies there is an acute competition for women and other commodities [due to the low level of technology].

Two reasons have been suggested for a shortage of women. These are:

- (i) Due to Polygamous tendencies, the number of 'available' women are insufficient because all women are not desirable:

... the most desirable women form a minority. Hence, the demand for women is in actual fact, or to all intents and purposes, always in a state of disequilibrium and tension. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 36]

- (ii) In these societies the importance of marriage is not seen as fulfilling merely an erotic function, but the importance lies also in the economic function it fulfills. In 'primitive' societies,

...the satisfaction of economic needs rests wholly on the conjugal society and the division of labour between the sexes. Not only do man and wife have different technical specializations, one depending on the other for the manufacture of objects necessary for their daily tasks, but they are employed in producing different food-stuffs. Accordingly, a complete, and above all regular, food supply indeed depends on that 'production co-operative', the household. [Therefore], It would be almost impossible for an individual by himself to survive, especially at the most primitive levels, where hunting and gathering, are made hazardous by the harshness of the geographical environment and the rudimentary nature of techniques. [Lévi-Strauss: 38- 9]

Thus, in the case of 'primitive' societies women are scarce commodities because of their utility or use-value and are at par with what has been called 'economic-privileges'.

Next, we ought to focus on 'our' society and examine the question of woman's importance as a commodity and a generator of the 'system of the scarce product'.

According to Lévi-Strauss

The difference between the economic status of the married man and the unmarried man amounts solely to the fact that the bachelor has to replace his wardrobe more frequently.
[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 38]

This is to say, that the 'use-value' of women in 'our- societies' is much less as compared to that of a 'primitive' society, for 'our society' does not exist at a level of daily subsistence. Thereby the economic status and marital status do not effectort each other; however, the economic status has been compaired with the wealth of the 'wardrobe' , implying that status essentially entails accumulating 'Status Symbols', whether it is 'women' in primitive societies or whether they 'clothes' in 'our society'. If woman has a value today, it is an 'exchange-value', which she bears by virtue of being a 'sign'.

12. Considered in its purely formal aspect, the prohibition of incest is thus only the group's assertion that where relationships between the sexes are concerned, *a person cannot do just what he pleases*. The positive aspect of the rule is to initiate organization. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 43]

Even in cases where polygamy is prevalent, the privilege accorded e.g. to the chief is not unilateral. For, in giving the chief an access over more women of the group [which upsets the system of reciprocity of the group], the group exchanges the elements of 'individual' security for 'collective' security, for, the plurality of wives of the chief are both an instrument of his power and a reward of his power.

Polygamy, therefore, does not run counter to the demand for an equitable distribution of women. It merely superimposes one rule of distribution upon another. In fact monogamy and polygamy correspond to two type of complementary relationships.

[This complementarity is clearly brought to the fore through fact that],

On the one hand, there are the systems of prestations and counter prestations which bind together the individual members of the group, and on the other hand, there are systems of prestations and counter prestations which bind together the group as a whole and its chief.

[Considered only from the point of view of a rule, the incest prohibition] asserts that natural distribution should not be the basis of social practice regarding women.

...the first logical end of the incest prohibition is 'to freeze', women within the family, so that their distribution, or the competition for them is within the group, and under group and not private control. [Lévi- Strauss 1969: 44]

[Thus, when]

considered as a prohibition, the prohibition of incest merely affirms, in a field vital to the groups' survival, the pre-eminence of the social over the natural, the collective over the individual, organization over the arbitrary. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 45]

13. In order to grasp the incest prohibition, in its positive modalities, Lévi-Strauss deems it advisable to examine the relationship between *Endogamy and Exogamy*.

However, in order to do so he begins by distinguishing between two different types of Endogamy. These are: (a) True Endogamy and (b) Functional Endogamy. Let us consider each of these individually.

(a) *True Endogamy*

True endogamy is merely a refusal to recognize the possibility of marriage beyond the limits of the human community. The definitions of this community are many and varied, depending upon the philosophy of the group considered.

... it is merely a question of knowing how far to extend the logical connotation of the idea of community, which is itself dependent upon the effective solidarity of the group.

Generally, 'true' endogamy simply represents the exclusion of marriage outside the culture, which itself is conceived of in all sorts of ways, sometimes narrowly, sometime broadly. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 46]

(b) *Functional Endogamy*

This is considered to be merely the reverse of a rule of exogamy and is explicable only in terms of this rule. It is, only a function of exogamy or the counterpart of a negative rule. In cross-cousin marriage, the class of possible spouses is never an exogamous category ...cross-cousins are not so much relatives who must intermarry, as they are the first persons among relatives between whom marriage is possible once parallel cousins are classified as brothers and sisters. ...when possible it [Functional Endogamy] is obligatory because it provides the simplest conceivable system of reciprocity... But whereas, in this case, only two marriages are required to maintain the equilibrium, a more complex and consequently more brittle cycle becomes necessary with less likelihood of the desired result, where the kinship relation between the spouses becomes more distant. Marriage between outsiders is a social advance (because it integrates wider groups).

But the best proof that the CLASS of marriageable cross-cousins is determined simply by eliminating the class that is forbidden (so that endogamy here is clearly a function of exogamy...), is that there is no trouble if a potential spouse of the required degree of cousin-hood is missing, for a more distant relative can be substituted

The category of possible spouses in a system of preferential exchange is never closed, for what is not prohibited is permitted, though sometimes only in a certain order and to a certain extent. Moreover, this preference is explained by the mechanism of exchanges proper to the system considered, and not by the privileged nature of the group or class.

Thus, Lévi-Strauss has established that

the exogamous and endogamous categories have no objective existence as independent entities. Rather, they must be considered as viewpoints, or different but solidary perspectives, or a system of fundamental relationships in which each term is defined by its position within the system. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 47-8]

Thus 'true' endogamy determines the 'class' beyond which marriage is inconceivable for it represents the limit to the capacity for generalization by the group.

'Functional' endogamy may be regarded as a negative counterpart of exogamy, for before prescribing the 'class' into which marriage should take place (e.g. cross-cousin marriage), it forbids the class of 'brothers' and 'sisters'. Thus functional endogamy is seen as a function of exogamy and also as an *endogamy of relations*.

However, the point to remember is that all these modalities can be subsumed under the mechanism of exogamy because if marriage is a *social-advance*, this advance can be regarded as an advance in a 'relation' or advance in a 'class'.

Even if one is confronted with the situation wherein preferential marriages have to obey rules of 'class' (or clan), the fundamental proposition remains unaltered. According to Lévi-Strauss, these 'classes' (or sub-classes or clans),

are not so much groups defined in extension as positions which are alternately or successfully occupied by members of one line of descent or by the partners in an alliance.
[Lévi-Strauss 1969:48]

14. The notion of the 'Total Social Fact' is examined in the essay titled, 'The Scope of Anthropology'.

In the same essay he [Lévi-Strauss] begins by acknowledging the pioneering attempt of Durkheim to endow social sciences with a 'specific' object which he is able to conceive in the category of the Social. However, the category - Social- as constructed by Durkheim, falls short of recognizing other 'specificities', which are crucial for the apprehension of this category. These are language, law, art and religion, which Durkheim reduced to the status of *Projections of the Social World*.

Before maintaining that logic, language, law, art and religion are projections of the social, would it not have been wiser to wait until the particular sciences had thoroughly examined the mode of organization and the differential function of each of these codes, thus facilitating the understanding of the nature of their inter- relations.
[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 6]

Lévi-Strauss sees these various 'specificities' as aspects for apprehending the Social. Thus, he is concerned with seeking the social phenomena in their 'totality', and the notion of this 'totality' he finds explicitly stated and developed in Mauss' conception of the 'Total Social Fact'.

According to Lévi-Strauss Mauss' was a lush sociology, which had a bearing on

- (i) The place of sociology among other sciences, (ii) The method of sociology and
- (iii) The theoretical implications of sociology.

In the 'Total Social Fact', Mauss was seeking the 'facts of general functioning',

which he showed to be more universal and have more reality. [Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 9]

These facts were located in the unconscious categories

which as Mauss wrote in one of his first works are determinants in magic, as in religion, as in linguistics. [And this was in keeping with the 'principle' and 'goal' of his lush sociology, which was], to perceive the entire group and the entire range of its behaviour. [Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 7]

Mauss' notion of the Social Fact has a significant bearing on the status of Sociology as a science. It is concerned with the following aspects of the science of Sociology:

- (i) *Relation of Sociology with other Sciences:* Mauss' theory related sociology to other sciences, with which it had been dissociated. It re-established links with history, since through the empirical investigations, which were strongly advocated by Mauss, 'the ethnographer sets up camp in the particular'; with BIOLOGY and PSYCHOLOGY since, 'social phenomena are recognised as being 'first' social but also and at the same time, both physiological and psychological. [Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 7]

Regarding social phenomena as physiological and psychological only meant that, Mauss' sociology 'invited' the guest - the human mind - particularly the brain structure, and was also aware of the significance of a subject being conscious of his experiences, i.e. it did not accord a 'supreme' status to the brain structure, but it also accorded a significant status to the subjective consciousness of individuals.

Social facts are not reducible to scattered fragments, they are lived by men, and the subjective consciousness is as much a form of their reality as objective characteristics. [Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 7-8]

- (ii) *The Method of Sociology* Mauss' sociology contributed towards a 'collapse' of the hiatus between explanation stemming from 'causality' and explanation stemming from 'understanding'.

Instead of opposing causal explanation and understanding, it brings to light an object which may be at the same time objectively very remote and subjectively very concrete, and whose causal explanation could rest upon that understanding . . .

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 9]

Mauss advocated a causal explanation based on an 'understanding', which he believed should be founded on the common fact of both the observer and observed being 'united' in a common 'experience' which is essentially HUMAN.

Advocating an in-depth analysis by the ethnographer's participation in the life of the community he studied, Mauss wanted this analysis by the observer to be carried as far as the 'unconscious categories' thus assimilating 'objective' and 'subjective' synthesis in explanation.

This assimilation of objective and subjective synthesis, for Mauss drew its validity from the fact that,

it arose from human experience [and], we must make sense of it since we study men, and we are ourselves men.

[Thus, through *The Gift* one can see]

the nearest order of truth to which the sciences of man can aspire when they confront the integrity of their object. [Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 8]

- (iii) *Theoretical Implications* Mauss gave to sociology its 'essential' concern, which according to him,

is the movement of the whole, the living aspect, the fleeting moment in which society, and men become sentimentally conscious of themselves and of their situations, vis-a-vis others. [Lévi-Strauss 1987a:8]

The incorporation of the Other into a Self Consciousness, lay at the heart of Mauss' conception of RECIPROCITY as a TOTAL SOCIAL FACT.

15. Lévi-Strauss has examined the institution of POTLATCH with a considerable degree of attention. The POTLATCH is conceived as an institution, wherein,

Considerable valuables are transferred ... sometimes amounting to several tens of thousands of rugs handed over in kind, or in the SYMBOLIC FORM of copper plaques whose face-value increases in terms of the importance of the transactions in which they have figured.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 52]

We should note here, that these societies which practice this form of 'exchange', are societies with 'low surplus', thereby characterized by scarcity. Thus, the 'destruction of wealth' does not make any 'economic sense'. It is obvious then, that these transactions are a function of something other than economics.

These ceremonies, according to Lévi-Strauss have a triple purpose, viz.

- (i) to return gifts previously received (together with an appropriate amount of interest);
- (ii) to establish publicly the claim, of a family or social group to a title or prerogative, or to announce officially a change of status;
- (iii) finally, to surpass a rival in generosity, to crush him if possible with future obligations which it is hoped he cannot meet, so as to take from him his prerogatives, titles, ranks, authority and prestige.
(Davy, Murdock, Barnett)

The Potlatch is a UNIVERSAL MODE OF CULTURE, although not everywhere equally developed.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 52]

A close look at the function of Potlatch leads us to two possible explanations of the Potlatch:

- (a) At the PARTICULAR LEVEL (of the individual), it amounts to a simple RETURN.

- (b) At the UNIVERSAL (Social) level, it amounts to the ACCUMULATION of certain 'rights' and 'privileges' over a rival.

Thus, we are confronted with two planes upon which the 'universal mode of culture' finds expression. These are:

- (1) The PARTICULAR - UNIVERSAL (representing the norm of privacy, on the one hand and the fact of community on the other).
- (2) The INORGANIC - ORGANIZED (representing exchange, which can also be referred to as REPETITIVE and ACCUMULATORY).

Lévi-Strauss has extended the notion of Potlatch even to contemporary societies. The contemporary examples he gives of 'universal' Potlatch are:

- * The significant theme of the millionaire lighting his cigar with bank notes; there are many little facts in this example to remind us that even in our society the destruction of wealth is a way to gain prestige.
- * Gambling provides, in modern society, the most striking picture of these transfers of wealth with the sole purpose of gaining prestige.
- * The exchange of gifts at Christmas, for a month each year, practiced by all social classes with a sort of sacred ardour, is nothing other than a gigantic potlatch, implicating millions of individuals, and at the end of which many family budgets are faced with lasting disequilibrium.

The refinement shown in the selection of Christmas cards, their originality, their price... and the quantity sent or received, are the proof, ritually exhibited on the recipients' mantelpiece during the week of celebration, of the wealth of his social relationships or the degree of his prestige.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 56]

Now, we know that, what these instances have in common is a PUBLIC-DISPLAY, and an idea of SPECTACLE attached to them. In Lévi-Strauss' words, there is almost a '...ritualization of the use of *surpluses*' (money in this case) ...and this corresponds to, 'a regulation...of 'scarce' products' i.e.. a regulation of 'prestige'.

Thus, underlying every *exchange* (of 'surplus' whether it has 'use-value' or whether it has only a symbolic *exchange* value), the notion of ACCUMULATION is very evident. ACCUMULATION, as we may recall, is *exchange* on the plane of Culture. Hence, one accumulates either

use-values or complementary values which 'signify' i.e. which stand for something other than themselves.

16. Lévi-Strauss has compared this situation with that occurring on a chess board. According to him, the skilful 'game' of exchange can be cited ideally for a situation in which 'goods' have something apart from an 'economic-value'. For, in keeping with the rules of the game (chess, in this case) one is really doing two things:

i. One is provoking a counter-move

[and],

ii. One is 'accumulating' for oneself- certain amount of 'confidence' and 'symbolic power' [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 54].

Here one can perceive the invocation of the 'Game-theory' of which Lévi-Strauss has talked about in an endeavour to compare social institutions to the 'play of earnest children' (as said Kroeber) [Lévi-Strauss 1972: 298]

The foundation of this comparison rests on rendering social institutions as comprising essentially of 'rules' which have little concern with the nature of the partners in the game:

The game is simply the totality of the rules which describe it. [Von Neumann - quoted in Lévi-Strauss 1972: 298]

Besides that of game, other operational notions are those of play, move, choice and strategy. But the nature of the players need not be considered. What is important is to find out when a given player can make a choice and when he cannot. [Lévi-Strauss 1972: 298]

17. In the context of modern societies, Lévi-Strauss notes examples of 'non-utilitarian' gifts: flowers, sweets and luxury items,

to which is attached a great psychological, aesthetic or sensual value [and which are thought] to be more properly acquired in the form of reciprocal gifts rather than an individual purchase or for individual consumption. [Lévi- Strauss 1969: 55]

There is a sense of taboo attached to the self consumption of certain articles considered as *Gifts*.

18. This applies especially to Individual consumption of 'food' and 'wine'.

...if the occasion requires certain traditional foods, their very appearance, by a significant recurrence, calls for shared consumption.

A bottle of vintage wine, a rare liqueur, a fore gras, pricks the owners conscience with the claim of some one else. These are some of the delicacies which one would not buy and consume alone without a vague feeling of guilt. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 57]

Wine is a social commodity [because it serves to honour]. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 58]

Exchange, as a total phenomenon, is from the first a total exchange, comprising food, manufactured objects and that most precious category of goods, women.

These are phenomena of the same type - they are the elements of the same cultural complex, or more exactly of the basic complex of culture. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 60-1]

19. This is the standpoint of Hocart, which Lévi-Strauss quotes in order to discover the true nature of cross-cousin marriage. This, we shall be discussing subsequently. However, here we can quote a remark by Lévi-Strauss which illustrates Hocart's viewpoint.

By Comparing the relationship of reciprocity between cross-cousins among the Azande, and father and son among the Pawnee, Hocart has clearly seen that both forms derive from a basic relationship between a male individual and a female individual.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 128]

20. Lévi-Strauss, quotes Proudhon in this regard,

The natural state recognizes only indivision and appropriation and their chance admixture. (Proudhon) [Lévi- Strauss 1969: 43]



21. The following remark supports this point sufficiently:

By recognizing and sanctioning the union of the sexes and reproduction, society influences the natural order, but at the same time it gives the natural order its chance, and one might say of any culture of the world what an observer has noted of one of them. Perhaps the most fundamental religious conception relates to the difference between the sexes. Each sex is perfectly all right in its own way, but contact is fraught with danger for both.

Marriage is thus a dramatic encounter between nature and culture, between alliance and kinship.. Thus marriage is an arbitration between two loves, paternal and conjugal. Nevertheless, they are both forms of love, and the instant the marriage takes place, considered in isolation, the two meet and merge; love has filled the ocean. Their meeting is doubtless merely a prelude to their substitution for one another, the performance of a sort of *chassé-croisé*. But to intercross they must at least momentarily be joined, and it is this which in all social thought makes marriage a sacred mystery. At this moment, all marriage verges on incest. More than that, it is incest, at least social incest, if it is true that incest, in the broadest sense of the word, consists in obtaining by oneself, and for oneself, instead of by another, and for another.

However, since one must yield to nature in order that the species may perpetuate itself, and concomitantly for social alliance to endure, the very least one must do is to deny it while yielding to it, and to accompany the gesture made towards it with one restricting it. This compromise between nature and culture comes about in two ways, since there are two cases, one in which nature must be introduced, since society can do everything, the other in which nature must be excluded, since it rules from the first - before descent and its assertion of the unilineal principle, and before alliance, with its establishment of prohibited degrees. [Lévi-Strauss 1968:489-90]

22. In Dual Organization, Lévi-Strauss sees the emergence of what he calls on a purely empirical level,

the notions of opposition and correlation basic to the definition of the dualistic principle, which is itself only one modality of the principle of reciprocity.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 83]

And he has illustrated this by giving an example of the social organization of Motu and Koita of New Guinea.

The central idea demonstrated through these examples is the manner in which, irrespective of historical, geographical contingencies, the social organization assumes a 'dual' character. Each of the sub-sections of the 'dual-whole' is bound by a reciprocal obligation to each other.

It is as if every disorganization of the social structure has to filter through a 'grid' which is structured to progressively divide social organization into binary forms. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: Chapter 6]

23. Cross-Cousin Marriage operates not only at the level of organization, but also at the level of TERMINOLOGY. For it not only organizes individuals into 'relations' and 'classes', but also gives,

every man and woman the chance to marry a cross-cousin, wherever, the kinship terminology divides all the members of the one generation, and of the other sex, into two approximately equal categories, viz. cross-cousin (real or classificatory) and brothers and sisters (including real brothers and sisters and parallel cousins).

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:119]

Apart from identifying SEX and GENERATION, it establishes a third system of identification,

which groups the cross-uncle and cross-aunt under one term spouse's father and mother.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 21]

(This ofcourse presumes the application of the feminine perspective in identifying relationships).

The purpose of this is to avoid terminological confusion, which may have resulted if in the ego's generation, potential spouses were 'confused' due to the application of a terminology resulting from avuncular marriage in the previous generation.

24. The idea that it is 'men who exchange women' and not vice-versa occurs frequently in Lévi-Strauss' writings.
25. According to Lévi-Strauss, the problem which social anthropology attempts to resolve is the PROBLEM OF INVARIANCE. However, social anthropology sees this problem,

as the modern form of question with which it has always been concerned - that of the universality of human nature.
[Lévi- Strauss 1987a: 24]

Lévi-Strauss draws our attention to the manner in which the 'Problem of Invariance' was sought to be resolved by Durkheim by conceiving,

a completely formal psychology, which would be a sort of common ground of individual psychology and sociology.
[Lévi- Strauss 1987a: 25]

Durkheim, thus, in his search for invariants and universals, remains faithful to what Lévi-Strauss terms as an 'obscure psychology'. Thus,

by comparison of mythic themes, legends and popular traditions and languages,[one can know] in what way social representations call for each other, are mutually exclusive, merge with one another or remain distinct.
[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 25]

In the same quest, Mauss oriented anthropology towards,

the study of what men have in common.[According to him],men communicate by symbols, but they can only have these symbols, and communicate by them, because they have the same instincts.
[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 25]

Thus, according to Mauss, social anthropology could arrive at 'universals' by focusing on symbolic communication (through a system of representations), for the determinants of these were UNCONSCIOUS CATEGORIES ,

which as Mauss wrote... are determinants in magic as in religion, as in language.
[Lévi-Strauss 1987a:6]

26. The substantive comparabilities between language and kinship can be derived, by treating both as systems of 'representations', which can be subject to semiological analysis. Thus, both can be studied under the broader perspective of 'communication'. We shall delve into this aspect in the next chapter.
27. This clearly has a connection with Saussure's distinction between *langage* and *parole*,

one being the structural side of language, the other the statistical aspect of it, *langue* belonging to a reversible time *parole* being non-reversible. [Lévi-Strauss 1972: 209]

The distinction between *langue* and *parole* is analogous to that between the collective aspect, Language and the individual aspect, Speech.

28. The conception of this level is very much in keeping with Mauss' endeavour to seek 'unconscious categories' which he said are determinants in 'religion', 'magic', 'language' i.e. these are the facts of the social order.
29. A similar concern is expressed regarding the significance underlying the discerning of 'relationships' in different aspects of social life:

As soon as various aspects of social life - economics linguistics etc. - are expressed as relations, anthropology will become a general theory of relationships. Then it will be possible to analyze societies in terms of differential features characteristic of the system of relationships which define them.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 95-6]

30. In an endeavour to seek *General Laws*, the social scientist is confronted with two kinds of problems.
- i. How to account for variations in 'space' with regard to social phenomena?
 - ii. How to account for variations in 'time' with regard to social phenomena?

The answer to the first question lies in the notion of the STRUCTURE, because by its very essence it negates the possibilities of variations in 'space', for all manifestations of the social phenomena can be reduced to 'reflections' of this structure. The structure of the human 'mind can be compared to

a room [in which there are], mirrors fixed on the opposite walls, which reflect each other (as well as objects in the intervening space), although without being strictly parallel. [Consequently], a multitude of images forms simultaneously, none exactly like any other, so that no single one furnishes more than a partial knowledge of the decoration and furniture but the group is characterized by invariant properties expressing a truth.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 263]

The imagines-mundi, which occur in 'space' are apprehended by the 'mind' as mere variations in 'space' of the 'invariant' 'structure'. The 'variations' result from a 'partial' capturing of the 'image' by the 'mirror' or due to the different 'angles' from which the mirror captures them.

The answer to the second question, however requires, an examination of the role of *history* in structural analysis. For if in tackling the problem of 'variations' in time, we accord 'history' the status of a 'causal factor' of these variations, we shall be obliged to find out laws for every historical epoch. And this would 'nip-in-the-bud' our quest for 'General Laws' - as we would be deriving 'specific-laws' for specific historical epochs.

As a consequence, 'synchrony' would be reduced to 'diachrony', the 'general' would be reduced to the 'specific', the 'unconscious' would be a mere reflection of the 'conscious' and 'events' (at the level of particular and specific) would take precedence over 'structure' which is the focal point in our discussion. This 'dilution' and 'reduction' then may negate the very purpose and object of anthropology, in favour of history, and reduce explanation in social science to a mere teleology engaged in a never ending implication between cause and effect. Anthropology, which concerns itself with the study of man and his culture, would then be devoid of the very object of its concerns-Man.

Thus, it is important to examine the *relationship between Social Anthropology and History* (before we can go on to examine the role of history in structural analysis).

According to Lévi-Strauss, in order to detect a relationship between History and Social Anthropology, it is important to discern a relationship between two other disciplines. According to him,

Ethnography and history differ from social anthropology and sociology in as much as the former two aim at gathering data, while the latter two deal with models constructed from these data. Similarly ethnography and social anthropology correspond to two different stages in the same research, the ultimate result of which is to construct mechanical models*, while history together with its so-called 'auxiliary' disciplines and sociology end ultimately in statistical models.** The relations between these four disciplines may thus be reduced to two oppositions, one between empirical observation and model building, which characterizes the initial stages of research, and the other between the statistical and mechanical nature of models, which constitutes the products of research...

Anthropology uses a 'mechanical' time, reversible and non-cumulative... On the contrary, historical time is 'statistical'; it always appears as an oriented and non-reversible process.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972 285-6]

Lévi-Strauss has distinguished between mechanical and statistical models as follows:

- * *'mechanical model* is a model the elements of which are on the same scale as the phenomena themselves'.
- ** *'statistical model* is a model, the elements of which are on a scale different from that of the phenomena under scrutiny'.

(Lévi-Strauss 1972: 283)].

This distinction between mechanical and statistical models refers to the scale of the model and that of the phenomena. However, we also need to define the notion of the model itself.

We have already established that social anthropology, like linguistics, seeks the phenomena located in the 'unconsciousness which means that structural analysis, cannot assume the status of an 'empirical analysis'. At most, what structural analysis can achieve is a 'model' approximating that of the abstract reality - 'structure' [Lévi-Strauss 1972: 279].

From the passage examined it is clear that the characteristic differences between History and Social Anthropology result from the fact that *History* builds up 'Statistical Models' based upon the notion of a *Statistical Time* - which is irreversible, whereas *Social Anthropology*, builds up 'Mechanical Models', based upon the notion of *Mechanical Time* - which is reversible.

What engages our attention is a *Notion of Time* as is present in History and Social Anthropology. This notion is mapped on to a 'Time-Scale' by Lévi-Strauss:

That next to a short-scale time span, there exists a long-scale time-span; that some facts arise from a statistical and irreversible time and others from a mechanical and reversible one.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 17]

This does not in any way contradict Lévi-Strauss' notion of the 'structure'. With the introduction of a short-scale and long-scale time span, he introduces the idea of STRUCTURAL HISTORY. According to him,

the idea of structural history contains nothing which could shock the historian. The two come together.

This can be elucidated by following explanation:

In a kaleidoscope, the combination of identical elements always yields new results. But it is because the history of historians is present in it - even if only in the successive flicks of the finger which bring about the reorganization of the structure - and because the chances are practically nil that the same configuration will appear twice.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 16]

History thus is held significant in as much as it can be held responsible to account for *particular* and *specific* combinations, which may occur of the same universal structure:

The historian always studies individuals, whether these be persons, events or groups of phenomena *individualized* by their *location in space and time*.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 5]

(i.e. history pertains to 'process')

The principle that anthropology draws its originality from the unconscious nature of collective phenomena stems from a statement made by Tylor..[pertaining to the definition of culture].

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 19]

Social anthropology thus, concerns itself with the unconscious foundations of social life.

On the other hand history studies 'particularities' which are individualized by their location in time, i.e.

History organizes its data in relation to conscious expressions of social life.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 19]

As our discussion on the basic STRUCTURE OF KINSHIP has shown, the synchronic law is validated diachronically due to the presence of the 'child' in the marriage triangle. This means,

In anthropology, as in linguistics,... the synchronic can be as unconscious as the diachronic. In this sense already the divergence between the two is reduced.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 17]

Phonemics provides *another instance*, wherein history is invoked.

Even the analysis of synchronic structures, however, requires constant recourse to history. By showing institutions in the process of transformation, history alone makes it possible to abstract the structure which underlies the many manifestations and remains permanent throughout a succession of events.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 21]

Phonemics thus, either incorporates history in the very notion of its 'structure' as 'structural history' or else it renders history as arriving at this 'structure', for by generating 'transformation' in processes, events, particulars, on a plane of time which is irreversible it enables one to perceive 'that' which in the midst of transformations remains constant and invariant i.e. - the 'structure' and the 'general' which consequently lie on a plane of time which is *gained*, because the structure is 'reinterpreted' in every historical epoch.

Consequently, the existence of a General Law entailing the notion of 'structure' which can be apprehended by different modes of Culture: Language, Religion, Logic, Art, Ritual, Myth, Kinship is related to,

different levels of structuration which must first be isolated. If a conscious system exists, it can only result from a sort of 'dialectical average' among a multiplicity of unconscious systems, each of which deals with one aspect or one level of social reality. However, these systems do not coincide either in their logical structure or in their historical affiliations. They are as if diffracted upon a temporal dimension, from whose density synchrony draws its consistency, and for lack of which it would dissolve into a tenuous and impalpable essence, a ghost of reality.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 17]

The temporal dimension is thus only a 'short-scale' temporal dimension, which carries 'particular' images - but in order to grasp which, one has to regard these particular images as only a 'form without content' (i.e. history), which gain their content only when related to different levels of structuration.

Synchrony thus has to be seen in relation to diachrony because,

Structure itself occurs in the process of development... It is ceaselessly forming and breaking down; it is life which has

reached a certain degree of consolidation; and to distinguish it from the life whence it derives or from the life it determines amounts to dissociating inseparable things. [Lévi-Strauss 1987a - 17-8]

Thus, the problem of the 'variation' in the temporal dimension resolves itself when the relationship between history and social anthropology is seen from the perspective of the method of transformation.

In truth it is the nature of facts we study which leads us to distinguish in them what pertains to the order of structure and what belongs to the order of events. Important as the historical perspective may be, we can only achieve it in due time... Nevertheless, the diversity of human societies and their number - several thousand still at the end of the nineteenth century - make them appear to us as if spread out in the present. It is not surprising, then, if taking a cue from the object of our study, we adopt a *Transformational* rather than a *Fluxional* method.

A very close relationship exists between the concept of transformation and that of structure, which occupies such a large place in our work.

Today no science can consider the structure with which it has to deal as being no more than a haphazard arrangement of just any parts. An arrangement is structured which meets but two conditions: that it must be a system ruled by an internal cohesiveness and that this cohesiveness is inaccessible to observation in an isolated system, be revealed in the study of transformations, through which similar properties are recognized in apparently different systems.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 18]

The method of history is implicated in the *Fluxional Method*; however, it is the *Transformational Method* which enables one to grasp the cohesive totality, which occurs in a fragmented state in particular manifestations of the structure., also the *Transformational Method* enables one to grasp the 'similarities' which appear to be different projections of the same structure. History thus is incorporated into the method of anthropology.

31. To acquire a specific understanding let us quote an 'extract' which is concerned with the same problem. This passage deals with it in the most fundamental manner.

Jakobson claims that young children gain control of the basic vowel and consonants so as to generate meaningful noise patterns in a standardized sequence. The child first develops the basic vowel/consonant opposition by discriminating a contrast in loudness:

Vowel (V)	Consonant (C)
(high energy noise)	(low energy noise)
(loud-compact)	(soft-diffuse)

The undifferentiated consonant (C) is then split by discriminating pitch - a low frequency (grave) component ('p') and a high frequency (acute) component ('t'). The high energy (compact) vowel ('a') while the low energy (diffuse) consonants ('p', 't') are complemented by corresponding low energy (diffuse) vowels ('u' - grave, 'i' - acute).

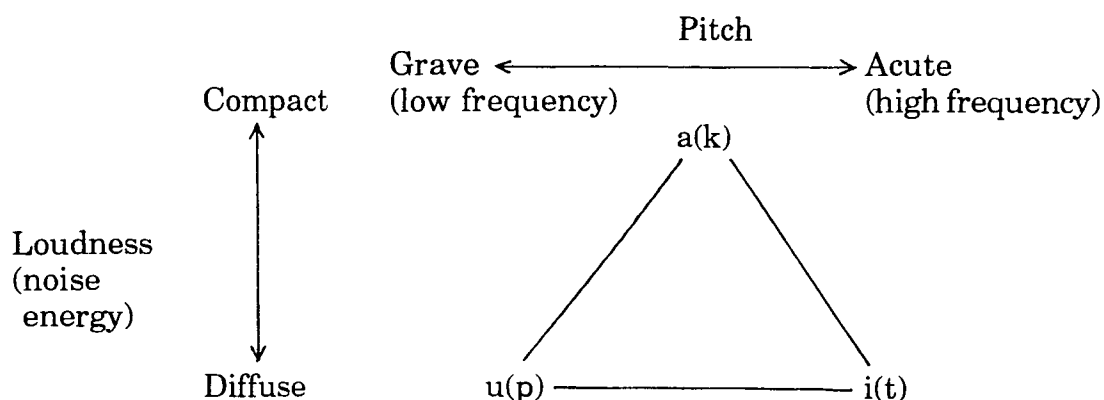


Fig.3: **Jakobson's Primary Vowel - Consonant Triangles.**

The whole argument may be represented by a double triangle of consonants and vowels discriminated as compact/diffuse, and grave/acute.

Thus, we can see that 'phonemes' result from the binary-contrast between consonant and vowel, which itself works by the double opposition between 'compact and diffuse' on the one hand, and 'grave and acute' on the other.

32. These 'relations' between 'terms' may, further be of two orders: (i) Metonymical which constitute the syntagmatic chain and are based on the recognition of a relation of 'contiguity'. (ii) Metaphorical which constitute the paradigmatic chain and are based on the recognition of a relation of 'similarity'. [Leach 1985: 47-8]

33. According to Lévi-Strauss, one of the characteristic features of a 'structure' is that, it has a SYSTEMIC NATURE.

As he says,

First, the structure exhibits the characteristics of a system. It is made up of several elements, none of which can undergo a change without effecting changes in all the other elements.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 279]

34. We consider 'phonemes' as the point of departure for an analysis of kinship structures because,

We know that to obtain a structural law the linguist analyzes phonemes into 'distinctive features', which he can then group into one or several 'pairs of oppositions'.

[Lévi- Strauss 1972: 35]

35. That kinship terms like phonemes are elements of meaning which can be integrated in systems of meanings, will constitute the explanation of the 'substantive' comparabilities between language and kinship.
36. By regarding the SYSTEM OF ATTITUDES as an 'order' of kinship systems which is different from the other 'order' of the same system, which is the SYSTEM OF TERMINOLOGY, it is clear that [even as Lévi-Strauss advocates], 'attitudes' cannot be regarded as reflecting 'Terms' or vice-versa. According to him,

we have to disagree with A.R. Radcliffe- Brown... that attitudes are nothing but the expression or transposition of terms on the affective level. [Thus], it would be incorrect to assume that the kinship system constitutes the principal means of regulating interpersonal relationships in all societies.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 38]

Lévi-Strauss, has also distinguished between two types of attitudes. These are,

- i. Diffuse, uncrystallized and non-institutional.

These according to him are a

reflection or transposition of the terminology on the psychological level.

ii. Stylized, prescribed and sanctioned

by taboos or privileges and expressed through a fixed ritual. These attitudes, far from automatically reflecting the nomenclature, often appear as secondary elaborations, which serve to resolve the contradictions and overcome the deficiencies inherent in the terminological system.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 38]

Because, the system of attitudes attempts to resolve contradictions and deficiencies inherent in the system of terminology, Lévi-Strauss posits a 'functional relation' between the two systems:

The system of attitudes constitutes, rather, a dynamic integration of the system of terminology.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 39]

However, it is for methodological reasons that he chooses to treat the 'system of terminology' and the 'system of attitudes' as separate.

37. Lévi-Strauss recognizes the significance of the 'maternal uncle' as an appropriate starting point for the examination of any theory of attitudes,

Because the relationship between nephew and maternal uncle appears to have been the focus of significant elaboration in a great many primitive societies.

[He gives the same reason, for the maternal uncle being a significant and a recurring *theme* in the work of many anthropologists (Lowie, Radcliffe-Brown) who have interpreted it differently. The important thing according to Lévi-Strauss is to recognize that], ...It is not enough to note the frequency of this theme, we must also account for it.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 39]

38. The question may be asked as to what is the necessity for the presence of the sister's son in the most elementary structure of reciprocity, which by the very presence of creditors or debtors is self-sufficient?

Lévi-Strauss has pre-empted this objection, and has tried to answer it in the following manner:

Let us repeat, that the basis of the objection is the presence of a 'child' - who may be born or yet unborn:

we must understand that the child is indispensable in validating the dynamic and teleological character of the initial step, which establishes kinship, on the basis of and through marriage. Kinship is not a static phenomena, it exists only in self-perpetuation. Here we are not thinking of the desire to perpetuate the race, but rather of the fact that in most kinship systems the initial disequilibrium produced in one generation between the group that gives the woman and the group that receives her can be stabilized only by counter-prestations in the following generations. Thus, even the most elementary kinship structure exists both synchronically and diachronically.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 47]

Thus, the presence of the 'child' is rendered almost indispensable in the elementary structure of kinship. By its very presence it achieves an integration of the 'diachronic' and the 'synchronic', of the 'general' and the 'specific', of 'unconscious' and 'conscious' and of 'structure' and 'event', thereby rendering STRUCTURES as deriving from 'General Laws' which govern the 'universal' and 'invariant' in the HUMAN.

The synchronic law of correlation thus suggested may be validated diachronically.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 44]

An operational comparison between linguistics and kinship, merges the diachronic and synchronic co-relations. According to Lévi-Strauss,

Only one social science has reached the point at which synchronic and diachronic explanation have merged, because synchronic explanation allows the reconstitution of the origin of systems and their synthesis, while diachronic explanation reveals their internal logic and perceives the evolution which directs them towards an end. This social science is linguistics, regarded as phonological study (Trubetzkoy).

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 492-3]

39. That this relationship is indeed fundamental and immanent is clearly revealed by the bearing it has on all possible relationships in a society. As Lévi-Strauss remarks,

No relationship can be arbitrarily isolated from all other relationships. It is likewise impossible to remain on this or that side of the world of relationships. The social environment should not be conceived of as an empty framework within which beings and things can be linked, or simply juxtaposed. It is inseparable from the things, which people it. Together they constitute a field of gravitation in which the weights and distances for a co-ordinated whole, and in which a change in annulment produces a change in the total equilibrium of the system.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 483]

40. The manner in which this organization takes place is well explained in the following remark,

Thus if the system of cross-cousins defines the RELATIONSHIP between the individuals more strictly, the individuals themselves are not so strictly defined. The opposite happens with dual organizations, which leaves the relationship very vague, but strictly defines the class. What is the result of this analysis?

Dual organization is a global system, binding the groups in its totality. Marriage between cross cousins, on the contrary, seems very much more special process: it is a tendency rather than a system.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 101]

CHAPTER III

SIGNATURES: THE COMMUNICATION OF DIFFERENCE

SUMMARY

Section 1

*In this section we consider COMMUNICATION as a total social fact. Communication is seen as a function, not only of Language, but also as a function of all Semiological Systems comprising of Language, Myth, Religion, Art, Women, Goods, Services etc. The **substantive** comparabilities which we seek between Language and Culture thus lead us to consideration of Systems of Meaning which the classificatory penchant of the mind contrives. These systems of meaning, in fact, subsume a totality, thereby lending themselves to classification and, subsequently, structuration at various levels, which can communicate with each other using **sign**.*

The various levels of classifications are contrived so as to subsume within themselves a reality which is symbolically saturated along the axes of General and Particular and Abstract and Concrete. These semantically charged axes then can communicate with each other by employing signs.

Section 2

In this section our focus lies on the concrete level of classification, which is the level at which Nature can be apprehended by Man in sensible terms. The underlying assumption is that man's perception of the universe around him is subsequently ordered taxonomically. Thus, at this most concrete level, the taxonomies which are formulated by Man are guided by the associations between sensible qualities of Nature which subsequently on the plane of intelligibility are registered as properties. This transformation is realized with

the aid of myth, which is here introduced as a code the function of which is to transform entities at a concrete level into an intelligible level, so that there is an equivalence between aesthetic and intelligible perception.

Section 3

*In this section, we examine the **mythic** code more closely. We find it operating in two ways:*

Methodologically, it operates like a bricolage i.e., it can be conceived as an activity which operates by means of those elements, which already have been employed by systems of meaning (at the most concrete level, in this case). The elements of the myth are then historically significant and thus pre-constrained.

In the second way, we examine myth as it operates as a secondary-code by re-employing already significant elements. We elaborate this point considerably. Our focus rests on the manner in which the operation of myth as a secondary code translates the meaning derived from the primary code and also the manner in which it changes the signifying term of the primary code into a non-signifying term of the secondary code.

*We also suggest that because myth is concerned with the relation between Man and Nature at a concrete level, it has a potential for transforming the sensible qualities into **signifiers** which can be re-employed metaphorically by Man for classification at any other level.*

Section 4

*In this section, we seek to examine **classification** from a perspective which strives to resolve the problem of continuity and discontinuity i.e. as an operation which aims at an introduction of discontinuity and discretion in the associations ranging from the abstract to the concrete level: the abstract is at higher level of organization and discretion.*

*The import of this perspective is to enable one to logically relate the various levels of classification: the move from concrete to abstract level is a move towards greater discretion. Thus classification and association at a concrete level is rendered different from the abstract level only from the point of view of a degree of complexity. For all purposes, otherwise, they are connected by **substitution** and translation by the operation of signs.*

Section 5

*This section examines the nature of associations in **totemism**. Here our main concern is with the 'Species Operator' which can relate Man with Nature by employing a conceptual apparatus, filtering unity through multiplicity and multiplicity through unity: a range of retotalizations and de-totalizations of the species can relate meaningfully to Man.*

We see that this same logic which relates Man with Nature also relates Man with Man, thus an individual can be related to another individual, to groups of individuals or groups can be related mutually.

Thus we can conceive of a homologous relationship between two systems based on DIFFERENCE.

Section 6

This section looks at the possible classifiers which can serve as individual or group totems, whether they are elements, categories, numbers, or proper names. And it is the mythic code which enables the convertibility and substitution of each of these totems with each other.

Section 7

In this section we recall the fundamental levels of communication viz. Language, Goods and Services and Women and we explore the inter-relations between them. Our major concern is with the potential offered by women to be subsumed by the MYTHIC CODE: she can be represented as a category, number, object or even a name. She has thus been considered as a sign and a 'generator' of signs.

Section 8

*In this concluding section, we put forward the manner in which myth communicates the fundamental message of **difference** by signs, which can be accumulated as SIGNATURES.*

SECTION 1

In seeking comparabilities between Language and Kinship (as one mode of apprehending the Social) we have specified and examined the operational comparabilities between the two. However, we had mentioned another mode of comparison which is the SUBSTANTIVE.

Operational comparabilities between Language and Kinship led us towards the comparability between a unit-structure which is based on a social demand and the unit-structure of language, which is found to be essentially the same. The reason we sought in the fact of both being located in the unconscious and subjacent to 'general laws' pertaining to the function of mind. The Human Mind was then posited to be in the centre of affairs which accorded primacy to a STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENCE based on a social demand for difference.

But have we, in the process, dissociated ourselves from the Social? For if we accorded a primacy to a structure which is rooted in the Mind, then, how can it result from a Social demand? The Mind in this case would be an object by itself and would reflect itself! And in a quest for seeking invariance and human universals, we would only be contributing 'to a better knowledge of objectified thought and its mechanisms' (which Lévi-Strauss claims is the final aim of anthropology), and what would matter to us is simply that

The human mind regardless of the identity of those who happen to be giving it expression, should display an increasingly intelligible structure.

[Lévi-Strauss 1970: 13]

However, we cannot disregard the identity of the creditors and debtors and consider them to be merely pawns on the chessboard of destiny which is ruled by the human mind. Those who constitute the Social are not merely a resultant of simple co-relations and oppositions of certain attitudes which play in the minds of men because they are Human i.e. they do not constitute merely the 'grammar' of a universal language (which seeks a *relation of difference*), but they have to be considered from the point of view of being *participants* in the universal language. This fact of their being participants in the universal language is clearly brought out in the fact that they Exchange valuables and commodities. They can be considered to be guided by the mind in so far as it impels them to differentiate; but beyond that it is mute for it does not decree what value has to be accorded to the thing or commodity exchanged.

We do concede to the fact that, in a sense, we can regard the human mind as impelling men to 'Exchange a Difference' given in biological sex, but it is not the mind which determines the sex which is considered suitable for exchange and the value which must be assigned to it!

We started with the introductory chapter in which we established the demand for difference as a necessity for the existence of society and this difference was given a concrete Social foundation. In the second chapter, also, it has been our endeavour not to lose sight of the Social. Of course we compared the structure of reciprocity to the elementary structure of Language but the significance of this operational comparison lies in the fact that it sought to demonstrate the ability of the mind to *classify* entities, whether they belong to Language or whether they belong to Kinship.¹

Thus, we shall bear in mind, as we proceed, that the mind classifies and that the creditors and debtors articulate the mode of this classification not at the level of a grammar, but at a level of a *lexicon* (which pertains not to exchange but to what is exchanged and the value it bears).

We shall be able to understand the remark better by examining the SUBSTANTIVE comparabilities between Language and Kinship.

A society consists of individuals and groups which communicate with one another. The existence of, or lack of communication can never be defined in an absolute manner. Communication does not cease at society's borders. These borders, rather, constitute thresholds where the rates and forms of communication, without waning altogether, reach a much lower level. This condition is usually meaningful enough for the population, both inside and outside the borders, to become aware of it. This awareness is not, however, a pre-requisite for the definition of a given society. It only accompanies the more precise and stable forms.

In any society communication operates on three different levels: communication of women, communication of goods and services, communication of messages. Therefore, kinship studies, economics, and linguistics approach the same kinds of problems on different strategic levels and really pertain to the same field. Theoretically at least, it might be said that kinship and marriage rules regulate a fourth type of communication, that of genes between phenotypes. Therefore, it should be kept in mind that culture does not consist exclusively of forms of communication of its own, like language, but also (and perhaps mostly) of RULES stating how the *games of communication* should be played both on the natural and on the cultural levels.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 296]

Communication thus can be thought of as a fact given in Nature (e.g. in heredity and descent), where Nature has established the *rules of the game* which are invariant and universal. These rules entail a presence and participation of *individual* and *classes of individuals* in the game of communication when played on the Cultural level; and they entail the presence and participation of genes between phenotypes at a lower level and that of consanguines at a higher level in the game of communication when played on the Natural level. Further, this communication at a Natural level is based on a reciprocal and repetitive rhythm, which is essentially 'inorganic' in Nature, whereas, the communication at a Cultural level is based on reciprocal and accumulatory rhythm, which thereby is essentially organic in Culture.²

This is to say that the human mind by its structure necessitates communication; however, individuals and groups participate in this communication and colour it with a Social shade. Communication, entails a certain 'meaning' for the participants, hence it cannot be reduced merely to a reflection of the unconscious; in fact it involves an awareness of the participants.

According to Lévi-Strauss, communication takes place on three different levels. These are (i) Language, (ii) Women, and (iii) Goods and Services. Thus, we can say that communication, as it takes place on these three levels, is imbued with *meaning* and the participants are aware of it. The Social is very much *conscious* of communication at these three levels, because the Social, as we shall examine, has participated in altering the rhythm of this communication from being repetitive to accumulatory.

The point of immediate interest to us is that Kinship Studies and Linguistics as also Economic Studies, approach the same kinds of problems and pertain to the same field. Here is a clue for us because it enables us to locate a level of substantive comparabilities between Language and Kinship Studies.³

As Lévi-Strauss himself says, that it is indeed a Copernican Revolution, which consists in,

interpreting society as a whole in terms of a theory of communication. This endeavour is possible on three levels, since the rules of kinship and marriage serve to insure the circulation of women between groups, just as economic rules serve to insure the circulation of goods and services, and linguistic rules the circulation of messages.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 83]⁴

And to those, who may ask, as to how 'exchange' (that is what we have been concerned with in the marriage exchange) can be interpreted as communication, Lévi-Strauss answer is:

These three forms of communication are also forms of exchange which are obviously interrelated (because marriage relations are associated with economic prestations, and language comes into play at all levels). It is therefore legitimate to seek homologies between them and define the formal characteristics of each type considered independently and of the transformations which make the transition possible from one to another.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 83]

'Exchange' may be seen as existing in a homologous⁵ relationship with a mode of communication employed by language; this enables one to define it in terms of language by a simple translation.⁶ from the mode of communication employed by one language to that employed by another.

If the exchange of goods and service, of women and of words constitutes Language, then Language, itself, can be seen as constituting communication. From our point of view, then, Language which also constitutes an 'Exchange of Women' (i.e. Kinship rules) is a form of communication. And therefore the substantive comparabilities between Language and Kinship lie in the fact that they both fulfill the function of communication (This does not mean that this communication only has a function, for it is based on a well-defined structure, and we should keep this in mind).

A question may be raised here, which pertains to the relationship between Language and Culture (of which Kinship is a constituent mode). Have we indeed *reduced* Culture to Language by saying that Kinship constitutes Language? Or is the relationship fundamentally different from the one implied? We shall seek to answer these questions in the proceeding section.

The nature of the relationship present between Language and Kinship has a fundamental bearing on the answer to the question, 'What is social anthropology?' The idea is to seek an 'object' for social anthropology which is relatively independent of Linguistics.⁷

According to Lévi-Strauss, it was Ferdinand de Saussure who came very close to defining social anthropology when

he introduced linguistics as part of a science yet to be born for which he reserved the name SEMIOLOGY. Its object of study he saw to be the life of signs at the heart of social life. [Lévi-Strauss asks] Did he not, furthermore, foresee our adherence when he compared language to 'writing, to the alphabet of deaf-mutes, to symbolic rites, to forms of politeness, to military signals etc.' No one would deny that anthropology includes in its own field at least some of these systems of signs, to which it adds many others, such as mythical language, the oral and gestural signs of which ritual is composed, marriage rules, kinship systems, customary laws, and certain forms of economic exchange.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 9]

From this it is clear that by introducing semiology as a science studying *signs*, a distinction was made between linguistics and anthropology. Linguistics was seen as a specific branch of Semiology which studied only signs of a particular nature, i.e. those which were constituted in writing comprising of words. Secondly the writing which was a major concern of linguistics was compared by Saussure to alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, forms of politeness etc. i.e., Saussure conceived of these as modes of communication i.e. languages which nevertheless differed from Language concerned with words by virtue of employing signs of a different nature. And it was these signs of a different nature, which had to be studied by social anthropology (these were the signs employed by languages: myth, ritual, kinship, economics etc.).

This conception of Semiology changed the fortunes of what came to be called Social Anthropology because it gave it a non-linguistic starting point. As Lévi-Strauss claims,

We conceive anthropology as the *bona fide* occupant of that domain of semiology which linguistics has not already claimed for its own; and this until the time when, at least for some sections of this domain, special sciences are set up within anthropology.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987: 9-10]

The next question which one may ask almost as a result of logical necessity is

whether all the phenomena of interest to social anthropology can actually be characterized as signs[?].

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 10]⁸

The answer to this question lies in the affirmative by virtue of fact that social anthropology bases itself on a search for MEANING:

This is sufficiently clear for the problems we study most frequently. When we consider some system of belief or some form of social organization the question we ask is What does it all mean? To answer it, we attempt to translate into our language rules originally conceived in another language.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 10]

Further, according to Lévi-Strauss, the very nature of the societies with which social anthropology is concerned, makes it imperative that the search must be for meaning as, he says,

...it was one of Mauss claims to fame to have established that in agreement with Malinowski - that, particularly in the societies with which we are concerned, but in others as well these domains are pregnant with meaning. From this point of view they already concern us.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 11]

By 'these domains' a reference is being made to geography and technology and all the phenomena in the domains which were originally a subject matter of cultural anthropology: implements, techniques, modes of production and consumption e.g. a stone-axe.

Lévi-Strauss defines a sign according to Peirce's famous definition: '*that which replaces something for someone?*' (emphasis mine) [Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 10]. And if social anthropology is to concern itself with a stone axe, it implies that a stone axe is a sign. The question which follows is: 'What, then, does a stone axe replace, and for whom?' [Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 10].

Lévi-Strauss answers this question by invoking the notion of the *total social fact*: an implement such as a stone axe may be conceived as one of the many modes which could be used to fulfill the same function in different societies, so that it constitutes only a *convenient language*. The stone axe by being thus envisaged only as one particular mode among the totality of modes available to a particular society, constitutes also a code, which communicates something about that society. It is thus the *totality* of social facts catering to a *holistic* perspective which enable the anthropologist to look at the stone axe not in isolation, but in a *context*, which is imbued with *meaning* and which consists in an awareness of its participants. As he himself puts it, it is.

the exhaustive aims which inspire our investigations (that) greatly transform their object. Techniques taken in isolation may appear as raw fact, historical heritage, or the result of a compromise between human needs and the constraints of environment. But when one places them in that general inventory of societies which anthropology attempts to construct, they come out in a new light. For then we envisage these techniques as the equivalents of so many choices, from all the possible ones which each society seems to make. This is a convenient language which must be stripped of its anthropomorphism. In this sense, it is conceivable that a stone-axe could be a sign. In a given context, and for the observer capable of understanding its use, it stands for the different implement which another society would use for the same purpose.

Consequently, even the simplest techniques of any primitive society take on the character of a system. The techniques can be seen as a group of significant choices which each society or each period within a society's development has been forced to make, whether they are compatible or incompatible with other choices.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 11]

With this standpoint in view, nearly every phenomenon studied by social anthropology can be characterized as a sign whether it belongs to a domain of geography or economics. Further,

In positing the symbolic nature of its object, social anthropology does not intend to cut itself off from *realia*. How could it, when art in which all is sign, utilizes material media? [Social anthropology] does not separate material culture and spiritual culture - it is equally interested in each.

Social anthropology concedes to the fact that

men communicate by means of symbols and signs.
[Therefore] for *anthropology*, which is a conversation of
man with man, all things are symbol and signs which act
as intermediaries between two subjects. (emphasis mine)

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 11]

Thus by rendering social anthropology a branch of semiology, of which linguistics is also a branch, Lévi-Strauss has established a homologous relationship between linguistics and social anthropology: the latter studies languages other than the language system studied by linguistics i.e. it is concerned with signs other than linguistic signs (which we know is an 'unmotivated sign') which are employed by languages: Art, Myth, Ritual, Religion (apart from Marriage Rules and Economics).

From this it is clear that a sign (which replaces something for someone) which is a subject matter of social anthropology is in some way different from the sign which is a subject matter of linguistics (having an 'arbitrary' nature).

Thus we have *not reduced* all Culture to Language. According to Lévi-Strauss,

To derive from language, a logical model

leading to operational comparabilities between Language and Culture

which, being more accurate and better known, may aid in
understanding the structure of other forms of
communication

and it is

in no sense equivalent to treating the former as the origin of the latter.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 83]

Both language and culture are the products of activities which are basically similar.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 71]

He further remarks,

I would say that between culture and language there cannot be *no* relations at all, and there cannot be 100 per cent correlation either. Both situations are impossible to conceive...So the conclusion which seems to me the more likely is that some kind of correlation exists between certain things on certain levels, and our main task is to determine what these things are and what these levels are.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 84]

The comparabilities between Language and Culture thus stem not from a relationship wherein one is reducible to the other, but from the fact that both have a common function in communication using signs and that between the two there exist certain levels which lend themselves to *structuration*.

Lévi-Strauss thus seeks,

certain structures, where they may be found....in other words in the kinship system political ideology, mythology, ritual, art, code of etiquette, and... cooking.

These structures according to him are all 'partial expressions' of any society, taken as whole. And a focus on any one structure, does not

substitute one particular content for another or... reduce one to the other, but rather

it enable one to

discover whether formal properties present homologies, and what kinds of homologies; contradictions, and what kind of contradiction; or dialectical relationships that may be expressed as transformations.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972:85-6]

We now can claim to have a fair idea of the common ground between Language and Culture. Both pertain to systems of meaning which serve to fulfill the function of communication. Further communication can take place at different levels (the three levels isolated specifically by Lévi-Strauss are Language, Women and Goods and Services; the others being those of Myth, Ritual, Art etc.), and these levels of communication are prone to structuration. Structure thus becomes the centre of focus in communication in as much as it entails levels of structuration, which can be transformed from one to another, and which at a substantive level, can communicate with each other, by a simple *translation* from the language of one level to the language of another level.

We may recall that in the last chapter we had commented upon the transformational method as opposed to the iluxional method adopted by social

anthropology. The sense underlying the adoption of this method was conceived in the specificity of social anthropology, which seeks to study the phenomena of interest in its entirety, and which incorporates diachrony and synchrony in the unconscious categories of the mind.

A further sense in the adoption of the transformational method lies in the perspective with which the object of social anthropology is conceived. If social anthropology has to concern itself with non-linguistic signs, then these signs are involved in systems of meaning⁹ as employed by the various levels of communication, and further, by occurring in languages which lend themselves to structuration, they are also part of structures:

Signs and symbols can play their part in so far as they belong to systems regulated by internal laws of implication and exclusion

[and hence it is the property of systems of signs]

to be transformable, in other words TRANSLATABLE, into language of another system with the help of substitution.

[Lévi-Strauss 1987a: 18-9]

In a nutshell then, translation or transformation is reduced to an operation of substitution, wherein one sign is substituted for another or where the signs employed in one language substitute signs employed in other languages.

Communication between Man and Man, which is realised by employing signs, essentially takes place in *semantic fields* by employing *systems of significance*.

The need for communication stems from the propensity in man to 'organize' his experience of the world. The question then is, 'how do we organize our experience of the world?'

Needless to say, that in this exercise we are concerned with the organization of experience, as is expressed in the structure of the mind (which eventually will be conveyed as a 'message' to the various levels of structuration around it). What we are hinting at is a fact we have established in the course of this exercise that the human mind has a propensity to classify (see Note 4), whether it be experience apprehended through Language or whether it be experience apprehended through modes of Culture. And this propensity for classification may be said to be rooted in a need to differentiate (as - it is most concretely manifested - on the plane of social life).

This classification proceeds in a manner which employs associations, whether *successively* or *simultaneously*. 'Association' is seen as the most elementary form of logic operating in the human mind. This has been highlighted in the study of kinship structures wherein 'associationism' was seen in action in as much as it strived to conceive a structure based on

logic of oppositions and correlations, exclusions and inclusions, compatibilities and incompatibilities, which explains the laws of association.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 90]

As Lévi-Strauss says.

Associationism had the great merit of sketching the contours of this elementary logic, which is like the least common denominator of all thought... a direct expression of the structure of the mind.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 90]

Thus, we can say that starting from a unit-association (which in case of language is between the distinctive units of the phoneme, and which in the case of kinship is between the male and female sexes) the mind can proceed to contrive *relationships* and finally *systems*. The propensity of the mind to classify then can culminate in designing a SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION having various levels of classification, which associate entities by different relationships.

The contriving of systems of classification by the human mind cannot be divorced from a consideration of the essentially Human trait of the mind that is to say if the passage from Nature to Culture has entailed a passage from affectivity to rationality, then the nature of this reason, has a significant bearing on the mind's propensity to contrive classificatory schemes.¹⁰

Guided by Reason the mind, which can be referred to as the *savage mind*, contrives classificatory schemes which are totalizing. The classificatory systems which result are remarkable as far as their systemic properties are concerned.

...one is struck by the systemic nature of the relations between them. Two aspects of this system are also immediately apparent: its internal coherence and its practically unlimited capacity for extension.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 217]

The totalizing propensity of the mind 'structures' classificatory schemes in a manner:

the structure is in all cases supported by an axis (which it is convenient to picture as vertical). This connects the general with the particular, the abstract with the concrete; but the classificatory intention can always reach its limits whichever direction is in question. These are defined in terms of an implicit axiomatic according to which all classification proceeds by pairs of contrasts: classification only ceases when it is no longer possible to establish oppositions. Strictly speaking, therefore, the system knows no checks. Its internal dynamism is progressively weakened as it proceeds along its axis in either direction. And when the system comes to a halt, this is not because of any foreseen obstacles presented by empirical properties of beings or things nor through any jamming of its mechanism but because it has completed its course and wholly fulfilled its function.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 217]

This is illustrated in Fig. 4.

The *savage mind* thus assigns certain ends to itself in fulfilment of which it

claims at once to analyze and synthesize, to go to its furthest limits in both directions, while at the same time capable of mediating between the two poles.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 219]

Each of these levels of classification have been termed by us as levels of structuration i.e. those levels on which the structures of the mind can be

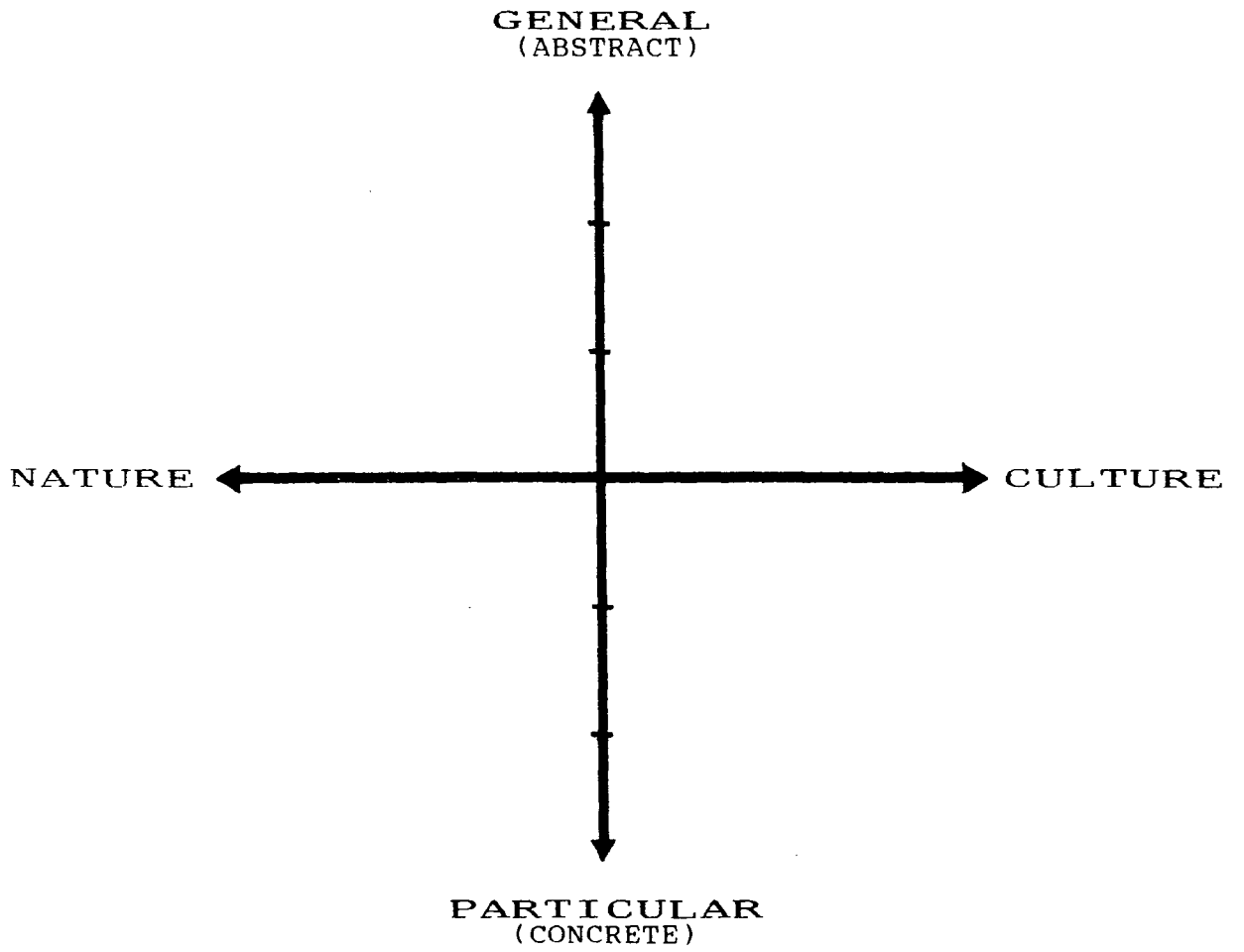


FIG. - 4 LEVELS OF CLASSIFICATION OR STRUCTURATION

realized. Also, we know that these structures are transformable into each other and because these structures are part of systems of meaning, we have advanced the proposition that each of these levels communicate with each other. The most elementary type of communication being realized with the circulation '*of women of the group, who are circulated* between clans, lineages or families' (or with the circulation of) '*words of the group which are circulated* between individuals' [Lévi-Strauss 1972: 61] or with the circulation of goods and services between individuals of the group. Communication at the complex level uses codes different than Women, or Language or Goods and Services viz. Myth, Ritual, Art, Religion etc.¹¹

Now what we have to do is to decipher the *nature of the code* employed by the different levels of classification i.e. by the system of classification, as a whole, in order to communicate with each other.

SECTION 2

We have already specified that among the various levels of classification the limits on the vertical and the horizontal axes are that of the 'concrete' and 'abstract' respectively. This means that in a process of communication, the transmission of messages or information which is 'gathered' at the most concrete level to the most abstract level is achieved by the code which operates (and translates messages pertaining to different levels) at all levels of classification.

Such a conception implies that in treating classificatory systems as communication systems, one is accepting the suggestion that classificatory systems are 'Systems of Meaning' [Lévi-Strauss 1976: 223]. This is to say that even at what has been termed the 'most concrete level' the associations between entities are charged with a semantic content by virtue of the relationships they enter into (the same holds true for associations at the 'most abstract level').

Let us begin by focusing on this concrete level which lends itself to classification: underlying associations contrived at this level are imbued with meaning or a *semantic charge*.

(The contemporary form of the fundamental idea is that it is almost a universal fact that when a chalk stick produces a screeching sound when in contact with the class room board, it generates a most creepy feeling! Can science account for this?)

According to Lévi-Strauss,

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 two strategic levels at which nature is assessable 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 at a remove from, sensible intuition.

Any classification is superior to chaos and even a classification at the level of sensible properties is a step towards rational ordering. It is legitimate, in classifying fruits into relatively heavy and relatively light, to begin by

separating the apples from the pears even though shape, colour and taste are unconnected with weight and volume. This is because the large apples are easier to distinguish from the smaller if the apples are not still mixed with fruit of different features. This example clearly shows that classification has its advantages even at the level of aesthetic perception.

For the rest, and in spite of the fact there is no necessary connection between sensible qualities and properties, there is very often at least an empirical connection between them, and the generalization of this relation may be rewarding from the theoretical and practical point of view for a very long time even if it has no foundation in reason. Not all poisonous juices are burning or bitter nor is everything which is burning and bitter poisonous. Nevertheless, nature is so constituted that it is more advantageous if thought and action proceed as though this aesthetically satisfying equivalence also corresponded to objective reality. It seems probable... that species possessing some remarkable characteristics, say, of shape, colour or smell give the observer what might be called a 'right pending disproof' to postulate that these visible characteristics are the sign of equally singular, but concealed, properties. To treat the relation between the two as itself sensible (regarding a seed in the form of a tooth as a safeguard against snake bites, yellow juices as a cure for bilious troubles, etc.) is of more value provisionally than indifference to any connection. For even a heterogeneous and arbitrary classification preserves the richness and diversity of the collection of facts it makes.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 15-6]

To understand this quotation, one needs to focus on the Nature-Culture axis because what is being discussed here pertains to Man's relationship with his environment or surroundings i.e. Nature, as it is apprehended in a most concrete fashion through the senses.

The point being made is that classification of the environment as undertaken by man may be guided by two considerations. One is that which is undertaken by 'modern' science, wherein natural species may be classified by man on the basis of *properties* - as in undertaken in biological taxonomy - the other is that which is undertaken by 'primitive' science, wherein natural species may be classified by Man on the basis their *qualities*, which can be apprehended by Man's senses: colour, shape, size, smell and taste. Based on this, Lévi-Strauss puts forward a claim that there exists an empirical connection between *properties* and *qualities*: the posited relationship between properties is based on an empirically validated theoretical equivalence and the posited relation between qualities is based on an aesthetically satisfying equivalence:

natural science	:	primitive science
:: properties	:	qualities
:: theoretical equivalence	:	aesthetic equivalence

The essence of the aesthetically satisfying equivalence then has to be based on association (and relationship) between qualities which is of a special nature in that it recommends yellow-juices as a cure for bilious troubles. Certainly this relationship has to be imbued with meaning as there is otherwise no *necessary* connection between the two. Further, there has to be a logic by virtue of which sensible qualities are apprehended by the mind simply as an external sign of concealed properties.

Thus, whatever the scientific status of the classification is, it serves to organize experience. This organization may take place at a most abstract or

most concrete level. At the concrete level, classification seeks associations as they are apprehended by the senses; these associations are apprehended by the mind as visible *images* of a concealed property or *concept*: classification is 'a system of concepts embedded in images' [Lévi-Strauss 1976: 264].

Classification at the most concrete level then involves the following steps: (a) observation, (b) reflection, and (c) preservation.¹² The facts stemming from this classification are preserved in the memory-bank in a unique code. This code, according to Lévi-Strauss, is that of the *myth*. The principal value of the myth, he says,

is to preserve until the present time the remains of methods of observation and reflection which were (and no doubt still are) precisely adapted to discoveries of a certain type: those which nature authorized from the starting point of a speculative organization and exploitation of the sensible world in sensible terms. This science of the concrete was necessarily restricted by its essence to results other than those destined to be achieved by the exact natural sciences but it was no less scientific and its results no less genuine.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 16]

This code, at a *primary* level, thus required to preserve the method by which the sensible world was apprehended in sensible terms, and at the *secondary* level, it required to preserve in the mind (as mythical thought) the relationship posited between the visible *image* and the concealed *property*. Myth itself can thus be considered from a two-fold perspective. First where it is a method and second where it is a 'code'.¹³

We shall examine each of these facets of myth in the proceeding section.

SECTION 3

We shall begin with looking at myth as a 'method', which means that we shall be treating it as an activity which, by virtue of its nature, selects and organizes elements in a particular way.

Lévi-Strauss has treated MYTH as an 'intellectual kind of bricolage' [Lévi-Strauss 1976:17]¹⁴, and this comparison with bricolage has a significant value as it helps one to gain an insight into the associative nature of mythical thought; it is then for this reason that we feel we should deal with the two as parallel perspectives in the course of our exercise.

Like bricolage on the technical plane, mythical reflection can reach brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 17]

Let us see how:

The 'bricoleur' is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks... His universe of instruments 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 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. The set of the bricoleur's means cannot therefore be defined in terms of a project... It is to be defined only by its potential use or, putting this another way and in the language of the 'bricoleur' himself, because the elements

are collected or retained on the principle 'that they may always come in handy'... They represent a set of actual and possible relations; they are 'operators' but they can be used for any operations of the same type.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 17-8]

This paragraph addresses itself to the 'means' or 'elements' which are at the disposal of a 'mythologist' (parallel to the 'bricoleur').¹⁵ The elements which lend themselves to associations for entering into relations and thereby conjuring systems (of classification, in this case), are finite and heterogeneous with regard to the construction at hand. They can enter into any number of possible relations and thus form various combinations among themselves; the condition however is that they have no power whatsoever to change the structure of the system, as they are remnants of 'demolished' structures.

This implies that the perspective of the 'mythologist' is

retrospective. He has to turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all, to engage in a sort of a dialogue with it and, before choosing between them to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer to his problem. He interrogates all the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury is composed to discover what each of them could 'signify' and so contribute to the definition of the set which has yet to materialize but which will ultimately differ from the instrumental set only in the internal disposition of its parts.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 18]

A retrospective enables the mythologist to understand the meaning contained in each of the elements he has in his treasury and then *re-employ* these elements in his scheme, basing his choice of the element and its position in the scheme on its power and context of signification. This means that the *history* of each of these elements is an important consideration for its choice in a new scheme: the possibilities of inclusion of elements

always remain limited by the particular history of each piece and by those of its features which are already determined by the use of which it was organically intended or the modifications it has undergone for other purposes. The elements which the 'bricoleur' collects and uses are 'pre-constrained' like the constitutive units of myths, the possible combinations of which are restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language where they already possess a sense which sets a limit on their freedom of maneuver.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 19]

History thus renders the elements of the myth pre- constrained because they belong to an epoch which has already given them a sense and a meaning i.e. they are already imbued with a semantic-charge.

So far we have been concerned with the preservatory function of the myth in which it incorporates elements which themselves have a history; in a sense then, myth is able to reiterate history embedded in elements by re-employing them in structured-sets, the structure being 'immutable' so that elements can only be accorded a new *position*, their sense and meaning however being pre-determined and thereby constrained.

Now, we have to draw our attention to the elements employed by myth. As we can recall from our discussion of a concrete logic that these elements can be isolated (at one end of the classificatory axis) on the plane of Nature (for we are seeking a relationship between Man and Nature), hence they are apprehended by the senses prior to their conceptualization by the mind. After this primary apprehension, they are conceptualized by the mind: the visible image is attributed to concealed properties. These elements are conceived as *signs*.

For signs can always be defined in the way introduced by Saussure in the case of the particular category of linguistic signs, that is, as a link between images and concepts. In the union thus brought about, images and concepts play the part of the signifying and signified respectively.

Signs resemble images in being concrete entities but they resemble concepts in their power of reference. Neither concepts nor signs relate exclusively to themselves: either may be substituted for something else.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 18]

Thus, starting from a very concrete level, we partake in a translation (transformation) i.e. of the sensible quality of an image or a *signifying* into an intelligible property of a concept or *signified*; this translation is realized with the sign, which is an intermediary between images and concepts. The way in which man apprehends his environment is thus by means of signs which have a power of reference, in that they have substituted something for something else: *a property for a quality*.

It is with this in mind that one regarded myth as a 'code': it is the information from a primary act of association which is preserved by myth in the memory bank. However, *myth goes one step forward* in this respect. We know that it can be conceived *of as an activity* on the intellectual plane, which seeks to *re-employ* elements in new permutations and combinations. This means that the elements which myth employs are already signs with a power of reference, for these elements can look back into their history which is localized 'spatially' (and not temporally) in the unconscious and where, by virtue of the mode of apprehension, they are 'fabricated' into meaningful *entities*, and are given a 'sense'. Myth then, in this sense, is concerned with a repertoire which is 'finite' and imbued with a 'historical significance'. Thus myth is a code which employs signs entailing not 'primary' associations but 'secondary' associations.

Lévi-Strauss' conception of myth thus makes it a *secondary* code. Perhaps, we need to go into this conception further, as it is of considerable importance from the point of view of this exercise.

At this stage, we feel the need to invoke *mythology* or the Science of myth.¹⁶ The reason for this is that it is in the 'guise' of mythology, that myth confronts our consciousness: it unhesitatingly appropriates material provided by folk tales, legends and pseudo-historical traditions and it frequently refers to ceremonies and rites. Thus, in whichever form it confronts us, according to Lévi- Strauss, it is a 'manifestation of the mental or social activities of(communities) [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 4].

Myth manifests the mental or social activities of communities in such a manner that it totally disregards the thinking subject. Hence, it is according to Lévi-Strauss, a

system of axioms and postulates defining the best possible code, capable of conferring a common significance on unconscious formulations which are the work of minds, societies, and civilization.

[Lévi-Strauss 1970: 12]

This means that myth in as much as it can be regarded as a code is so by virtue of its ability to confer 'significance'. It re-employs signs to confer this significance. Further, an important point which is put forward is that they confer common significance on unconscious formulations and that this common significance is the work of *bricoleurs*, personified by individuals, societies or civilizations. From this point we can derive three facts.

- i. Myth uses signs which are results of primary associations (concrete associations) and employed by the primary code (the primary code is formulated in the unconscious and is guided by the need to classify).
- ii. Myth itself is a secondary code because it re-employs signs (which are arrived at by primary and concrete associations) i.e. the unconscious formulations which results from the contingency of classification are translated by myth into a secondary code.
- iii. The common significance is conferred upon 'translations' of myth by *bricoleurs*: myth appears to be conveying a *universally* valid message which is timeless, even though it has 'no practical obvious function' [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 10].

As Lévi-Strauss says,

'Circumstances for the creation of myth are collective'.
[They are experienced in] 'particular manner by
individuals'

[Lévi-Strauss 1970: 18].

The signs which are re-employed by myth are derived from primary associations of qualities and properties which represent the manner in which Man apprehends Nature and consequently the manner in which Man can relate himself to Nature: Nature for Man is endowed with meaning and significance. And when these signs play a role of raw materials in myth it is as if,

By taking its raw material from nature, mythic thought proceeds in the same way as language, which chooses phonemes from among the natural sounds of which a practically unlimited range is to be found..

[Lévi-Strauss 1970 - 341]

Mythic thought then proceeds in the same way as language: 'Myth is Language' [Lévi-Strauss 1972: 209].

However, Lévi-Strauss makes another statement, which at first sight seems to contradict the one just stated. He says, 'The total body of myth belonging to a given community is comparable to its "speech" ' [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 7].

How are we to resolve this contradicting conception? We find an answer to this in the following remark:

There is very good reason why myth cannot simply be treated as language if its specific problems are to be solved; myth *is* language: to be *known*, myth has to be told; it is a part of human speech. In order to preserve its specificity we must be able to show that it is both the same thing as language and also something different from it.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 209]

Lévi-Strauss is able to account for the duality inherent in myth by invoking the experience of linguists:

language itself can be analysed into things which are at the same time similar and yet different... This is precisely what is expressed in Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*, one being the structural side of language, the other the statistical aspect of it, *langue* belonging to a reversible time, *parole* being non-reversible.

[Lévi-Strauss 'appropriates' this categorization of Language by Saussure, to put forward of a third one.]

If these two levels already exist in language, then a third one can conceivably be isolated.

[This level, he isolates by making use of the time referent.]

On one hand, a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place long ago. But what gives myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless.

[Thus], It is that double structure, altogether historical and ahistorical, which explains how myth, while pertaining to the realm of *parole* and calling for an explanation as such, as well as to that of *langue* in which it is expressed, can also be an absolute entity on a third level which, though remains linguistic by nature, is nevertheless distinct from the other two.¹⁷

[And significantly it is this third level, which can be said to provide a true meaning of myth.]

Myth is like language, functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at 'taking-off from the linguistic ground on which it keeps on rolling'.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 210]

Mythic thought can thus be conceived of as a special code, which exists on a 'third' level where meaning no longer derives from 'linguistic associations', for it has, so to say, 'taken-off' from there, and is being 'timelessly rolled-on' by myth using different permutations and combinations of the signs bearing meaning. We can represent the relation between the three levels of myth as shown in Fig. 5.¹⁸

The very nature of mythic thought is such that, it proceeds,

as if the thinking process were taking place in myths, in their reflection upon themselves and their interrelations... as myths are based on secondary codes. [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 12]

[And by using these secondary codes, mythic thought accomplishes to]

transcend the contrast between the tangible and the intelligible by operating at the outset at the sign level. The function of the sign, is precisely, to express the one by means of the other. Even when very restricted in number, they lend themselves to rigorously organised combinations which can translate even the finer shades of the whole range of sense experience. We can thus hope to reach a plane where logical properties, as attributes of things, will be manifested as directly as flavors or perfumes. [Signs then] introduce secondary qualities into the operations of truth.

[Lévi-Strauss 1970: 14]

(Needless to say that tangible would refer to Level 1 and intelligible, to Level 2 [See Fig.5].)

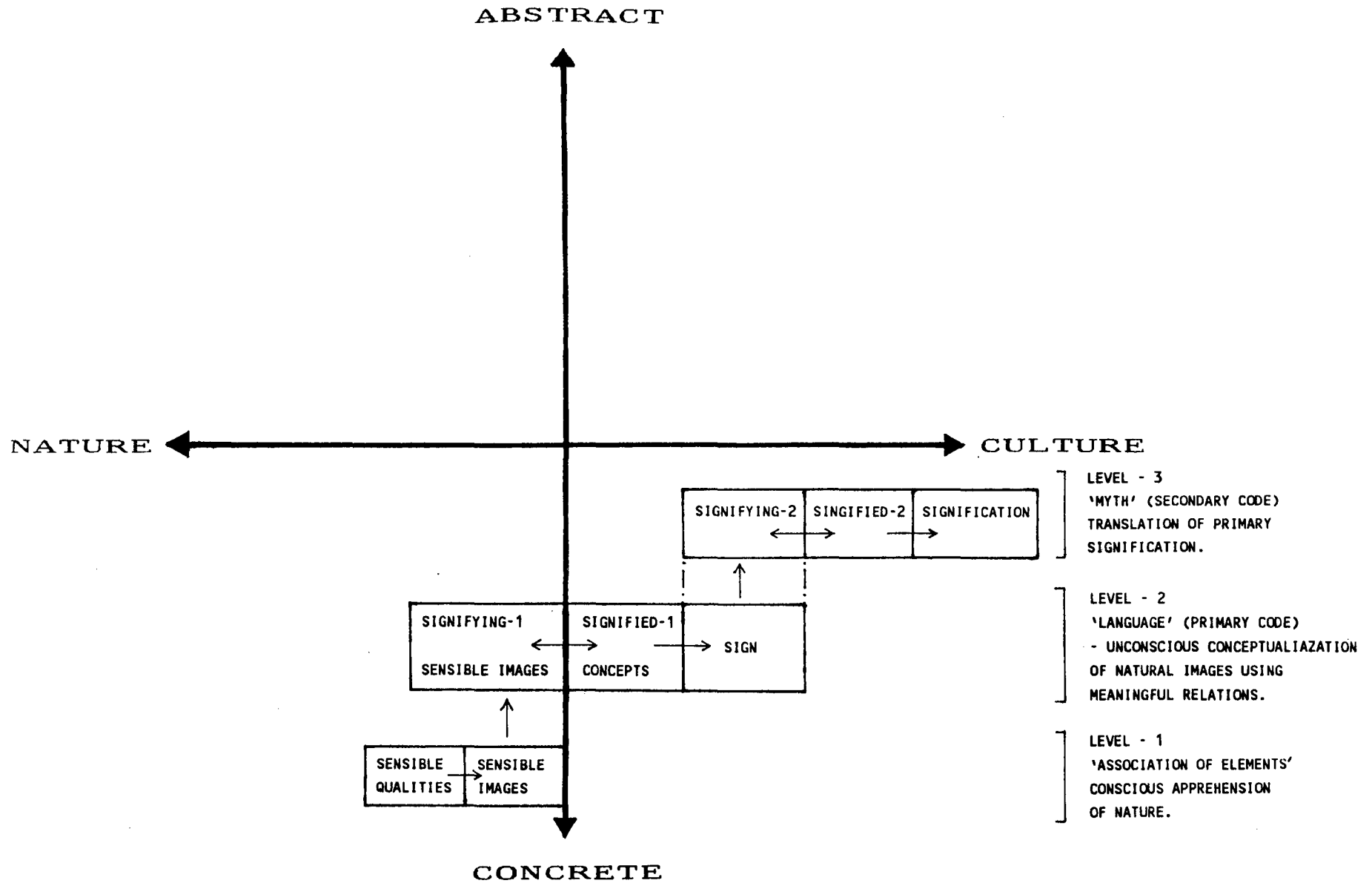


FIG. - 5 STRUCTURING OF THE MYTH.

Level 2 of the diagram refers to what Lévi-Strauss terms '*as an initial level of articulation*' ((emphasis mine) [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 20], and Level 3 refers to the *secondary level of articulation*. The simultaneous presence of these two levels of articulation has considerable repercussions for the 'message' which is being conveyed by myth which functions as a part of a semiological system. Let us reconsider Level 2, and Level 3 in a certain measure of detail in Fig. 6.

Thus we see that at the initial level of articulation, significance results from the grasp of 'aesthetic perception and secondly through intellectual perception' [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 20]: the sign contains *meaning* of the message.

However, at the secondary level of articulation, the sign is subjected to a process wherein its arbitrary nature is imbued with ambiguities. From being a meaningful entity (at the initial level of articulation), it undergoes two changes: (i) from being an object of intellectual perception, it becomes an object of aesthetic perception (*from signifying it changes into non-signifying*), and (ii) it can no longer to be used in the same sense of conveying the same meaning as the *meaning undergoes a translation*.

The significance of this elaboration, for our purpose, lies in the fact that 'in articulate speech the non- signifying code is a means and condition of significance in the secondary code: in this way significance itself is restricted to one level' [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 20]. Thus the message conveyed by myth has a tremendous power of reference, as the signs it makes use of at the secondary level of articulation undergo, '*EBA transposition in terms of a code characteristic of a given... society*'.¹⁹

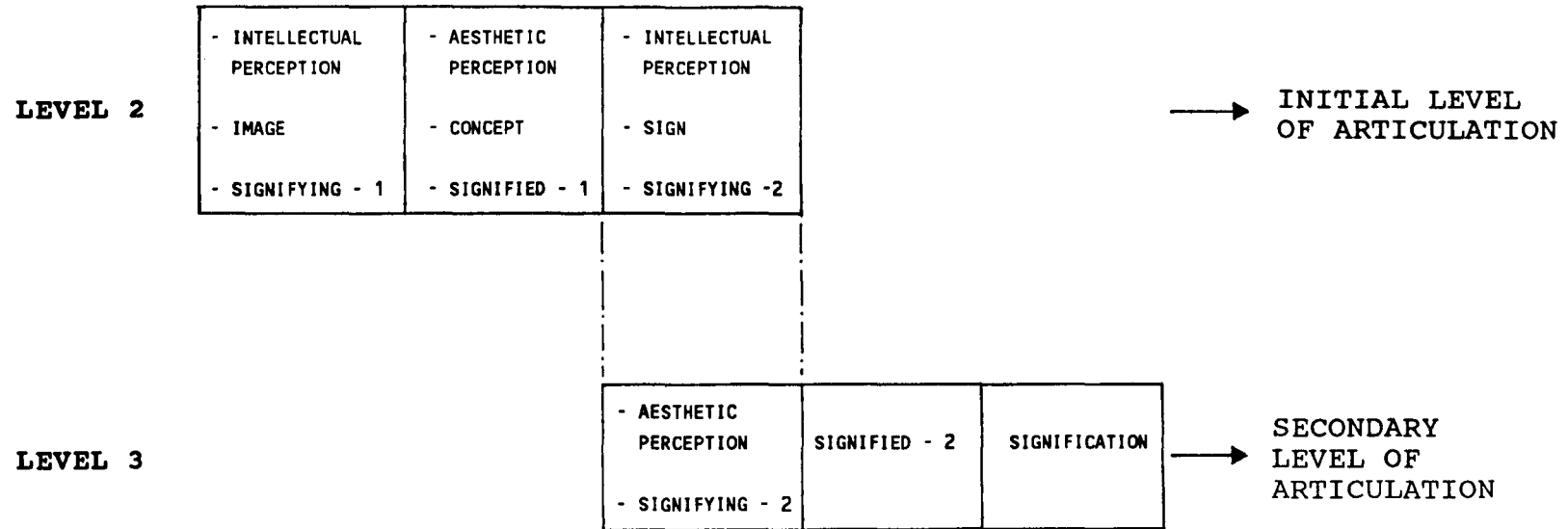


FIG. 6 LEVELS OF ARTICULATION IN MYTH

We cannot afford to forget that myth derives its raw materials from Nature, for its aim is to relate Man and Nature. Let us then explore the relation between myth and Nature.

In sensible images, 'nature spontaneously offers man models'.

[of all qualities that can be used by man, in a *pure* state. And the *relations* which are posited between these qualities in Nature are]

'by means of implicit metonymies, as if a given yellow were inseparable from the visual perception of straw or lemon, or a given black from the burnt ivory used in its makings, or a given brown from pounded earth'

[Lévi-Strauss 1970: 22].

From a discussion of the initial level of articulation how can we know that the sensible qualities undergo a transformation at the intelligible level: Nature itself is signified? Lévi-Strauss answer to this question is that, mythic thought, 'accepts nature on condition that it is able to reproduce it. By doing so, it limits itself to the choice of those formal properties by which nature can signify itself and which consequently are appropriate for metaphor' [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 341]. Thus, Nature is related to Man by the mythic code which apprehends Nature as sensible, and then subsequently translates the sensible entities into *signifiers*, by subjecting them to two consecutive articulations: these signifiers become a part of the image Man has of Nature which can be re-employed for expressing *metaphorical relations*.

SECTION 4

We know that the apprehension of Nature by Man is concomitant with its classification. And we also have talked about the system of classification entailing different levels of classification. These levels of classification communicate with each other: the most extreme - concrete - level is in communication with the other extreme -abstract - level, by subsequent *translation* of messages from one level to another, by employing a code. Thus we have isolated this code as being the mythic code or simply the *myth*, for we have just explained how it succeeds in translation of a concrete quality into a signifier. (See Fig. 5.)

May we at this stage ask the question as to 'what is the *meaning* of classification?' We of course know that at a linguistic level an unlimited variety of sounds are classified into phonemes, and at the level of kinship, consanguines are classified on the basis of their sex- difference and then on the basis of the difference of their status as creditors and debtors.

The classification of consanguines based on difference in sex by the incest prohibition amounts to 'the introduction of what can be called the "*law of the distinction of difference*" ', [and the structure of reciprocity based on the opposition and co-relation of 'creditors and debtors' and 'exchange and neutralization of exchange', which represents the structuration ability of the classificatory nature of the mind, amounts to (along with the introduction of the *law of the distinction of difference*)] 'the correlative introduction of the discrete, discontinuous, combinatory component into the non-discrete continuum of nature' [Wilden 1984: 245].

To illustrate this point further , let us quote an 'instance', which has been quoted by Wilden.

We have a Bororo myth interpreted by Lévi-Strauss which explains this introduction of the discrete component, the passage of the continuous world of difference into the discontinuous world of distinction and opposition. After a flood, the earth became so full of people that the sun decided to reduce their number. All perished by drowning in a river at his command, except Akaruio Bokodori (who, like Oedipus limps). Those who were lost in the rapids had wavy hair; those who were lost in the pools had straight hair. Akaruio Bokodori then brought them all back to life, but accepted only those clans whose presents he liked. All the others he killed with arrows. Lévi-Strauss comments:

'It was necessary that men should become less numerous so that neighboring physical types could be clearly discerned. For if the existence of clans and peoples bearing INSIGNIFICANT or NON-SIGNIFYING gifts were permitted - that is to say, clans whose distinctive originality was as minimal as one could imagine - then there would be a risk that between two given clans or populations there might be interpolated an unlimited number of other clans or peoples which would differ so little from their immediate neighbours that all would end up by being confounded together. Now, in any domain whatsoever, it is only with the introduction of the discrete quantity that a system of significations can be constructed'.

He goes on to point out that a system made discrete by the subtraction of elements, as in this and other myths, becomes logically richer, even if numerically poorer. [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 53-6].

The point is... that only systems of discrete components are available to COMBINATION and permutation, that is to say, only such systems can properly be said to have anything equivalent to SYNTAX. [Wilden 1984: 245-6]

Thus, the prohibition of incest, which triggers the passage from Nature to Culture, bases itself on the necessity arising due to the advent of society i.e. *difference which is reiterated* in culture can be looked at from a different optic.

Nature decides consanguinity, heredity and descent, as driven by its repetitive and inorganic rhythm of exchange epitomized by the 'procreative unit'. Thus exchange which features in these units through the fact of consanguinity, conjugality and descent does not

involve discrete components beyond the level of the 'skin-bound organism'. these natural 'components' do indeed enter into combinations with each other, but these are combinations of natural differences (e.g. biological sexuality) in which the information (male.female) is not distinct from its organic marker.

Thus, in Nature .

the most that can be said of the relation between the sexes or between parents and offspring... is that their biological 'distinctions' and their temporary competitive 'oppositions' are subsumed under the relation of difference, in such a way that a male is simply a male, a female simply a female...

i.e. in Nature, one cannot conceive of.

the purely informational or logical combinations of discrete components, dependent on the relationships of logical distinction, opposition and identity...

as is present in Culture. in Culture, on the other hand, with the reiteration of difference, what really occurs is ,

a reduction on the number of elements, the introduction of distinct 'gaps' between them, and the resulting possibility of a very high number of combinations.

The point of considerable interest for us is that ,

the members of the procreative unit have become *logically* distinct from each other in order for them to become signs.

[Wilden 1984: 246-7]

Classification thus entails a passage from Nature to Culture in as much as it strives to introduce discreteness and discontinuity in Nature, in order to associate entities.

And it is only from this perspective that we can account for the two extremes of the classificatory system viz. concrete and abstract. Obviously, the communication of message from the concrete to the abstract is a *transformation from continuity and indiscretion to discontinuity and discreteness* and if we use the mythic code, it is a translation from images to signs, from metonymic to metaphoric relationships.

However, we know that there are *levels* of classification. Thus the question which arises is 'what do these levels comprise of?' Now from the discussion advanced in note 4, we know that the external limit of classification (generalized exchange) is the *global organization*. Hence, these

levels of classification, from one perspective, can be seen as entailing, at one extreme the *individual* (Particular) and the *society* (General). This can be considered from another perspective, wherein, starting from natural images, Man can relate himself metaphorically to *anything* (in the range of concrete to abstract: as we move towards the abstract we arrive at the highest level of organization), which can lend itself to *signification*.

The aim of classification thus can be seen as organizing relations between 'Man and Nature' on one hand, and between 'Man and Man' on the other. Fig. 7 represents a classificatory scheme,

'which allow(s) the natural and social universe to be grasped as an organized whole.' (emphasis mine)

This classificatory scheme has different levels of classification which are formally analogous to each other and which, at the same time differ from each other only with respect to

'their relative position within the whole system of reference which operates by means of a pair of contrast: between general and particular on the one hand, and nature and culture on the other'. (emphasis mine)

With the existence of levels of classification, the mythic code can focus 'on

all planes, from the most abstract to the most concrete,
the most cultural to the most natural'

thereby facilitating the communication of messages by a simple translation of the signifying of the language employing *women, goods, service*, etc. as codes - therein subjecting it to a process whereby it represents a sense, and meaning in terms of the level concerned .

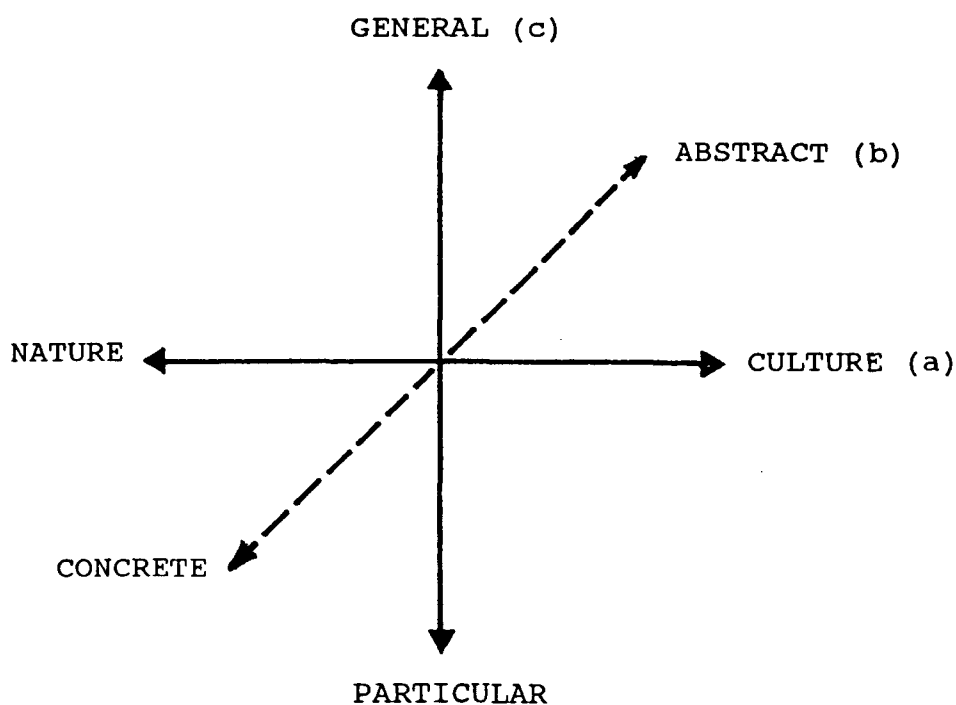


FIG. 7 - AXES OF THE CLASSIFICATORY SCHEME.

Levels of classification may comprise of zoological or botanical typologies, the empirical evidence of which is found in the institution of 'Totemism', wherein there is a *metaphorical relationship* between two system of difference viz. Natural Species and Social Groups which employ *concrete classifiers*. However, typologies can also be based on '*abstract classifiers* such as numbers, directions, and the cardinal points' [Lévi-Strauss 1976: 142]. Thus the concrete and abstract classifiers form an

'integral part of an all embracing dynamic taxonomy the unity of which is assured by the perfect homogeneity of its structure, consisting as it does of successive dichotomies'

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 139]

even though they represent classifiers at different levels of organization where the abstract classifiers are logically more rigorous; however, 'the logical rigor of the oppositions can be unequally manifested without thereby implying any difference of kind.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 140]

The only implication of the difference in the logical status of concrete and abstract classifiers is that, the systemic character dominates at the level of the abstract, whereas the *lexiconic* character dominates at the level of the concrete. In any case, 'there is no inconsistency between the SYSTEM and the LEXICON whose role becomes progressively more dominant as one descends the ladder of dichotomies'. Another significant achievement of the classificatory scheme with levels of classification is that, 'the problem of the relation between *continuous* and *discontinuous* reaches a solution in terms of origin since the universe is represented as a continuum made up of successive dichotomies.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 139]

SECTION 5

At this juncture, let us pause and examine the problem of what is conventionally and traditionally known as *totemism*. Lévi-Strauss refers to *totemism* as a problem, which has the

logical power of systems of denotation that are borrowed from the realm of nature.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 14]

The fundamental feature of Totemic institutions lies in

the homology they evoke... between the differences which manifest themselves on the levels of groups on the one hand and on that of species on the other. They are thus based on the postulate of a homology between TWO SYSTEMS OF DIFFERENCES, one of which occurs in nature and the other in culture. Indicating relations of homology by vertical lines, a 'pure totemic structure' could thus be represented in the following way:

NATURE :	SPECIES I #	SPECIES II #	SPECIES III #	...SPECIES N
CULTURE :	GROUP I #	GROUP II #	GROUP III #	...GROUP N

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 115]

In the case of Totemism, Man and Nature are related along the level of *species*, which has also been termed as the *totemic operator* [Lévi-Strauss 1976:151]. This operator, which is used as a

MEDIAL CLASSIFIER

has unique attributes

Each animal can be analyzed into parts: head, neck, feet, etc. These can be re-grouped first within each species and then together by types of parts: all heads, all necks... A final regrouping restores the model of the individual in his regained identity.

The whole set thus constitutes a sort of conceptual apparatus which filters unity through multiplicity, multiplicity through unity, diversity through identity, and identity through diversity.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 153]

The potential of the species to undergo two processes - those of *detotalization* into individual parts and then *retotalization* into the individual, who in turn is only one member of a particular species, which itself is only one species among a class of species - implies that,

in none of these cases can the animal, the 'Totem or its species be grasped as a biological entity: through its double character of organism - that is, of system - and of emanation from a species - which is a term in a system - the animal appears as a conceptual tool with multiple possibilities of detotalizing or retotalizing any domain... concrete or abstract, natural or cultural.

Thus, what is at the disposal of man is ,

a genuine system by means of a creature, and not the creature itself

and this

constitutes the object of thought and furnishes the conceptual tool.

The species classifies then

can widen its net upwards, that is, in the direction of elements, categories, and numbers, or contract downwards, in the direction of proper names.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 148-9]

The essence of totemism thus lies in the fact that by accentuating differences between species (retotalized or detotalized), it furnishes thought,

with a means of access to other distinctive systems, which have their own repercussions on it. ...by its presumptive objectivity the diversity of species furnishes man with the most intuitive picture at his disposal and constitutes the most direct manifestation he can perceive of the ultimate discontinuity of reality. It is the sensible expression of an objective coding.

Man relates himself to Nature by

a mode of sensory apprehension of a combination objectively given in nature: the activity of the mind, and social life itself, do no more than borrow to apply it to the creation of new taxonomies.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 136-7]

The import of the examination of the problem of *totemism* lies in the acquaintance with the detotalization and retotalizing logic which can be said to account for axis **b** of Figure 7.

Now, we may recall our discussion of a demand for difference, which realizes itself in a structure of difference: society demands that individuals should differ (at a most Particular level), and that groups should differ (at a most General level). In fact, this difference, which leads to the formation of classes is a global system. We have also discussed that in the process of reciprocity and exchange, specially generalized-exchange, the *individual and class are synonymous*, which implies that the individual can be conceived of as a group.

This is logically represented by the mode of operation of the totemic or species operator:

One of the essential functions of totemic classifications is to break down... closing in of the group into itself and to promote an idea something like that of a humanity without frontiers.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 166]

This can be referred to as totemic universalization. On the other hand, 'the meshes of the net'...

can also shrink...but this time at the lower limit of the system by extending its action beyond the threshold which one would be inclined to assign to all classification, that beyond which it is no longer possible to class, but only to name.

[Lévi- Strauss 1976: 168]

Thus we see that it is the same logic which is applicable in defining the relations of Man with Nature and with the relations of Man with Man, for, differences are given in Nature and so in Culture; and by postulating a homology between two systems of differences, the logic can account also for the axis **c**, as existing simultaneously with axis **b** in Figure 7.

SECTION 6

We now know as to what do the levels of classifications comprise of. On the one hand, they comprise of individuals and groups which are classified, and on the other hand, they comprise of images and ideas [Lévi-Strauss 1976: 154], which are drawn from 'concrete' Nature, and which serve as conceptual

tools, in the hands of Man, to devise other modes of classification. We also know that these two axes are related to each other: Man can relate himself metaphorically to anything (from most abstract to most concrete, which can lend itself to signification). (See Fig. 8).

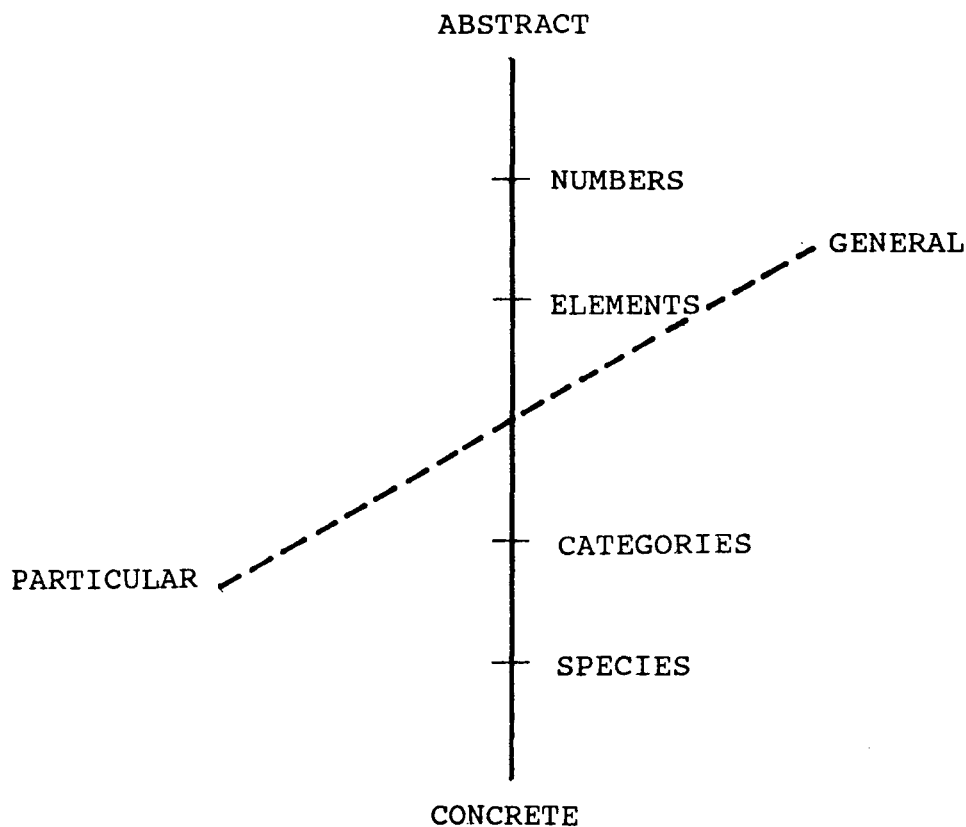


FIG. 8 - AXES OF ASSOCIATION IN MYTH.

Myth is the code which re-employs signs by absorbing them as a signifier in the secondary code.

Given the mode of operation of the mythic code, we can conceive of a situation wherein myth can translate an image (given in the concrete) into a secondary code, whereby it can be represented as a species or as a category, element, number...etc. ; and secondly, the possibility arises wherein e.g. numbers, elements, images etc. are no longer mute, for they have the potential for being expressed as *signifiers* with a tremendous power of reference.

Thus by translation (or transformation)²⁰ one sign can be *substituted* by the other, scanning the entire range of classification systems, and hence, communication between the different levels can be achieved.

The axis, 'General - Particular' represents respectively, groups and individuals; and since we have recognized the possibility of relationships between Man and Signs, we can suggest that *individuals or classes of individuals can signify themselves through concrete or abstract signs.*

Thus, individual may be related to a sign which can become his *totem*. However, we do not have any conception of an individual who is unrelated to an Other in our exercise. Thereby the existence of a *different* Other is mandatory, to realize ones own identity. Hence, if there is any significance of *totem* it is to *signify this difference with respect to the Other*. Same is the case with classes of individuals: one group may employ a *totem* only because it serves for it a signifier of a difference with respect to other groups, and consequently which is an *identification mark* for it. *Totems then serve to differentiate*. Thus, *myth* which is a case of classification which is primarily

conceived, manifests itself in the consciousness of participants: they are 'aware' of classification deriving from difference, and thus, in the form of the institution of *totemism*, they *live* this classification and in the course of their daily *ritual*, they *act* it also [Lévi-Strauss 1976: 232].

Briefly we need to ponder over the fact, that *individuals can be regarded as classes at their lowest limit*. What then, is the corresponding, 'lowest individuating class'?

To answer this question, we have to invoke the 'identification mark', which *every individual* bears, and this identification mark is the *proper name*.

In Lévi-Strauss view, proper names,

are an integral part of systems we have been treating as codes: as means of fixing significations by transposing them into terms of other significations.

This is because ,

the forms of thought with which we have been concerned as totalizing thought... exhaust reality by means of a finite number of given classes, and have the fundamental property of being TRANSFORMABLE into each other

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 172]

Given the fact that ,

resulting from the multiplication of one level by another or several others... language serves to indicate areas of meaning [Lévi-Strauss 1970: 340].

it axiomatically follows, that ,

meaning is not decreed: if it is not everywhere it is nowhere.

[Lévi-Strauss 1963: 91]

Hence, in rendering proper names 'meaningful', Lévi- Strauss is simply accepting the potential of totalizing thought and indicating areas of intelligibility which cannot be recalcitrant to signification [Lévi-Strauss 1976: 170].

To illustrate this important point, Lévi-Strauss cites examples and instances based on empirical facts:

- i. Societies construct their proper names from clan appellations.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 173]

- ii. The connection between proper names and totemic appellations is found (e.g.) in Melanesia.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 173]

From these instances, it is clear that ,

these individual appellations belong to the same system as the collective appellations...and through the intermediary of the latter, one can with the help of transformations, pass from the horizon of individuation to that of more general categories.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 174]

And therefore, the name of the individual is only one part of the name of the collectivity, where the collective appellation may correspond to the whole animals and individual appellations may correspond to the different parts of the animal :

two parallel detotalizations

may be

involved.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 175]

These totalisation may be

of species into parts of the body... and of social segments into individuals and roles.

This suggests that all the deductions .

(and so all the acts of naming) have something in common. A unity divined at the heart of diversity is claimed in advance.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 176]

- iii. The Iroquois... seem to have a system of proper names entirely distinct from the system of clan appellations. Their names most commonly consist of a verb with an incorporated noun or a noun followed by an adjective: In - the-Centre - of - the - Sky, He - raises - the - Sky, ... Hanging - Flower, Beautiful - Flower,.. He - announces - Defeat, ... She - works - in - the House...

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 177-8]

The Iroquois names

suggest a detotalization of those aspects of social life and the physical world which the system of clan appellations has not already caught in the meshes of its net.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 178]

- iv. [Name are also given] to hills, rivers, rocks, forests, wells, landing places.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 178]

- v. [Among the Lugbara, there are various modes of naming a new-born child]

- Three quarters of the 850 names collective from a single sub-clan refer to the behaviour of character of one or other of the parents: 'In - laziness' because the parents were idle, 'In - the - beer - pot' because the father was a drunkard, 'Give-not' because the mother fed her husband badly etc.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 179]

- The other first names refer to recent or imminent death (of other children of the same parents, the parents themselves, or other members of the same group) or to attributes of the child.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 179]

- vi. Among the Banyoro also 'personal names are concerned with the themes of death, sorrow, poverty, neighbourly spite'.

'But the person giving the name is almost always thought of as being acted upon, not as acting; the victim of the envy and hatred of others'.

'This moral passivity, which projects upon the child an image of the self created by others, finds expression on the linguistic plane': (quoted from *Beathi*).

[Lévi-Strauss 1976 179-80]

vi. [Among the Banyoro and Lugbara], 'special names are reserved for children whose birth was marked by some notable circumstances.

Among the Lugbara, we find, for instance: Ejua for a male twin and Ejurua for a female twin; Ondia for a boy and Ondirua for a girl, if their mother was previously thought to be barren; "Bilene" ("for the grave") for a child who is the first of several children to survive'. (Middleton).

The point Lévi-Strauss is making with the help of this example is that,

these names exist before the individuals who bear them and they are assigned to them on account of the position which is objectively theirs but in which other individuals may equally find themselves, and which the group regards as charged with significance.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 180]

These examples illustrate two categorical modes of naming

At one extreme, the name is an identifying mark which, by the application of a rule, establishes that the individual who *is named* is a member of a preordained class

where he or she derives the name from clan or totemic appellations,

(a social group in a system of groups, a status by birth in a system of statuses). At the other extreme, the name is a free creation on the part of the individual who *gives the name* and expresses a transitory and subjective state of his own by means of the person he names.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 181]

[However Lévi-Strauss puts forward an important question, when he asks],

can one said to be naming in either case?

Because, ultimately

the choice seems only to be between identifying someone else by assigning him a class or, under cover of giving him a name, identifying oneself through him.

The conclusion, he thereby arrives at is that ,

one therefore never names: one classes someone else if the name is given to him in virtue of his characteristics and one classes oneself if, in the belief that one need not follow a rule, one names someone else freely, that is, in virtue of characteristics of ones own. And most commonly one does both at once.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 181]

The whole enterprises of naming is thus that of *classing the Self or the Other*.

In case of proper names (just as in case of common names) pertaining to individuals, the individual is as if a species for he is treated like a *class*: the proper names are a means which amounts,

to no more than a choice between assigning a class to an identifiable object or, by putting it outside a class, making the object a means of classing himself by expressing himself through it

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 182].

Further ,

proper names always appear as terms which are generalized or have a generalizing function. In this respect they do not differ fundamentally from the names of species.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 200]

This equation of the 'individual' with the 'Species', significantly posits a relation between (Proper) *names* and *totems*: even *names can be used as signifiers* in the system of classification along with other abstract and concrete signifiers.

SECTION 7

From the preceding analysis it is clear that, with the operation of the myth, individuals and groups of individuals are able to conceive, live and act classification employing *totems* which may range from names to any concrete or abstract image. And, classification, as we know is based on a demand for difference, resulting from the contingency laid by Society: we can agree with Lévi-Strauss, when he says that, totems are merely,

the reflection in men's minds of certain social demands,
that had been objectified in institutions.

[Lévi-Strauss 1970: 10]

Now let us recall the preliminary discussions of the chapter, wherein we have specified that Language, Marriage Rules and Economics are different modes of communication, which respectively employ codes: Linguistic signs, Women and Goods and Services which means that these three codes are used by members of a society to exchange information.

These three codes stand as different from other codes: Myth, Ritual, Art etc. Further there is a certain difference among these codes mutually. How can we account for these facts?

According to Lévi-Strauss,

What is communicated in marriage is almost of the same nature as those who communicate (women, on the one hand, men, on the other), while speakers of language are not of the same nature as their utterances. The opposition is thus one of *person to symbol*, or of *value to sign*. This helps to clarify the somewhat intermediate position of economics between these two extremes - goods and services are not persons, but they still are values. And, though neither symbols nor signs, they require symbols or signs in order to be successfully exchanged when the exchange system reaches a certain degree of complexity.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 297]

We can represent the relation between the three codes of communication as shown in Fig. 9.

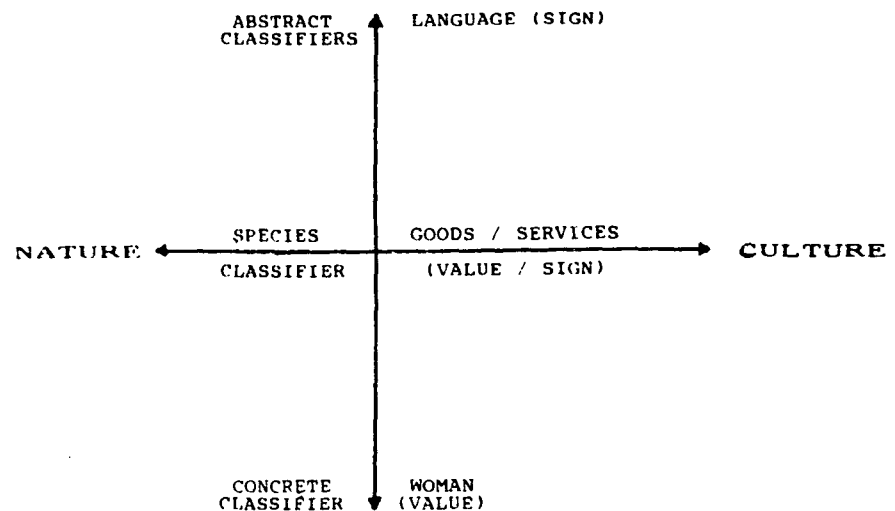


FIG. 9

RELATION BETWEEN THE THREE CODES OF COMMUNICATION

In this figure the presence of the Nature - Culture axis has been deemed necessary as, with the passage from Nature to Culture all these codes undergo a translation of meaning: *real differences* are created between Women; *symbolic distinctions* are created between Goods and Services and *imaginary oppositions* are posited between elements of a Language, as we move from the concrete level to the abstract, which is a level of greater complexity and a higher degree of organization [Wilden 1984: 276].

What then is the difference between these three codes on the one hand and the mythic code on the other?

Perhaps it can be understood without an explanation anew that while myth operates on the secondary level of articulation, as a secondary code, language operates on a primary level of articulation: it is a primary code, and so is Goods and Services - as necessitated by the replacement of barter by cash economy. However, women, occupy a unique position in this respect.

They are *Natural Species*, and are considered as such by social groups. 'Women are held by the social group to be values of the most essential kind' [Lévi-Strauss 1972: 61]. Thus, in Nature, as represented in the fact of the 'union of sexes' (based only on biological difference), women had a value which was a use value and in Nature the 'relations between sexes' [could be] 'conceived as one of the modalities of a great communication function' [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 494].

However, with the coming into operation of the *fact of alliance*, the value of the person called woman changed. She could no longer be the possession of the procreative unit, and thus she had to be *exchanged*. Culture, then, through imposing alliance, transformed the use-value of the person to the *exchange-value* of the person. However, this was not all. Her transfer from one group to another was accompanied by a *common significance* which the *bricoleurs* (participants in the exchange) attached to her because, 'she is same whereas she must (and therefore can) become OTHER... all that is necessary... is the sign of otherness'. [Lévi- Strauss 1969: 114] because the exchange of women created the categories of creditors and debtors, who signified their status with regard to possession of values, they bore a sign, which culminated only in the realization of cycles of long-term or short-term reciprocity as the case may be.

Thus with the *exchange of women*, is triggered a series of exchanges and communication of messages, using signs, so that the woman is *the generator of signs* and a sign herself, which serves to convey a message of *otherness* as she is the elementary sign of *otherness* [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 496].

The woman thus provides an image of the concrete in Nature, which is employed by Culture as a sign of otherness, and which can be *re-employed* by myth by translating the sign into *signifiers* which can be represented by proper names, goods, numbers, objects, categories etc.

SECTION 8

Communication, which is realized by myth, necessarily is of otherness or of difference.

In the previous chapter we talked about the universality of Potlatch and we also stated that it entails an accumulation of social values: a mysterious quality is attached to the value (commodity) exchanged.

The mysterious quality is no doubt the potential in any commodity to become a signifier, wherein it can be allocated a *timeless significance*. Also, this commodity has the potential to be translated into any other code, by the 'bricoleurs' who are participants in the *myth making process*.

The Potlatch in as much as it is an institution which is universal allows the *accumulation of differences* by employing signs. Nature allows repetitive communication between use-values; whereas culture incorporates accumulatory communication, wherein by a psychological exchange of signs - as by display of values or by expending of values - one can accumulate; Nature, when, it is signified and marked with natural differences is rendered no more than a SIGN plus NATURE: it becomes a SIGNATURE.²¹

The passage from Nature to Culture, thus, is seen in a new light, wherein men communicate differences, for the sole purpose of *accumulation of difference*, which they achieve by accumulating markers of their identification i.e. SIGNATURES. Thus it is in the *accumulation of difference*, that the true meaning of the passage from Nature to Culture can be discerned.

NOTES

1. The model of the cross-cousin marriage, we know, entails a DIFFERENCE OF RELATIONSHIP and a DIFFERENCE OF CLASS. [Refer to Note - 4]
2. This discussion has already been advanced in the preceding chapter, where in a passage from Nature to Culture, we entailed a passage from the fact of consanguinity to a fact of alliance, wherein consanguinity implies an exchange which is natural and hence validating descent, whereas alliance by posing the necessity of 'partners in an alliance', implies an exchange of natural commodities - women - which have been decreed by Culture to be different, and hence resulting in an exchange of values, which bear a sign. And an exchange, which bears a sign, necessarily leads to an accumulation of the sign: the women bears in herself - 'A sign of otherness' [Lévi-Strauss 1969:113].
3. Lévi-Strauss has rendered linguistics and kinship as being concerned with essentially the same problems; however, he recognises the fact that these two fields deal with forms of communication, which are on a different scale. He says,

Should one try to compute the communication rate involved, on the one hand in the intermarriages and on the other, in the exchange of messages occurring in a given society, one would probably discover the difference to be of about the same magnitude as, let us say, that between the exchange of heavy molecules of two viscous liquids through a not very permeable film and radio communication. Thus, from marriage to language one passes from low-to-high speed communication.

[This difference in the scale or speeds of communication, according to Lévi-Strauss arises from], the fact that what is communicated in marriage is almost of the same nature as those who communicate, (women, on the one hand, men, on the other), while speakers of language are not of the same nature as their utterances.

[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 296-7]

That is, Language communicates through 'symbols' and 'signs', whereas Marriage communicates through 'persons; or 'values' at the *primary stage*.

4. Let us focus our attention on the following remark:

The rule of kinship and marriage serve to insure the circulation of women between groups.

We will be committing a very grave omission if we let this statement pass unexplained and 'taken for granted'.

This statement makes reference to *rules* of kinship and marriage, which insure circulation of women between groups.

But, from our discussion in the previous chapter, we have established only 'one' rule i.e. the incest prohibition, which can ensure the *exchange* of women between 'two individuals' defined by a *relationship* or between 'individuals' defined by the *classes* to which they belong.

This relationship was defined by the negative modality and inorganic rhythm of the incest prohibition, whereas, the classes were defined by the positive modality and organic rhythm of the incest prohibition as expressed in *exogamy* and organized into the institution of *dual-organization*.

Further we invoked the tendency towards *cross-cousin marriage* as subsuming both these modalities and both these rhythms, and thus serving to simultaneously co-relate and oppose individual and groups of individuals, bearing a status either of creditors or debtors.

Importantly, the tendency towards cross-cousin marriage by introducing the attitude of 'mutuality', simultaneously co-related and opposed 'exchange' and a 'neutralization' of exchange. This attitude of mutuality, entailed the incorporation of a 'future perspective', thus incorporating the diachronic dimension by invoking the next generation of the child.

Thus, the tendency towards cross-cousin marriage represented a continuity of the fact of 'alliance', which was to be neutralized in the subsequent generation. The *eternal triangle of marriage* (as represented in Figure - 1) thus served the purpose of accounting for alliance, consanguinity, and descent between two individuals or two classes, as expressed in the idea of the Dual Organization.

But the fact is that, marriage or the fact of alliance has to account for 'reciprocity', not only between two individuals or two groups, but in fact between as many individuals and as many groups (we have to remember that, incest prohibition has to account for the entire society, which thereby has to participate in exchange).

How, then, can we incorporate any number of groups (at least theoretically), engaged in reciprocal exchange, and yet concede to the fact that SOCIETY exists? The underlying suggestion is that an exchange between two entities halts or breaks the continuity of exchange because this exchange is *restricted*; but we have to account for 'continuing exchange' pertaining not to particulars, but to groups, who are as general, as is possible (theoretically).

To answer this question, we shall start with looking at the cross-cousin marriage in a new perspective i.e. of its being an instance of *bilateral exchange*.

Cross-cousin marriage entails:

- i. a differentiation of cousins into 'cross' and 'parallel' (inspite of their equal degree of proximity)
- ii. a differentiation between the theoretically homogenous category of cross-cousins: some societies prescribe a unilateral marriage with a mother's brother's daughter or with a father's sister's daughter, and the former is more frequent than the latter.

This implies that there is a difference between the mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter.

According to Lévi-Strauss,

To the extent that one can conceive the possibility of explaining marriage with the bilateral cross-cousin, to the exclusion of the parallel cousin, or of understanding the exclusion of the bilateral cousin in favour of either unilateral cousin, or, finally, of resolving the problem of the continual exclusion of one unilateral cousin in favour of the other, so it seems impossible to find one principle which simultaneously accounts for the exclusion of parallel cousins, for the preference of bilateral cross-cousin, and in particular, for the fact that when one of them is prohibited, it is more often (but without any regularity) one than the other.

The logic, however, must be there if kinship systems are really systems, and if... formal structures, consciously or unconsciously apprehended by the human mind, constitute the indestructible basis of marriage institutions, of the

incest prohibition whereby the existence of these institutions is made possible and of culture itself, the advent of which is constituted by the incest prohibition.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 440]

These features of the cross-cousin marriage, Lévi-Strauss seeks to explain by invoking the *structure of reciprocity* which is consciously or unconsciously apprehended by the human mind. Let us see, how this has been done.

Bilateral marriage is based on direct or restricted exchange; marriage with the mother's brother's daughter is based on indirect or generalized exchange.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 440-1]

Before we proceed, it is imperative that we clarify the two types of exchange viz. *restricted exchange* and *generalized exchange*.

RESTRICTED EXCHANGE - In this kind of exchange, this marriage rule is,

that if a man of A (moeity, section or subsection) can marry a woman of B, a man of B can marry a woman of A. Thus there is reciprocity between the sexes within the classes; or, if preferred, the marriage rules are indifferent to the sex of the spouses. What is true for marriage rules is ...obviously not so for the rules of descent.

Systems exhibiting this characteristic whatever the number of classes, are called **SYSTEM OF RESTRICTED EXCHANGE**, meaning that the systems can operate mechanisms of reciprocity, only between two partners or between partners in multiples of two.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 177-8]

GENERALIZED EXCHANGE - Lévi-Strauss explains this kind of exchange by hypothetically conceiving of a four-class system - A, B, C, D. What is the possible kind of exchange that can take place between a system comprising four-classes?

Generalized Exchange is one of the possible kinds,

[the other being realized in the Kariera System in which]

the classes are split into two pairs, each governed by a law of restricted exchange. The link between the two pairs is

secured by descent, the children who are of one of the pairs always belonging to a section of another pair. That is, an A man marries a B woman (pair number one), the children are D (pair number two); a B man marries an A woman (pair number one), the children are C (pair number two)" [Lévi- Strauss 1969: 178]}

This kind of exchange, satisfies, at the same time the exigencies of class exogamy and those of the division, formulated or unformulated, into moieties. This is expressed in the formula:

If an A man marries a B woman, a B man marries a C woman. Here the link between the classes is expressed simultaneously by marriage and by descent. We propose to call the systems using this formula, **SYSTEMS OF GENERALIZED EXCHANGE**, indicating thereby that they can establish 'reciprocal' relationship between any number of partners. These relationships, moreover, are **DIRECTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**. For example, if a B man depends for his marriage upon class C, placed after his own, a B woman depends upon class A, placed before.



FIG. 10 - DIRECTIONAL RELATIONS IN GENERALIZED EXCHANGE.

In these figures the arrows represent one-way pairs (going from man to woman) while the same system turns symmetrically but inversely if considered from the point of view of the spouse. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 178]

[In such systems], the rules of marriage and of descent are not functionally related. The former - by which an A man marries a B woman, a B man a C woman, a C man a D woman, and a D man, an A woman - remains the same, whether it is decided that the children of a man A shall fall into section A, B, C, or D. The only condition is that the rule of descent, once chosen, shall be applied systematically.

[A further differentiating feature between restricted and generalized exchange is that the 'pairs' of restricted exchange are 'reciprocal' (because, for the pair AB, the relationship is between an A man and a B woman, and between a B man and an A woman), whereas, the 'pairs' of generalized exchange are univocal i.e.] they unite only the men of one section with the women of the other. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 179]

From a definition of the 'restricted' and 'generalized' exchange, it follows that,

direct exchange is possible only in what we have called disharmonic regimes, i.e. in which residence, and descent separately follow the father's and the mother's lines, while indirect exchange arises, as the only possible mode of integration of groups, in harmonic regimes, i.e. in which descent and residence are at once paternal and patrilocal, or maternal and matrilocal respectively.

[As a consequence of this, we can see that, regimes which are disharmonic], are capable of providing a regular process of reproduction by segmentation [say from moieties to sub-sections (Lévi-Strauss 1969:441), because exchange in them is 'restricted'. On the other hand, harmonic regimes are 'unstable' and in order to reach a stage of reciprocity (+), and thereby acquire an 'autonomous structure', they have] to reach the stage of systems of generalized exchange with 'n' sections, [so that the cycle of reciprocity is completed].

[Thus, the 'Direct or Restricted Exchange' is] extremely productive as regards the number of systems which can be based upon it, but functionally is relatively sterile.

[This can be expressed by the fact, that even in a four-section system (or sections which are multiples of two) - which implies a 'richness' with regards to the system - the tendency is to 'split' each of the sections into two subsections - which are then integrated by virtue of direct exchange or simulated exchange. This means that] the development of restricted exchange goes hand in hand with the admission of an even greater number of local groups participating in exchange [so that, the], organic development (i.e., development in the degree of integration) goes hand in hand with a mechanical development (i.e., the numerical increase in the number of

participants) [So that there is no 'relative' increase in the degree of integration].

Conversely, generalized exchange, while relatively unproductive in the matter of system (since it can engender only one pure system), is very fruitful as a regulating principle: the group remaining unchanged in extent and composition, generalized exchange allows the realization of a more supple and effective solidarity within this mechanically stable group [We can recall that, in order to acquire an autonomous status, regimes of generalized exchange have to reach a stage which comprises of a defined (n) number of sections]. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 441]

This discussion on harmonic and disharmonic regimes, as involved in generalized and restricted exchange respectively, due to the contingency arising from stability, solidarity and continuity of the Society, can throw more light on the 'unilateral' and 'bilateral' marriage rules, which are based on them, respectively.

The *Bilateral Rule*, in its true form, as entailing the cross-cousin marriage includes or excludes spouses depending on whether or not they belong to the particular class or group (This is represented in the dual organization because 'bilateral principle' implies the presence of a complementary group (bearing the opposite sign) with which the first group contract restricted-exchange. Thus,

wherever bilateralism is to the fore, it is the system, i.e. inclusion or exclusion within or outside the class, which plays the leading role [This is because], in such systems direct exchange is the simplest and most effective process for ensuring the integration of the group.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 442]

On the other hand, the 'unilateral principle' which is based on a differentiation between mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter i.e. the matrilateral and the patrilateral cross-cousin respectively, include in the category of spouses those persons who are defined thus, by virtue of the 'degree of kinship' (the class being non-existent in case of harmonic regimes, which are governed by unilateral preferences):

the notion of relationship preponderates.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:441]

By a discussion of bilateral rule of preference for a spouse and a unilateral rule for the same, we have accounted for the reasons of

- i) a differentiation of cousins into 'cross' and 'parallel' (as, the exchange entailed in case of cross- cousin marriage regulated by the bilateral rule, engenders an integration of groups, at a most direct level: the systemic nature of the exchange is extremely 'rich'. It fulfills the demands of the structure of reciprocity).
- ii) the reason of a further differentiation of the cousins: bilateral preferences are replaced by unilateral preferences, (as the generalized exchange entailed in case of unilateral preferences has no limits imposed on the number of groups which can be incorporated into the cycle of generalized exchange, so long as the number is finite, and further, as this system is functionally more suited as far as the integration of this 'autonomous' group is concerned, because in this case 'organic' development has the potential to increase infinitely, whereas 'mechanical' development, remains static).

The next fact we have to account for is the differentiation between the theoretically homogenous category of cross- cousins: there is a preference and a markedly greater instance of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, as contrasted to patrilateral cross-cousin marriage i.e. a preference for the mother's brother's daughter over father's sister's daughter.

Why is it so?

As Lévi-Strauss says,

any system of cross cousin marriage permits the formation of a structure of reciprocity; it does not follow that these systems are strictly equivalent and interchangeable.

Now the question is that why these systems of reciprocity arising, on the one hand from marriage with mother's brother's daughter and on the other hand from marriage with father's sister's daughter, are not equivalent and interchangeable?

This Lévi-Strauss explains, by constructing what he call,

two quartets corresponding to marriage with the mother's brother's daughter and marriage with the father's sister's daughter.

These can be represented as follows:

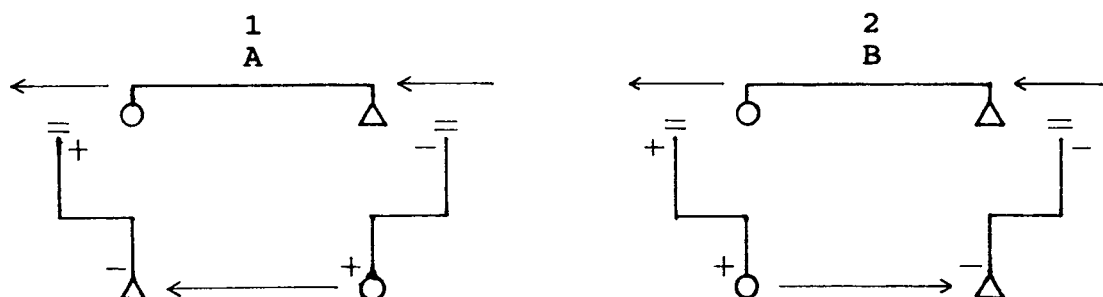


FIG. 11 - THE QUARTETS OF MARRIAGE.

According to Lévi-Strauss,

In a purely formal way, the former is a 'better structure' than the latter, in the sense that it is the most complete development conceivable of the principle of crossing, on which the very notion of cross-cousins is based. It comprises of] in the older generation, a brother and a sister, and in the following generation, a son and a daughter i.e. all told, two men and two women, one man creditor and one man debtor, one woman received and one given. [i.e. a special virtue is accorded to 'asymmetrical pairs' in cross-cousin marriage, as illustrated by [A] [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 443]

If we generalize this notion of the asymmetrical pair, we can say that the quartet constructed on marriage with the mother's brother's daughter is formed of four of these pairs: a brother and a sister; a husband and a wife; a father and daughter; and a mother and a son. In other words, however the structure is analyzed, men and women appear in regular alternation, as must do those from whom cross-cousin (and more generally, potential spouses in a dual organization) are descended. The quartet of marriage with the matrilateral cousin is the systemic application, to all degrees of kinship, of the formal alternation of sex on which the existence of cross-cousins depends. [Lévi-Strauss 1969:443-4].

[As regards the quartet **[B]** which represents marriage with the father's sister's daughter is less satisfactory", "we find only two asymmetrical pairs, viz. brother and sister and husband and wife, and two symmetrical pairs, viz. father and son, mother and daughter. Accordingly, this structure conforms, as it were, to only half the archetype. While the other half retains the fundamental relationship of symmetry of the pairs on which the existence of parallel cousins depends.

[Resulting from the differences in the structure of the two quartets, there arises difference in the functioning of the two systems]: each quartet implies the existence of three marriages, i.e., two in the ascending generation and one in the descending generation. [And according to the theory of the cross-cousin marriage, the last marriage in the descending generation] is a function of those which occurred in the previous generation. [We can see that in quartet **[A]**, the three marriages are] all oriented in the same direction, while those in quartet **[B]**, reveal a change to the opposite direction when we turn from the older to the younger generation. [This implies that], quartet **[A]**, is what we might call an OPEN STRUCTURE, inserted naturally and necessarily within structures of the same type (as is evident from the principle of generalized exchange): the various cessions and acquisitions of wives, by which the quartet is constituted, presuppose a whole chain of cessions and acquisitions on which, to the final analysis, a wider but self-sufficient system of the same type can be built [This structure, then presupposes a generalized exchange] By contrast, quartet **[B]** is a CLOSED STRUCTURE, within which a cycle of exchange opens and closes: a woman is ceded in the ascending generation, a woman is acquired in the descending generation, and the system returns to a point of inertia. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 444]

[In the case of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, with the Ego's marriage (If Ego is a man in the descending generation) which is] like restitution, the transaction is, as it were, terminated, [and] Ego's sister's marriage is an integral part of another transaction which has no connexion with the previous one. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 445]

Further, theoretically, (since this transaction figures as 'Ego's Father's marriage') - an Ego's brother's marriage is connected with another transaction viz. the ceding of the sister by the wife's father, which is a

transaction completely independent of other two transactions. This kind of marriage then derives from a principle of *discontinuous exchange*.

Thus, the principle of bilateral marriage is opposed to the principle of unilateral marriage, by virtue of it being based on Restricted Exchange, as opposed to Generalized Exchange of the latter and further, matrilateral cross-cousin marriage can be opposed to patrilateral cross-cousin marriage by virtue of, the former being based on Generalized Exchange, (which is *continuous* - as applicable to an 'open structure' when all marriages are oriented in one direction) while the latter being based on Restricted Exchange Exchange, which is *discontinuous* (as it is applicable to 'closed structures', which orients subsequent marriages in opposite directions: in two generations, the transaction is terminated). This marriage is,

incapable of attaining a form other than that of a multitude of small closed systems, juxtaposed one to the other, without ever being able to realize an overall structure.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 444]

...no where is the group as a whole engaged; a total structure of reciprocity never emerges from the juxtaposition of these local structures ... The integration of the group does not proceed from the participation of every individual and biological family in a collective harmony. It results both mechanically and precariously from the sum of particular ties by which a family is linked with one family or another. Instead of the real unity of a single thread underlying the whole social fabric, there is an artificial unity of bits and pieces, proceeding from the fact that two interconnected elements are each coupled with a third element.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 4445]

[On the other hand bilateral and matrilateral cross-cousin marriage], ensure(s) the best possible solidarity of family groups allied by marriage. Moreover, this solidarity extends to the whole social group achieving a structure: dual organization, marriage classes or system of relationships.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 445]

[It is due to these factors, that] there is no formula for marriage with the patrilateral cross cousin; the system is no more than the statement and repetition of the obvious rule by which it operates. More exactly, it is not a system but a procedure. [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 446]

The only significance of the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage lies in the fact that it express the manner in which a kinship relation, by changing into alliance, allows the formation of a structure of reciprocity.

We have thus accounted for the differentiation of cousins into cross and parallel and also for the differentiation of cross-cousins into matrilateral and patrilateral, all based on the principle of reciprocity.

However, the existence of these three rules of marriage bilateral, matrilateral cross-cousin and patrilateral cross cousin, bear a significance, by virtue of the relationships that exist between them. An examination of this aspect is rendered imperative, by the implications it has for comparison with the structure of reciprocity (which is the structure of language) thereby validating Lévi-Strauss claims that this structure is UNIVERSAL.

When looked at from the perspective of opposition and co-relation of elements, we can easily say that,

patrilateral marriage is not only the counterpart of matrilateral marriage but also its negation. [Thus], within systems of reciprocity, marriage with the father's sister's daughter - short cycle - is to marriage with the mother's brother's daughter - long cycle - what incest is to the entirety of systems of reciprocity. [This is because, incest is considered to be the limit of reciprocity i.e.], the point at which it cancels itself out. And what incest is to reciprocity in general, such is the lowest form of reciprocity (patrilateral marriage) in relation to the highest form (matrilateral marriage) [The marriage between sister's daughter and brother's son, represents the] omnipresent danger but irresistible attraction of a 'social incest', more dangerous to the group, even, than biological incest [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 454]

Thus, the reasons for proclaiming the preference for matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, are the same as the reasons for abhorring the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. The final structure which emerges from the operation of these inclusions and exclusions is as follows :

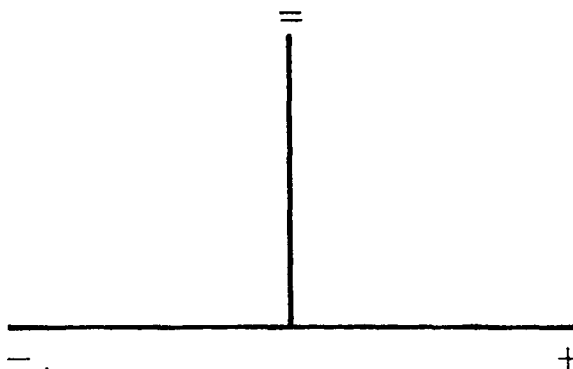


FIG. 12 SYSTEM OF OPPOSITION BETWEEN THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF MARRIAGE

'Bilateral marriage: no cycle formula

$$A \longleftrightarrow B$$

'Patrilateral marriage: short cycle formula

$$\begin{array}{l} A \longrightarrow B \\ A \longleftarrow B \end{array}$$

'Matrilateral marriage: long cycle formula

$$A \longrightarrow B \longrightarrow C$$

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:465]

And this structure is identical to the one we conceived as the structure of reciprocity. It represents three elementary structures (as Lévi-Strauss has designated them) of exchange viz. *bilateral*, *matrilateral* and *patrilateral*, and they are,

always present to the human mind, at least in an unconscious form, and, [the human mind] cannot evoke one of them without thinking of this structure in opposition to - but also in correlation with - the two others.

[That these elementary structures result from a system of opposition and co-relation, is given by the fact that], matrilateral and patrilateral marriage represent the two poles of generalized exchange, but they are opposed to each other as the shortest and the longest cycles of exchange and both are opposed to bilateral marriage as the general to the particular, since mathematics confirms that, in all combinations with several partners, the game for two should be treated as a particular case of the game for three. At the same time, bilateral marriage has the characteristic of alteration in common with patrilateral marriage, whereas it resembles matrilateral marriage in that both allow a general solution, and not a collection of partial solutions, as is the case with patrilateral marriage. The three forms of exchange thus constitute four pairs oppositions.

[Lévi-Strauss 1969:464]

Thus, these three rules of marriage ensure the circulation of women among the groups, and with the laying down of these rules, Lévi-Strauss has succeeded in demonstrating, that,

The diversity of the historical and geographical modalities of the rules of kinship and marriage have appeared to us to exhaust all possible methods for ensuring the integration of biological families within the social group. We have thus established that superficially complicated and arbitrary rules may be reduced to a small number. There are only three possible elementary kinship structures; these three structures are constructed by means of two forms of exchange and these forms of exchange themselves depend upon a single differential characteristic, namely the harmonic or disharmonic character of the regimes considered. Ultimately, the whole imposing apparatus of prescriptions and prohibitions could be reconstructed *a priori*, from one question, and one alone: in the society concerned, what is the relationship between the rule of residence and the rule of descent? [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 493]

Thus the progress of the analysis has been like that of the 'phonological linguist'.

Another aspect to which we would like to draw attention is the 'organizational' perspective involved in bilateral and (particularly) matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. [We choose to speak on these two, since they, aspire to integrate the groups involved.]

In case of bilateral marriage, the organization tends towards *classes* (as exemplified by dual organization). However, as we approach the matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, the exchange involved is generalized, and the organization tends towards *relationship*.

For obvious reasons, we can say that the modern society, can be conceived of as based on a generalized exchange, which practices marriage (the rule being of prohibition of a specified kinship degree, without a specification of a suitable spouse) organized on the principle of *relationship*.

However, Lévi-Strauss puts forward a suggestion that, even in a modern society, marriage has to be conceived of as a *bilateral* act, and a *symmetrical institution* (and not as a unilateral act and an asymmetrical institution).

The only difference (if there is one) is that,

in primitive societies, the symmetrical structure of the institution involves two groups [whereas in modern societies] the symmetrical elements are on the one hand a class tending to be reduced solely to the individual, and on the other a class which extends so far as to be confused with the social group as a whole. Lévi-Strauss 1969: 130]

Thus the entities (supposedly 'n' in number) involved in a generalized exchange, may select a spouse, by means of an *exclusion* of the prohibited degree: the individual excluded may almost be conceived of a prohibited class and this selection may simultaneously include in the category of possible spouses, the entire social group (minus the prohibited class).

Modern generalized exchange can be envisaged as occurring at the level of an individual, who is a species (class) by himself (at the *particular level*), and at the level of the group which itself is only one class among the 'n' involved in generalized exchange, (at the *general level*).

Exchange, thus essentially is a mechanism operative between different classes, in modern society. The notion of the universal structure of the human mind, is thus validated, at the most empirical level if we recognize that the universality of the mind derives from its CLASSIFYING nature and structure.

5. Homology has been defined by Lévi-Strauss as,

an orderly correspondence between the two [levels or series, or as the case may be. He specifies the meaning of homology, in the following statement made with regard to the relationship between myth and ritual] Regardless of whether the myth or the ritual is original, they replicate each other; the myth exists on the conceptual level and the ritual on the level of action. In both cases, one assumes an orderly correspondence between the two - in other words a homology. [Lévi-Strauss 1972:232]

6. As we have said, communication which takes place on the three levels viz. Language, Goods and Services and Women, is imbued with *meaning*.

According to Lévi-Strauss, all systems of meaning pose a fundamental question 'What does it mean?'. In an answer to the same they merely *translate* into the desired language, 'rules originally conceived in another language' [Lévi-Strauss 1987:10]

7. We have not forgotten about the notion of the *Total Social Fact*, which was advocated by Mauss, and magnanimously incorporated by Lévi-Strauss in his work.

The total social fact as we know incorporated language as well as kinship (along with the other modes) to apprehend the Social - which we established to be a STRUCTURE OF DIFFERENCE resulting from a demand for difference.

However, in seeking an object for itself, social anthropology is trying to capture within the totality, the difference which exists between linguistics and kinship: though they are both included in a totality yet they are excluded at another level.

8. Before we go on to examine the nature of signs, which constitute the subject matter of social anthropology, we feel that it is important to examine the nature of the sign as conceived by Saussure, in case of Language and by virtue of which Saussure was able to arrive at a general science of semiology.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist is regarded as the father of modern linguistics. He contributed to

- (i) a *theory* of language and also to
- (ii) a *method* for studying language

Before Saussure, the study of language, or philology as it was usually called, had been essentially historical, tracing change and development in phonology and semantics within and between languages or groups of languages.

Saussure, however, argued that a scientific study of linguistics could not base itself on a *diachronic* consideration; it had to base itself on a *synchronic* dimension and approach language as *synchronic* system i.e.

a system of which all the elements and rules are in theory simultaneously available to the user of the language.
[Lodge 1988:1]

The fundamental question then was,

What is it that linguistics sets out to analyze?
[Lodge 1988:2]

Some preliminary facts regarding linguistic phenomena, according to Saussure are:

- a. Language cannot afford to dissociate, an inherent phonetic duality in its perception of articulate syllables: language comprises of auditory impressions and oral articulation;
- b. Phonetic facts perceived as speech sounds, are only instruments of thought: they do not have an independent existence. Hence, by itself, a sound is only.

a complex auditory - articulatory unit [which needs to] combine with an idea to form another complex unit, both physiologically and psychologically [Lodge 1988:3]

- c. Language has two aspects - *individual* and *social*, and, One is not conceivable without the other [Lodge 1988:3]
- d. Language at any given time involves an established system and an evolution. At any given time, it is an institution in the present and a product of the past.

There is a dual aspect of *system* and *history* inherent in language.

In a nutshell then, the preliminary facts about language render it comprising of *dualities* between,

- a. Oral Articulation and Auditory Impression
- b. Sound Pattern and Idea
- c. Individual and Social
- d. System and History.

The dualities pose problems as far as defining an object of study is concerned because the need for specificity remains unfulfilled. However, the solution advocated by Saussure, which is the only solution lies in one approach, wherein,

The linguist must take the study of linguistic structure as his primary concern, and relate all other manifestations of language to it. [Lodge 1988:3]

Linguistic structure, entails a specific solution, because as contrasted to language, which

in its entirety has many different and disparate aspects; [which] lies astride the boundaries separating various domains [which are] at the same time physical, physiological and psychological; [which], belongs both to individual and society [and hence has] no discernible unity; [the linguistic structure is] both a self contained whole and a principle of classification [Lodge 1988:3-4]

Even, in according primacy to the linguistic structure, Saussure, has not overlooked the essentially social aspect of language (which he is keen to establish); as he says,

the language we use is a convention, and it makes no difference what exactly the nature of the agreed sign is. [Lodge1988:4]

The social and conventional nature of language is reiterated by Saussure, in advancing the notion of *language articulation*:

As regards language, articulation may refer to the diversion of the chain of speech into syllables, or to the division of the chain of meanings into meaningful units. [Lodge1988:4]

Thus, according to Saussure, the faculty of constructing language - as a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas is given to man in Nature; however the *articulation* of language - embodied in spoken language of speech - is the essential individual nature of language. Further,

the faculty of articulating words is put to use only by means of the linguistic instrument created and provided by society. [Lodge1988:5]

Saussure thus, establishes language as an essentially social construct by introducing the notion of articulation and at the same time validates his claims for according linguistic structure the function of uniting of Individual and Social, which serves as a clue for providing a specific solution to the problem regarding the object of study.

Saussure has accorded the linguistic structure, a place in the facts of language by demonstrating that the process of language takes place between two individuals, in his conception of the TALKING HEADS. [Lodge 1988:5]

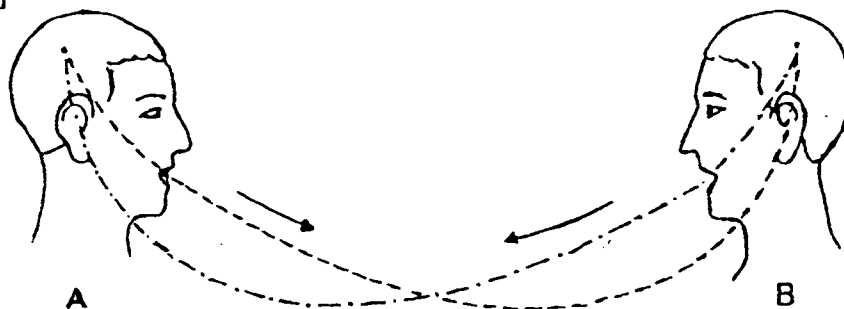


Fig. 13 The Talking Heads

By an entirely psychological phenomenon, the *concept* and a corresponding *sound pattern* are triggered in the brain. On this basis, we can conceive of the language-process as taking place between the 'talking heads', as two-fold: (i) vocalization and (2) hearing.

The psychological phenomenon of conception of a *concept* which is triggered into a *sound pattern* (taking place in the brain), is vocalized by A: vocalization is a physiological process; this vocalized sound pattern (embodying the *concept*) through an external and physical process is heard by B.

By another physiological process, the received sound pattern is transmitted to the brain of B (from its ear). However, in the brain, it is a psychological process, which enables B to associate the sound (physical) with the concept embodied in it.

The very fact that both A and B associate the same sound with the same concept entails a *convention* by virtue of which that *particular sound* is associated with that *particular concept*. It is this convention, which is *social*.

This social is independent of the individual execution, and it has been designated by Saussure as,

'speech' [And further, according to Saussure], if we could collect the totality of word patterns stored in all those individuals, we should have the social bond which

constitutes their language. It is a fund accumulated by the members of the community through the practice of speech, a grammatical system existing potentially in every brain, or more exactly in the brains of a group of individuals; for the language is never complete in any single individual, but exists perfectly only in the collectivity [Lodge 1988:7]

We have thus arrived at a point of distinction between 'language' and 'speech'; which distinguishes

1. what is social from what is individual and 2. what is essential from what is ancillary and more or less accidental. [This means that], Language itself is not a function of the speaker. It is the product passively registered by the individual. It never requires premeditation, and reflexion enters into it only for the activity of classifying...

Speech on the contrary is an individual act of the will and the intelligence in which one must distinguish (i) the combinations through which the speaker uses the code provided by language in order to express his own thought, and (ii) the psycho-physical mechanisms which enables him to externalize these combinations [Lodge 1988:7]

With these distinctions, Saussure has established language as a structured system or as we said in the beginning - the linguistic structure - as a part of the facts of language. In a summary fashion, the characteristic features of language as a structured system, may be listed as follows:

- a. Language is a well-defined entity (amidst facts of language, which are a disparate mass), which can be localized in a speech circuit (comprising of vocalization and hearing) in which concepts and sound patterns are associated. This is a social part of language and it exists only by virtue of a kind of contract agreed between the members of the community.

This is a passive aspect, which is external to the individual and which requires an apprenticeship of the individual. So that, even if he cannot speak, he can grasp,

the language system provided he understands the vocal signs he hears.

- b. A language system, as distinct from speech [Parole] is an object that may be studied independently [by linguistics. Our focus is on the linguistic structure, which can be studied by dispensing with other elements of language].
- c. While language in general is heterogeneous, a language system is homogeneous in nature. It is a system of signs in which the one essential is the union of sense and sound pattern, both parts of the sign being psychological. [Lader 1988:8]

Here a distinction is envisaged between the heterogeneous language (*langage*) and a homogeneous language system (*langue*). The latter is further conceived of as a system of SIGNS, which entail a union of *concept* and *sound pattern*.

Language is referred to as a system of signs, in which the one essential union is between concept and sound patterns, where both pertain to the psychological aspect.

This idea, contains a notion of the *arbitrary* nature of the linguistic sign.

[We know that] 'the linguistic sign is... a two-sided psychological entity', [where the two constituent elements] 'are intimately linked and [trigger one another]' [Lodge 1988:11]

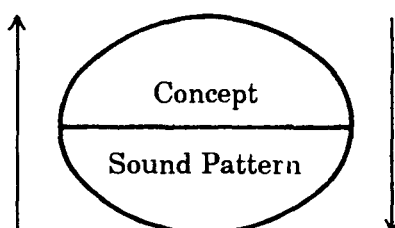


FIG. 14 REPRESENTATION OF THE LINGUISTIC SIGN

Saussure, referred to the whole entity as a Sign, whereas the constituent elements were referred to as Signification (Concept) and Signal (Sound Pattern). He postulated the link between the Signification and Signal as being of an arbitrary nature, for they have no 'internal connexion' [Lodge 1988:12]

This principle of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign, according to Saussure,

is the organizing principle for the whole of linguistics. [The word arbitrary must not be] taken to imply that a signal depends on the free choice of the speaker. The term implies simply that the signal is *unmotivated*: that is to say arbitrary in relation to its signification, with which it has no natural connexion in reality. [Lodge 1988: 12-3]

d. The outstanding characteristics of signs are:

- they are no less real than speech
- although essentially psychological [they] are not abstractions.
- [they are associations], ratified by collective agreement, [and they], go to make up the language. [Thus they are], realities localized in the brain.
- [they are tangible]: writing can fix them in conventional images.[This implies that they can] be represented by one constant visual image. [Importantly], a language is a repository of sound patterns and writing is then tangible form. [Lodge 1988:8]
- the sign always to some extent eludes control by the will, whether of the individual or of society [even though the sign is social by nature].[Lodge 1988:9]

Further, by rendering language as being concerned with signs, Saussure succeed in considering it as a branch of Semiology:

If one wishes to discover the true nature of language systems, one must first consider what they have in common with all other systems of the same kind [for], the linguistic problem is first and foremost semiological. Linguistic factors which at first seem central..must be relegated to a place of secondary importance if it is found that they merely differentiate languages from other such systems. In this way, light will be thrown not only upon the linguistic problem. By considering rites, customs etc. as signs, it will be possible we believe, to see them in a new perspective. The need will be felt to consider them as semiological phenomena and to explain them in terms of laws of semiology. [Lodge 1988:9]

Thus, instead of defining words, language defines *things* since it is a semiological system.

9. Systems of meaning, are concerned with the problem of meaning as it is communicated in a society.

An illuminating note on *meaning* and its scientific study by Geoffrey Leech is given below. Leech has established Semantics as being a science which concerns itself with the study of meaning.

Why study semantics? Semantics (as the study of meaning) is central to the study of communication; and as communication becomes more and more a crucial factor in social organisation, the need to understand it becomes more and more pressing. Semantics is also at the centre of the study of the human mind - thought processes, cognition and conceptualization - all these are intricately bound up with the way in which we classify and convey our experience of the world through language.

[Leech : 1983: ix]

10. The passage from Nature to Culture (as we have discussed in the introductory chapter) is accomplished by a passage from Affectivity to Rationality.

However, as we know, Lévi-Strauss has envisaged this passage as entailing not a break, between the two orders, but a transformation. There exist a continuity between the Natural and the Cultural orders, despite a discontinuity.

This problem of *continuity and discontinuity* is a major philosophical problem. Lévi-Strauss perceives it as follows:

There is a desire expressed in all thought to

apprehend in a total fashion the two aspects of reality which the philosopher terms CONTINUOUS and DISCONTINUOUS [and a refusal] to choose between the two: [there is a constant effort to see them as complementary perspectives to arrive at the same truth]. [Lévi-Strauss 1963: 98-9]

[Therefore], the advent of culture coincides with the birth of the intellect. Furthermore, the opposition between the continuous and the discontinuous, which seems irreducible on the biological plane because it is expressed by the seriality of individuals within the species, and in the heterogeneity of the species among each other, is

surmounted in culture, which is based on the aptitude of man to perfect himself, '... a faculty which... remains with us, in the species as much as in the individual; and without which an animal is, after a few months, what it will be all its life, and a species, after a thousand years, what it was in the first year of the thousand' (Rousseau). [Lévi-Strauss 1963: 100-1]

The problem confronting Lévi-Strauss is how to account for this *seriality* and also for the *perfectibility* of man?

It is in Reason (which is located and which operates in what Lévi-Strauss calls the SAVAGE MIND,⁷ that one can find a solution to the problem of continuous and discontinuous and thereby one is able to account for *seriality* and a *transcending* of this seriality.

As if engaged in a dialogue with the phantom of Sartre, Lévi-Strauss has invoked Sartre's distinction between dialectical reason and analytical reason. He says,

In reading the *Critique* it is very difficult to avoid feeling that Sartre vacillates between two conceptions of dialectical reason. Sometimes he opposes dialectical and analytical reason as truth and error, if not as God and the devil, while at other times these two kinds of reason are apparently complementary, different routes to the same truths. The first conception not only discredits scientific knowledge and finally even leads to suggesting the impossibility of a science of biology, it also involves a curious paradox; for 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:

[Lévi- Strauss 1976:245]

[The question which Lévi-Strauss asks is that] how analytical reason could be applied to dialectical reason and claim to establish it, if the two are defined by mutually exclusive characteristics.

[Lévi- Strauss 1976: 246]

Sartre's endeavour to exalt dialectical reason to a supreme status, thus is imbued with contradictions, and it does not unfold the real principle of dialectical reason. Lévi-Strauss, however finds the real principle of dialectical reason in the functioning of the Savage Mind:

In my view, it is this intransigent refusal on the part of the savage mind to allow anything human (or even living) to remain alien to it, that the real principle of dialectical reason is to be found. [We may recall, that man begins by *identification* with all that is living, as he is guided by the capacity for *compassion*.]

[His focus on dialectical reason is seeking the answer to the question as] to what extent thought that can and will be both anecdotal and geometrical may yet be called dialectical [The need for this question arises from an empirical fact that], the savage mind totalizes.

[Lévi- Strauss 1976: 245]

Thus Lévi-Strauss recognizes the propensity of the mind to move to, a two-fold rhythm. One, which is guided by analytical reason, and which seeks to define, distinguish, classify and oppose (and resolve the human into non-human) and the other, which is guided by dialectical reason, and which seeks the invariants (of the human) beyond empirical diversity, based on the ability of man to perfect himself.

As Lévi-Strauss sees it, dialectical reason cannot be divorced completely from analytical reasons:

I do not regard dialectical reason as *something other than* analytical reason, upon which the absolute originality of a human order would be based, but as *something additional* in analytical reason: the necessary condition for it to venture to undertake the resolution of the human into non- human.

[The fact that Lévi-Strauss regards dialectical reason to be something additional to analytical reason is further elucidated in the following remark] In my view dialectical reason is always constitutive: it is the bridge for ever extended and improved, which analytical reason throws out over an abyss; it is unable to see the further shore but it knows that it is there, even should it be constantly receding. 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.... I call the same reason (analytical reason) dialectic when it is roused to action, tensed by its efforts to transcend itself.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 246]

It is thus analytical reason which, when transformed and transcended, accounts for dialectical reason. The same idea may be put forward as follows: though Man 'identifies' with all living beings by virtue of the faculty of compassion, it is only when he strives to transform this primary identification into 'decreed' identification (by invoking culturally constructed differences) that he accomplishes a passage from Nature and Culture. Thus,

the role of dialectical reason is to put the human services in possession of a reality with which it alone can furnish them, but the properly scientific work consists in decomposing and then recomposing on a different plane. [Lévi-Strauss 1976:259]

This means that dialectical reason consists in furnishing a reality of man by the mechanism of transformation, however it also needs to keep sight of the analytical reason, which pushes the mind to perceive a seriality: each series constitutes a level and on which associations guided by *logic* are realized. (This amounts to *classification* on each of these levels).

The essential connection between dialectical and analytical reason as entailing a passage from Nature to Culture, according to Lévi-Strauss is, epitomized in language. Further, this connection is timeless and characterizes *invariance*, as it is not to be located in a constitutive dialectics of individual *praxis* i.e. it denies history:

... language does not consist in the analytical reason of the old style grammarians nor in the dialectic constituted by structural linguistics nor in the constitutive dialectic of the individual *praxis* facing the practico-inert, since all these three presuppose it. Linguistics thus presents us with a dialectical and totalizing entity but one outside (or beneath) consciousness and will. Language an unreflecting totalization, is human reason which has its reasons and of which man knows nothing. [Lévi-Strauss 1976:252]

Lévi-Strauss thus strives to resolve the problem between continuous and discontinuous by invoking the interplay between Savage Mind and Reason, which can be regarded as the most fundamental concern because beyond that man knows nothing.

* *SAVAGE MIND*: By 'Savage Mind' Lévi-Strauss refers neither to,

the mind of savages nor that of primitive or archaic humanity, but rather mind in its untamed state as distinct from mind cultivated or domesticated for the purpose of yielding a return.

According to Lévi-Strauss, the Savage Mind ,

has appeared at certain points of the globe and at certain moments in history,
 [where the so called Savages remained in their natural state without being domesticated by agriculture].
 [But the Savage Mind is not synonymous with 'savage' or 'primitive', for even today, one can specify certain] zones in which savage thought, like savage species is relatively protected... This is the case of art, to which our civilization accords the status of a national park, with all the advantages and inconveniences attending so artificial a formula; and it is particularly the case of so many as yet 'uncleared' sectors of social life, where, through indifference or inability, and most often without our knowing why, primitive thought continues to flourish.,
 [Lévi-Strauss 1976: 219]

The Savage Mind can thus be a repository of what can be called Savage Thought. It is a thought which epitomizes the true potentiality of the Human Mind, because it is not contaminated by the demands of progress and by the interplay of ideologies of culture.

One can grasp this Savage Mind in the mind of a Child which constitutes,

that common capital of mental structures and of institutional schemata which are the initial resources at man's disposal in the launching of social enterprises
 [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 95]

In the Savage Thought man has before in a field rich in 'possibilities': it gives man an unlimited capacity for analysis and synthesis, which is required for defining relations with Nature on the one hand, and with the most General Other, on the other:

Every new born child comes equipped, in the form of adumbrated mental structures, with all the means ever available to mankind to define its relations to the world in general and its relations to others.
 [Lévi-Strauss 1969: 93]

Savage Thought thus offers unlimited capacities for Extension, because it enables man to define his relations with Nature and also with the General Other, in various ways. It offers analytical and dialectical reason an unlimited field for operation to 'analyze', 'synthesize' and 'transform'. These operations may be seen as occurring at two planes viz.

1. Nature - Culture
2. Particular - General

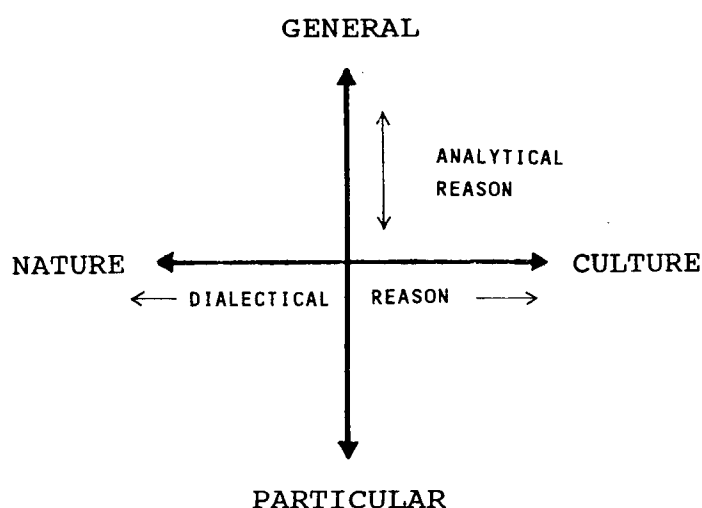


FIG. 15 THE FIELD OF OPERATION OF REASON

Savage Thought can, associate along these two dimensions indefinitely and thereby classify along these two planes by apprehending relations between series in a *successive* or a *simultaneous* fashion.

The reason, why Savage Thought is not present in all zones of life is because, each Culture, Society, and Epoch is faced with the problem of making choices, which are guided by *purposes which seek returns*.

Every new born child provides in embryonic form the sum total of possibilities, but each culture and period of history will retain and develop only a chosen few of them
[Lévi-Strauss 1969: 93]

11. The terms 'language' and 'code' have been used interchangeably by Lévi-Strauss to refer to art, myth, ritual, religion etc.

12. According to Lévi-Strauss any form of classification serves to preserve the richness and diversity of the facts; and the fact that everything is taken into account implies that 'the creation of a memory bank' [is facilitated]. [Lévi- Strauss 1976: 16] Preservation of facts, thus is an important consideration among those who are guided by 'concrete logic'.
13. Considering MYTH as a method amounts to examining it from the perspective of the associations of elements entailed in the Mythic Code.
14. 'Bricolage' has been defined by Lévi-Strauss as an activity on the *technical plane* which yields results parallel to those achieved by Myth on the *intellectual plane*

The 'agent' in the activity of 'Bricolage' is a *Bricoleur* who *bricolers*.

In its old sense the verb 'bricoler' applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding. it was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle. And in our own time the 'bricoleur' is still someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman.

[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 16-7]

As the translators note (17) explains, a *Bricoleur* is comparable to an 'odd job man' or handyman.

15. The Mythologist is a character, which has been invented as in a hypothetical situation, who is a counterpart of the Bricoleur. Otherwise, in Lévi-Strauss' world, the Mythologist is non-existent, as he strongly discounts MYTHS (and rites) as a result of

man's myth-making faculty [Lévi-Strauss 1976:16]

[He further says that], mythological analysis has not, and cannot have, as its aim to show how men think. [He claims] to show not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of it

[Lévi-Strauss 1970: 12]

In fact, Lévi-Strauss has completely disregarded the thinking subject in MYTHS.

16. Lévi-Strauss says that he is not concerned with accepting

overhasty pronouncements about what is mythology and what is not [Lévi-Strauss 1970:4] [For, as he says that the field of mythology is abounding with indeterminism due to chaotic interpretations] Myths are still widely interpreted in conflicting ways: as collective dreams, as the outcome of a kind of esthetic play, or as the basis of ritual. Mythological figures are considered personified abstractions, divinized heroes, or fallen gods. Whatever the hypothesis, the choice amounts to reducing mythology either to idle play or to a crude kind of philosophic speculation.
[Lévi-Strauss 1972: 207]

17. Myth is like language in as much as it can transcend articulate expression* (by virtue of its unconscious formulation), however it is like *articulate speech* which requires a time dimension to unfold itself.

But this relation to time is of a rather special nature: it is as if... mythology needed time only to deny it. [It is thus an] instrument for the obliteration of time
[Lévi-Strauss 1970: 1970: 15- 6]

**Articulation*, here would imply an initial level of articulation.

18. This schematic representation is based on a representation of MYTH given by Roland Barthes. (Barthes 1986: 115)
19. In order to understand more clearly, the analogy posited between *linguistic sign* and *sign as re-employed by MYTH*, let us consider the following remark:

Even at the babbling stage the phoneme group /pa/ can be heard. But the difference between /pa/ and /papa/ does not reside simply in reduplication: /pa/ is a noise, /papa/ is a word. The re-duplication indicates intent on the part of the speaker; it endows the second syllable with a function different from that which would have been performed by the first separately, or in the form of a potentially limitless series of identical sounds /papapapapapa/ by mere babbling. Therefore the second /pa/ is not a repetition of the first, nor has it the same signification. It is a sign, that, like itself, the first /pa/ too was a sign, and that as a pair they fall into the categories of signifiers, not of things signified.

[Lévi- Strauss 1970: 339-40].

Here we can compare the first /pa/ with the first term of first level of articulation and the second /papa/ with the last term of the first level of articulation.

20. To understand better the technique of *translation* and *transformation*, let us consider the following remark, which amply illustrates the transformation to which signs are subjected in the operation of the logic of the mind.

This logic works rather like a kaleidoscope, an instrument which also contains bits and pieces by means of which structural patterns are realized [The reference here is to the structure of the Mythic Code] The fragments are products of a process of breaking up and destroying, in itself a contingent matter, but they have to be homologous in various respects, such as size, brightness of colouring, transparency. They can no longer be considered entities in their own right in relation to the manufactured objects of whose 'discourse' they have become the indefinable debris, but they must be so considered from a different point of view if they are to participate usefully in the formation of a new type of entity: one consisting of patterns in which, through the play of mirrors, reflections are equivalent to real objects, that is, in which signs assume the status of things signified. These patterns actualize possibilities whose number, though it may be very great, is not unlimited, for it is a function of the possible lay-out and balances which may be effected between bodies whose number itself is finite. Finally, and most important, these patterns produced by the conjunction of contingent events.. and a law projects models of intelligibility
[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 36]

21. According to Lévi-Strauss,

the universe of information is part of an aspect of the natural world...[And when man treats] the sensible properties of the animal and plant kingdom as if they were elements of a message, [what man really does is discover] SIGNATURES - and so signs - in them.
[Lévi-Strauss 1976: 268-9]

CONCLUSION

Starting from 'A Demand For Difference' to 'Signatures: The Communication of Difference', we have indeed resolved the problem of the passage from Nature to Culture by locating the hinge of the transformation which is necessary to realize this passage in 'A Structure of Difference.' Also, along with Lévi-Strauss, we have traced this transformation, thereby resolving the problem posed by continuity and discontinuity which in turn are two modes of apprehending reality.

All along during the course of this exercise, we have remained faithful to an optic which has enabled us to view the afore lying landscape in a coherent and consistent manner. This optic, of course, is that of *difference*. In fact, a retrospective, even at this stage, of the exercise conducted so far, establishes the optic of difference as indispensable for making a thorough sense of the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who has more than anything else given anthropology its true subject viz. MAN.

At the outset it may seem contradictory that the work of a man who is concerned with the essence of Man, has been rendered by our endeavour understandable only when viewed from the optic of difference. However, just how important is this notion of difference is clearly brought out in the very conception of Man, who has no identity *except when related to an other*.

This is the central theme of the first chapter 'A Demand For Difference'. In this chapter we examine the perspective view by Lévi-Strauss on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who accordingly has been decorated as the 'Founder of the Sciences of Man' by Lévi-Strauss. In the thought of Rousseau, Lévi-Strauss find the clue to the question HOW DOES MAN BEGIN? This question of course has been posed in other forms: How was the triple passage (which is really one) from Nature to Culture, from Animality to Humanity and from Affectivity to Rationality accomplished?

Rousseau invokes the faculty of *compassion* which according to him can be held solely responsible for effecting this passage. Compassion, he believes, enables man to identify himself with all that is living even with the Others who are Naturally different from him. And this faculty itself operates at two planes: the Particular and the General. It enables Man to identify not only with any General Other, who is external to his Self, but it also enables him to identify with a Particular Other, who is internal to his Self, and who listens to him when he confesses and with whom he can engage in a dialogue.

It is a *primary identification* which results from this faculty of compassion, in a Particular Man, in the state of Nature. However, this primary identification is confronted with an inevitable stage arising from demographic expansion wherein primary identification has to cope with a multiplicity of Others. Also, when Others around a Particular Man multiply, he is faced with greater risks for his existence and he is confronted with a collectivity which can almost 'swallow-up' his identity. To cope with these developments accompanying the emergence of Society, he has to enter into relations with others. However, he is cautious not to dissolve his identity in Society. This means that he has to learn *how* to differentiate himself from the Others around him.

Thus, in a state of Society which is necessary for Culture, 'the Self and the Other', the 'Individual and Social', and 'the Particular and the General' are all identifiable in a relation which exists between each of them and which now is *marked* as a *relation of difference*. Of course, even in Nature, the relations between 'the Self and the Other' and 'Particular and General' were based on difference, which thereby is *immanent*, but as we can observe, Society by coming into existence, demands a conscious marking and creation of differences, so that it is here that the true passage from Nature to Culture can be perceived.

Man begins in a state of Nature by identifying with differences whereas in a state of Culture he differentiates in order to identify. His capacity for extension from a Particular to a General level is guided by a conception of reality which is total and continuous in a state of Nature: he can emotively identify himself even with animals; however in a state of Culture, his identity is no longer confounded with animals, but he can conceive of himself as essentially different from animals, as the existing reality is discontinuous in as much as it differentiates and opposes e.g. Man and Animal, and further which is continuous in as much as it can co-relate these differences. Reason overpowers Emotion in a state of Culture.

Rousseau conceives the passage from Nature to Culture as logically culminating in the origin of *Language*. Language, for him re-produces humanity 'in its way' and 'on its plane'. In a primary state, it entails identification between images and conceptions, between what is sensible and what is intelligible, as expressed in figurative language which comprises poetry. However, Language also entails a binary opposition of distinctive units

of the phoneme, and then co-relates them. In this way Language also proceeds by creating discontinuities in the continuum of audible sounds, and then co-relating them in pairs of binary oppositions: at this higher level of organization, Language comprises of words which have lost their primary signifying power, and can be regarded only as Signs.

Language thereby, constitutes discrete entities which have the power to signify - that which is the bed rock of Culture i.e. a *difference* between Men.

In the first chapter then, we have invoked Lévi- Strauss' perspective view on Jean-Jacques Rousseau and established that for Man to exist, at a Particular and Individual level or at a General and Social level, it is essential to recognize A Demand For Difference, which is produced in a state of Society and re-produced in the organization and function of Language.

The second chapter is entitled 'A Structure of Difference'. In this chapter we try to locate the hinge of the transformation which is necessary to realize the passage from Nature to Culture. And this is localized in the *structure* of the human mind.

However, we have attempted to arrive at this conclusion in a manner which strives to keep the *social* concern at the centre of affairs. We can say that in a way, this concern with the Social is important so as not to posit a break between Nature and Culture. For if we concede that the structure of the

mind can be regarded as a consequence of Nature, then it is only by rendering the social concern as playing on the mind, that we can account for a transformation between Nature and Culture.

In the previous section we have explained the important role played by Language by virtue of its organization - by which we mean structure - and function, in reproducing the passage from Nature to Culture, at a much higher level of organization than the Social. Language thus, by employing co-relations and oppositions reflects the structuring ability of the mind. Linguistic structure then is the culmination of the structuring ability of the mind at the highest level of logical abstraction i.e. at the level of binary oppositions and co-relations, and it comprises of sounds related in a binary opposition, which group together to constitute *distinctive units*, which in turn are grouped to constitute phonemes (*terms* of the linguistic structure). These phonemes further relate with each other into *sentences*, which in turn are grouped into a *system* of Language. The linguistic structure is realized with a consequent opposition and co-relation of entities in the Language system.

Language then has reproduced a passage from Nature to Culture on its own plane by rigorously applying binary logic. However, as we have already said, the Social concern is always at the centre of our discussion, for after all it is the coming into being of Society which triggered off a passage from Nature to Culture by rendering the need to differentiate almost imperative. Thus when the rigorous logic of the linguistic, hence the mental structure, is apprehended socially, we find that the entities which are opposed and co-related are *real social beings* i.e. existing men and women. Thus in apprehending the linguistic structure on the social plane, what we really have to do is, to find out how these real men and women are co-related and opposed in social situations. and whether the mode of these oppositions and

co-relations are the same in Nature and Culture. Further if these are different, we have to ask why and also how they are different.

In trying to answer these questions, we find ourselves seeking the Social in Man and we are able to locate the Social in Man in his sexual life, which is the only natural instinct requiring a stimulation of an Other, and further the fulfilment of which can be deferred. Now what is the mode of opposition and co-relation in Man's sexual life as it is given in Nature? The answer to this question is that the only opposition is between biological sexes. These can be co-related without any intervention or determination in order to procreate: their co-relation is arbitrary and guided by *chance*. And this mode is oblivious to the fact of the existence of Society because it precludes the need for order, organization and instituted differences between sexes. Combination and co-relation of sexes are guided by only one norm i.e. the natural difference between them, which allows them to combine. Thus the Social in Man, which given naturally, follows a principle of indetermination and confusion.

The picture changes considerably when Society makes its presence felt by its sheer ambience. It is then no longer possible for the individual to lead an isolated existence. He has to enter into relations with others. He has to follow the dictates of the Social demand for difference. He has to create differences, which have a bearing on his sexual life. In Nature, he was only aware of one difference i.e. between the sexes; but in Culture, this fundamental difference has to acquire almost global dimensions, since he is a part of a global organization (which implicates the plane of the General). In the sexual life then, Culture almost imposes *alliance* on Man, because it is only alliance, which enables Man to cope up with his instinctive Nature and the demand of Culture.

Alliance, which leads to the fact of *marriage* necessarily entails a difference: (i) between the sexes and (ii) between the partners of alliance, which means that Culture necessitates a *rival*. Alliance can be seen as a function of the principle of reciprocity and as guided by a need to exchange. The exchange which operates in Culture, strives to create the necessary conditions for the Society to exist for posterity; hence it widens its network by operating in a manner which has a bearing on the future generations: the perspective of alliance strives to account for a retrospective existence of Society and a prospective of existence of Society.

The combinatory operations in Culture are thus guided by alliance and by the necessity of *exchange*. At the level of the individual, alliance is confronted in the form of the *incest prohibition*, which forces the individual to abstain from contracting marriage within his family: his family members are categorically classed as '*prohibited degrees*'; and at the level of the Society or groups of individuals, alliance is confronted in the form of *rule of exogamy*, which defines the class of individuals with whom it is possible to contract marriage. Alliance, thus defines *relations* and *classes*.

As we have said, alliance has to account not only for society in the present but also for Society in the future, therefore it renders every marriage contracted between individuals or classes of individuals as only one 'part' of a 'whole' mechanism which has to continue till posterity. And the best way of achieving this, it finds in *mutually relating* the partners of an alliance in relations entailing obligations and rights: the exchange contracted in one marriage marks the participants as bearing *signs of creditors* or *debtors* which have to be accounted for in a future generation. Marriage thus becomes a part of a worldwide system of reciprocity, for it entails the exchange of valuable commodities called 'women' and which is founded upon differences

between sexes on the one hand and between creditors and debtors on the others. Nature thus co-relates and opposes the difference between sexes, whereas Culture co-relates and opposes the difference between men who are creditors and debtors and women who are gained in marriage and women who are given in marriage. The reason for this is that, Nature acknowledges the use-value of the difference between sexes, where Culture only acknowledges the exchange value of the difference between sexes, and it acknowledge the difference between participants in the exchange.

This difference in the mode of operation between Nature and Culture entails in Culture the existence of groups of men or classes of men who are related in a *system of attitudes* (of creditors debtors and partners in reciprocal exchange), which is based on differences on the Social plane.

The system of attitudes has the capacity of being projected on the *structural* plane: kinship is reduced to a structural phenomena, and the system of attitudes is reduced to a *structure of difference*.

In this way, by keeping the Social at the centre of our concerns, we are able to relate Social and Structural phenomena which are founded on difference. Also we are able to discern certain operational comparabilities between Language and Kinship, which renders the structure of language as important for locating the passage between Nature and Culture.

Having examined the structure of language as necessary to re-produce the passage from Nature to Culture, we focus our attention on the function of language and its significance in reproducing Culture on its plane. This function we specify as being that of *communication*. The central concern now shifts to an exploration of the *mechanisms* through which language is able to communicate. This in fact is the fundamental theme of the third chapter: 'Signatures: The Communication of Difference'.

In order to explore the mechanisms through which language is able to communicate, we invoke the ideas of Saussure, who played an instrumental role in the founding of the *object* of Language which is a SIGN. Language thus communicates with the help of signs, which mediate between a *concrete* image and an *intelligible concept*. Now this we recall is the function of Language in Culture. Language thereby organizes itself rigorously: it is able to combine qualities given in Nature and make them intelligible as properties which can be signified.

Comparabilities between Language and Culture exist not only at operational levels but also at *substantive* levels. This means that Culture communicates analogous to Language, using its own *codes*. The code with which we are concerned is the MYTH. The peculiarity of this code vis-a-vis Language is that it *re-employs* the elements which are used in Language: the meaning which is contrived by Language (which we refer to as the *primary* code) at the 'first level of articulation' is translated by the mythic code (the *secondary code*) on the 'second level of articulation'. Hence, the signs of language acquire a new significance in the mythic code, and they can be *translated* by this code to convey a desired significance.

The fundamental classification between the Self and the Other in Nature is conceived of as having the potential to classify the most Particular individual and so also the most General groups of individuals. Classification, at the outset, then entails different *levels* of classification, which have to communicate with each other (starting initially with an exchange of women). The communication between these various levels of classification is conducted by myth: the communication uses *something which stands for 'something', which has already replaced someone* (given the fact that a Sign can be defined as 'something which replaces someone').

This 'something' obviously is a concrete entity which by the functioning of myth, has been rendered representable even by a most abstract notion, for myth surpasses even Language as far as the level of organization is concerned; it is at a level higher than that of Language.

Culture as we have said communicates, which means that Language and Culture constitute two different aspects of systems which can account for communication and these are *systems of meaning*. In these systems of meaning, facts of culture have a *significance*, which in time has a bearing on the totality (hence the notion of the *Total Social Fact*) which is Society. Thus, what seems to be an exchange of women in Culture has a significance much beyond the context in which it takes place.

A woman who is exchanged stands for her person and her value, but the total conception of the exchange renders woman as merely a sign of an attitude. This is the attitude deriving from a conception of woman as an *other* (sex) who has to be exchanged. (This is almost equivalent to the manner in

which one exchanges words or goods or services.) Woman thus is the sign of an attitude of Culture which recognizes a difference and an *otherness*.

Being a Sign herself, woman is a potential victim of the mythic code, which can represent her as an abstract category whether it is a number, a colour, an object, or even a name!

Further in the form of 'any form' she is liable to stand for either individuals or groups of individuals, for, individuals in Culture, we know seek to *mark their differences* and what better way is there to mark one's identity other than by employing these SIGNATURES.

SIGNATURES, then serve to communicate a message - and this message is of DIFFERENCE - because Culture institutes differences by concrete or abstract markers, which are fabricated by the *mythic code*.

Our special attention is directed at the manner in which advertisements project woman as one of the SIGNATURES standing for objects: cycles, scooters, shirts, sarees, razor blades, soaps, 'vanaspatis' and even trade-marks such as *Garden* or *Bombay Dyeing*.

The outstanding feature of SIGNATURES is that they allow a *translation* and *substitution* of one object by an other object, of a concrete entity by an abstraction, and the 'victim' par excellence is the *second-sex*, as she, before being a sign is a generator of signs.

This special attention accorded to the generator of signs should in no way be regarded as the culmination of this exercise. For the very notion of SIGNATURES enables one to view it as standing for something valuable, something that has not use value, but exchange value and as a consequence, it accounts for the *accumulation of exchange values arising from a need to differentiate* (in order to mark an identity) so that the notion of SIGNATURES strives to logically culminate in the global institution of POTLATCH, striving to accumulate symbolic capital, as we see in the case of the Earth Summit (why not)!

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