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Central Problems in Social
Theory. Mac Millan.
Press. London 1983

8 Central Problems in Social Theory

part of the bargain have been prepared to relinquish the structural properties of social systems to the sociologists. But this kind of separation has no rational justification with the recovery of temporality as integral to social theory: history and sociology become methodologically indistinguishable.

'Sociology', as I have remarked elsewhere, is not an innocent term.⁷ It is one closely identified, in its origins and current use, with the threefold set of associations I indicate in the concluding paper: naturalism, functionalism and the theory of industrial society. The term sociology is today so widely in use that it would be merely obstructive to attempt to drop it altogether. I have continued to use it in *New Rules of Sociological Method*, and in this book, to refer in a general way to the study of the institutions of the industrialised societies. But this differentiation from the other social sciences is at best a convenient inconvenience, and since many of the arguments I develop apply to all of them, I have often used the term 'social science' in a generic fashion.

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Structuralism and the Theory of the Subject

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'Functionalism' and 'structuralism' have been perhaps the leading broad intellectual traditions in social theory over the past thirty or forty years. Both terms have long since lost any precise meaning, but it is possible none the less to identify a number of core notions which each invokes. Functionalism and structuralism in some part share similar origins, and have important features in common. The lineage of both can be traced back to Durkheim, as refracted in the former instance through the work of Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski, and in the latter through that of Saussure and Mauss.¹ Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski reacted against speculative, evolutionary anthropology; Saussure against not too dissimilar notions held by his predecessors, the neo-grammarians. Each of these three authors came to place a stress upon synchrony, separating the synchronic from the diachronic. Each came to accentuate the importance of the 'system', social and linguistic, as contrasted with the elements which compose it. But from then on the characteristic emphases diverge. In functionalism, the guiding model of 'system' is usually that of the organism, and functionalist authors have consistently looked to biology as a conceptual bank to be plundered for their own ends. In the work of Saussure, of course, and subsequently in that of the Prague circle, structuralism began as an approach to linguistics; in the form of social theory, however, structuralism may be most cogently defined as the application of linguistic models influenced by structural linguistics to the explication of social and cultural phenomena.²

The contrast has been a consequential one for the development of social theory in the Anglo-Saxon world as compared with that in France: I shall attempt to indicate some of the more significant

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divergences in what follows. I shall not be concerned with an overall appraisal of structuralism – which after all, if interpreted broadly, brings to mind the contributions of a dazzling variety of different authors, including Barthes, Foucault, Althusser, Lacan, Piaget, Greimas, etc. – and shall confine my attention strictly to a limited number of issues raised by the following: Saussure's linguistic theory; Lévi-Strauss's account of myth; and the 'critique of the sign' at the hands of those who have sought to develop a novel theory of structuration (Derrida, Kristeva).

Several of the themes I propose to raise in this paper are not discussed here in the degree which they warrant, because they are further analysed or exemplified in subsequent papers in this book. My discussion is partial and selective, because I want to use this paper in conjunction with previously published critiques of hermeneutics and action philosophy on the one hand, and of functionalism' on the other, and because it is intended as a preface to the papers which comprise the bulk of the book. Moreover, until right at the end of this paper, I shall be concerned mainly with critical analysis, rather than singling out the virtues of structuralist thought.

Saussure: structural linguistics

Of the various doctrines of Saussure, those most central to later developments in structuralism and semiology are: the distinction of *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech); the arbitrary character of the sign; the notion of difference; the constitution of the sign through the conjunction of signifier and signified; and the separation of synchrony and diachrony. These have become so familiar that they require only a schematic commentary.

Saussure did not use the term 'structure', the latter having been introduced into continental linguistics by Trubetskoy; Saussure preferred 'system'. The systematic character of *langue*, for Saussure, is the chief factor distinguishing it from *parole*, from the spoken or written word. The separation of *langue* from *parole*, Saussure held, differentiates both 'what is social from what is individual', and 'what is essential from what is accessory and more or less accidental'.⁴ Language is a social institution, and as such is not a creation of the individual speaker: the speaker 'passively

assimilates', as Saussure puts it, the pre-existing forms that language assumes. By contrast to *langue*, *parole* is a 'heterogeneous mass' of disparate events. The vocal apparatus has become the principal instrument of language among human beings, but this has no bearing upon the most integral characteristics of *langue*: these characteristics derive from the human faculty of grasping and ordering a system of signs. Such a faculty is not confined to language, since signs can be other than linguistic: hence Saussure envisaged the possibility of a general science of signs, or semiology, of which linguistics would be one branch.⁵

The arbitrary nature of linguistic signs, and their constitution through difference, are the chief notions by means of which Saussure attempted to explicate *langue* as system. Each notion places an emphasis upon form at the expense of content, or more accurately expressed, upon the relational rather than the substantive. Saussure pointed to the arbitrary character of the sign in two ways. One was simply by comparing words across languages: although they have a similar meaning, the sounds expressed in the pronunciation of 'ox' in English and 'boeuf' in French share nothing in common with one another. In this sense, the arbitrariness of the sign 'is proved . . . by the very existence of different languages'.⁶ But this is secondary to the demonstration that the sounds which form words in a language have no intrinsic connection with the physical objects that they designate: the utterance 'tree' is no more or less appropriate to a tree as an object than 'arbre' is. In view of the controversy that Saussure's assertion of the arbitrary quality of the sign – which he took to be 'indisputable' – has provoked, it is perhaps worth observing that he qualified it in various ways. Signs are not arbitrary, of course, as he was careful to emphasise, in respect of the individual speaker. Quite the reverse; the speaker has no choice but to follow what is already established in the language. Saussure also distinguished what he called 'radically arbitrary' from 'relatively arbitrary' signs: the latter are second-order words, constructed from the first. 'Neuf' is radically arbitrary, but 'dix-neuf' is only relatively so, since it is a composite term.

The principle of relative arbitrariness clearly only affects the internal composition of language; language as a whole is 'radically arbitrary' in relation to the object-world. It follows from this that the terms of language can only be defined *sui generis*: terms only require identity or continuity in so far as they are differentiated

from one another as oppositions or differences within the totality that is *langue*. Saussure's famous 'Geneva-to-Paris train' example is worth quoting here because, as I shall indicate further later on, it bears a definite similarity to issues that Anglo-Saxon philosophers have discussed in the context of the philosophy of action. We say that the 'same' Geneva-to-Paris train leaves Geneva every day at 8.25 p.m., even if from one day to another the engine, coaches and personnel are different. What gives the train its identity, Saussure argued, is the ways in which it is differentiated from other trains: its time of departure, route, etc. Similarly in language the identity of linguistic units, whether these be vocalisations or written terms, depends upon the differences or oppositions that separate them from one another, not upon their intrinsic content. A 't', for example, may be written in various different ways; its identity is preserved not by a unity of substance but by its demarcation from other letters. Exactly the same applies to the sounds that comprise linguistic utterances. The idea of difference, as Saussure formulates it, thus completes the insulation of *langue* as a self-contained system: the 'value' of the components of language derive solely from the demarcations drawn between them. 'In language', according to Saussure, 'there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms.'⁷

The constitution of identity negatively through difference applies to each of the two aspects of linguistic signs, signifier and signified. But their combination in the sign transforms the negative into the positive. The only positive feature that language possesses – but it is a very fundamental one – is the articulation of signifiers and signifieds in the process of speaking or writing. Language, for Saussure, is basically a vocal/auditory system on the level of the signifier, but in both utterances and in writing, the connections between signifiers and signifieds are organised in terms of linear sequences, unfolding in time. Although Saussure sometimes proceeded as though each signifier has a definite signified, a concept or 'idea', attached to it, he also made it plain that this is a misleading way of representing the association between the two. Such a view would imply that concepts were formed prior to and independently of the terms used to express them. The relation between signifier and signified is much more intimate than this; without being articu-

lated via the values created by phonological difference, thought would be just an inchoate flux. Linguistic signs only come into being through the mutual connection of signifiers and signifieds in the temporal conjunctions effected in speaking and hearing, reading and writing.

Time is thus not, as is sometimes suggested, absent from Saussurian linguistics. The fact that Saussure made the serial or linear character of signifiers basic to all language, and related this to a continuity of signifieds which meet at definite points of articulation, means that his view is not as distant as might appear from those later developed by Lacan and Derrida. Saussure did not so much eliminate time from his theory, as distinguish radically between two forms of temporality: that which is involved in the syntagmatic order of language, and thus is the very condition of synchrony, and that which is involved in the evolution of features of *langue*. In the first sense, time is integral to Saussure's understanding of the systematic character of language, because it is vital to the notion of 'system' here that the whole is only available in its particular articulations. This notion is quite distinct from the conception of the whole that pertains in functionalism in social theory, based on the analogy of organic or mechanical systems. None the less, Saussure did accentuate strongly the independence of synchrony from diachrony. The distinction between the synchronic and diachronic viewpoints, according to him, 'is absolute and allows no compromise'; the diachronic perspective concerns phenomena 'that are unrelated to systems although they do condition them'.⁸ To study the states of a system we must abstract completely from changes in its elements. This is related back to the distinction of *langue* and *parole*. Only synchrony allows us to grasp the nature of *langue*.⁹ Diachrony operates on the level of the event, of the modifications in language brought about through speaking.

Limitations of Saussure's views

The critical evaluation of Saussure's views has a dual interest: as linguistic theory in itself, and as a model of language that has served to shape some characteristic perspectives of structuralism – although, of course, various of Saussure's ideas were rejected by the Prague group and by Lévi-Strauss. The critical reception of

diachrony, or statics and dynamics: they have normally advanced this solely as a methodological division, and are not vulnerable to the criticism that societies are constantly undergoing processes of change. The real point concerns whether it is justified to claim that a linguistic system or a social system can be studied in abstraction from change, while at the same time the nature of that system can be adequately grasped. And this claim is not, in fact, one which can be sustained. The recursive character of language – and, by generalisation, of social systems also – cannot be understood unless we also understand that the means whereby such systems are reproduced, and thus exist as systems, contain within them the seeds of change. 'Rule-governed creativity' is not merely (as Chomsky's linguistics suggests) the employment of fixed, given rules whereby new sentences are generated; *it is at the same time the medium whereby those rules are reproduced and hence in principle modified.*

Treated as the *duality of structure*, I shall be returning to this notion on numerous occasions throughout this book. It will be one of my main claims that both structuralist and functionalist theories characteristically lack a conception of the duality of structure; and that, as regards the former of these, this is in some part traceable to the general influence of Saussure.

Lévi-Strauss: structural anthropology

In the writings of Lévi-Strauss, structuralism and functionalism are in some part reunited. One of the major sources which Lévi-Strauss has drawn upon is the work of Durkheim¹⁷ and, to a lesser extent, that of Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski. But he has only done so in a highly critical vein, and is indebted to a wide range of other thinkers also. Besides the very general influence of Rousseau, Marx and Freud, the most important writers in the evolution of Lévi-Strauss's thought have been Saussure, Trubetskoy and Jakobson. The work of the latter two authors is the avenue through which Lévi-Strauss has approached the ideas of Saussure, and he accepts basic elements in their critical assessment of their predecessor. Nevertheless a number of Saussurian themes are prominent in Lévi-Strauss's writings, albeit often in considerably modified form. These include the following: the priority of the collective and

universal over the individual and contingent; an emphasis on the relational at the expense of the isolated unit; and acceptance of the application of the sign to non-linguistic phenomena: that is, the programme of semiology. The implication of the latter point, as construed by Lévi-Strauss, is not just that concepts employed by linguistics can be applied to the study of social and cultural phenomena; but that these are 'phenomena whose inmost nature is the same as that of language'.¹⁸

Lévi-Strauss's writings divide into various main areas in terms of their subject-matter: the study of kinship systems, the earliest of his preoccupations; the theory of primitive classification and totemism; and the analysis of the logic of myth. Of these I shall touch here only on the latter, which in its content is generally recognised to be the most persuasive sector of Lévi-Strauss's work, and one in which the theoretical precepts of his approach are developed in their most sophisticated fashion. Three such precepts are particularly relevant to the general impact of Lévi-Strauss's thought on the social sciences and philosophy: his understanding of the notion of 'structure' itself, his conception of the unconscious, and his approach to history.

Structures, for Lévi-Strauss, involve models posited by the anthropological observer. They are not representations of social activity or ideas, but are a mode of delving below the surface phenomena of social life to discover underlying relations whereby it is ordered, in a similar way to that in which combinatory elements are uncovered in linguistics. Lévi-Strauss early on fashioned his approach after the so-called 'phonological revolution' in linguistic theory, according to which elements of culture can be treated as analogous to phonemes, whose significance can only be grasped in their mutual relations. Structures: (a) consist of interconnected elements, 'none of which can undergo changes without effecting changes in all the other elements'; in other words, they are systems; (b) involve transformations, whereby equivalences in divergent materials can be explicated; (c) make possible the prediction of how modifications in one element will alter the model as a whole.¹⁹ Lévi-Strauss has been sensitive to the charge of formalism which attended Saussure's idea of difference, and accepts the gist of Benveniste's critique of the arbitrary nature of the sign. The aim of structuralist analysis is to recover the content of 'intelligible reality'; 'content and form', he argues, 'are not separate entities, but com-

plementary points of view essential for the deep understanding of one and the same object of study'.²⁰ In specific contrast to the formalism of Propp, Lévi-Strauss holds that structures cannot be defined independently of their content, for the perception of structure is at the same time the identification of content. For Lévi-Strauss, this is a point with broad implications, which among other things distance him from positivism; scientific knowledge is not induced from sensory observations, but involves the construction of schemes whereby those observations are rendered intelligible.

Lévi-Strauss has frequently offered qualifications to the applicability of structural models. It is 'patently absurd', he says, to suppose that the structuralist method can achieve 'an exhaustive knowledge of societies',²¹ even of those which are 'cold' or relatively immobile. He has often described his work as 'tentative' and as an 'initial statement', and has kept his reserve in the face of the more expansive claims that have been made for structuralism as a philosophy or as a 'new conception of the world'.²² While he has disavowed the terms 'method' or 'philosophy', he has been prepared to endorse that of epistemology as an accurate designation of his concerns.²³ This no doubt reflects both his conviction that 'socio-logic' has to be made the basis of sociology and anthropology, and his absorption with the unconscious as the source of signification. The chief object of Lévi-Strauss's work is to identify what he variously calls 'unconscious psychological structures' or the 'unconscious teleology of mind' that underlie human social institutions. Although he bows in the direction of Freud, it seems evident enough that Lévi-Strauss's unconscious is not Freud's unconscious, and owes more to Trubetskoy and Jakobson than to Freud. The unconscious, for Lévi-Strauss, is the source of the basic structuring principles that govern language; language, as Lévi-Strauss puts it, 'is human reason, which has its reasons . . . of which man knows nothing'. ('Totalisation non réflexive, la langue est une raison humaine qui a ses raisons, et que l'homme ne connaît pas.') The study of the unconscious, which reflects basic operations in the structure of the brain, reveals the mechanisms of signification that lie beneath the conscious activity of the human subject. This 'Kantianism without a transcendental subject' does not so much – as later authors have tried to do – offer a theory of the origins of human subjectivity, as place an *epoché* upon the subject so far as anthropology is concerned.

Lévi-Strauss's views on the relation between structural analysis and history are complex and occasionally quite obscure. But the main thesis he seeks to advance is forcibly and bluntly put. History, understood as the attempt to describe or account for occurrences in time, does not enjoy the epistemological primacy often accorded to it: historical analysis is only one code among other codes, based on the interpretative mode expressing the contrast of 'before' and 'after', or 'preceding' and 'succeeding'. The concluding section of *La pensée sauvage* takes Sartre's writings as a leading example of a general tendency in Western thought to accord a dominant role to historical consciousness. 'Sartre', Lévi-Strauss remarks, 'is certainly not the only contemporary philosopher to have valued history above the other human sciences and formed an almost mystical conception of it.'²⁴ History, in the sense of the succession of events, is not the primary medium through which human experience is organised, nor is historical understanding the form in which the most basic elements of social life can be disclosed.²⁵ Lévi-Strauss brackets history, in each of the senses of the term (temporal occurrence, and accounts of such occurrence), in much the same way as he does the thinking and acting subject: in order, as he sees it, to penetrate more deeply to the foundations of human experience, especially as expressed in those societies which have 'an obstinate fidelity to the past conceived as a timeless model, rather than a stage in the historical process'.²⁶

Myths, 'machines for the suppression of time', are peculiarly apposite objects of study to this end. In comparing the structure of myth with a musical score, Lévi-Strauss intends much more than just an analogy. An orchestral score 'suppresses' time by encapsulating it within a sphere that makes possible an indefinite number of actual performances. It would be inaccurate to say that music is pure form, since Lévi-Strauss does not recognise the possibility of such a phenomenon; but the structuring principles of music express properties of mind that are prior to the organisation of thought or activity in words. The temporal dimension of music, as of myth, is what Lévi-Strauss sometimes calls 'reversible' or 'non-cumulative', in contrast to the 'statistical' or 'cumulative' character of historical time. Music and myth express *langue*, or the unconscious, in its most accessible form. Both music and myth, when considered as 'narratives' – as actually played or told – operate through the connection of two orders of relation, horizontally and vertically. Both combine

what Saussure called the syntagmatic and the associative; or, more broadly, Jakobson's metonymic and metaphoric dimensions.

Only a few further elements in Lévi-Strauss's discussions of myth are worth mentioning here. There are some variations between his earlier and later treatments of myth, but the overall themes are quite consistent. The principle of binary opposition as the origin of structures is both held to in Lévi-Strauss's earlier studies of myth, and defended throughout *Mythologiques*. In these latter volumes, Lévi-Strauss clarifies why myths cannot be studied in isolation: each myth is a sign rather than a complete order of signification. In decoding myths we have to proceed by means of a 'spiral movement', whereby each myth is used to provide clues for elucidating the structure of another, and so on. Binary opposition is used both as a way of identifying the structural components of myth, and at the same time as a mode of confirming the structural analysis in the 'spiralling' technique: an initial structural axis is identified, and substantiated by the disclosure of another axis to which it itself is in opposition. The antimony between nature and culture is the central opposition that Lévi-Strauss discusses throughout his work. But it is a crucial part of Lévi-Strauss's theory that this antimony is itself cultural, and is thus represented quite differently in divergent cultures.²⁴

Lévi-Strauss: structure and subjectivity

When contrasted to functionalism as developed in modern American sociology, Lévi-Strauss's work brings into clear focus the dual influence of Durkheim in the social sciences. Each has elaborated one thread of the Durkheimian theorem of the superiority of society over the individual. But whereas the functionalists have concentrated upon practical activity, Lévi-Strauss concentrates on cognition; and while functionalism, especially as worked out by Parsons, has developed the theme of society as moral consensus, Lévi-Strauss has drawn primarily upon Durkheim's 'sociological Kantianism'. For each, society 'has its reasons of which its members know little'. In the case of functionalism, these are the imperatives of societal co-ordination, the imperatives of normative order; for Lévi-Strauss they are the organising mechanisms of the unconscious.

The *langue/parole*, or code/message, distinctions have had no impact on the development of functionalism, although functionalist thought has not altogether lacked contact with linguistics more generally (as in the work of Malinowski). Since these distinctions have been very important to the notion of 'structure' that has evolved within structuralism, it is not surprising that the term has been employed quite differently by modern functionalists. For the latter, structure is basically a descriptive term, employed by analogy with anatomy as equivalent to something like 'fixed pattern'. Structure here has no connection with movement whatsoever: it is an arrangement of dry bones that are only made to rattle at all by the conjoining of structure with function. Function is the explanatory concept, the means whereby part is related to whole. The counter-part to the functionalists' structure/function division in Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is the differentiation of structure and event; structure plays an explanatory role only because it is linked to the idea of transformations.

Neither the functionalists nor Lévi-Strauss clearly distinguish structure from system, and it could be said that one or other of these notions is redundant to both schools of thought. There is no 'anatomy' in social life apart from its 'physiology': hence in functionalism structure and system become interchangeable terms.²⁵ It is apparent from the definition of structure quoted earlier that something similar is true of Lévi-Strauss's usage: apart from the notion of transformations, each of the other elements referred to are simply characteristics of systems. I shall want to argue later in the book, although not in this paper, that a distinction between structure and system is highly important to social theory.

Lévi-Strauss's writings have met with a critical reception at the hands of British and American anthropologists (especially those inclined to functionalism), many of whom regard the empirical support for his claims as less than completely convincing. I shall not be concerned with this type of criticism here, although there is no doubt that to some extent it stems from a positivist reading of Lévi-Strauss, which misunderstands the method he seeks to apply. I shall want to consider only certain conceptual limitations of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism — limitations which he in some part admits, but which stem from more than the restrictions he places upon structural analysis. The relevant issues can be dealt with quite briefly.

1. The first concerns Lévi-Strauss's treatment of the structuring properties of the unconscious. I want to argue that the same gap between the unconscious properties of mind and the conscious, purposive activity of human subjects appears in Lévi-Strauss as intervenes between *langue* and *parole* in Saussure; and that this is at the origin of a primary source of difficulty in Lévi-Strauss's structuralism. In the final volume of *Mythologiques (L'Homme nu)*, Lévi-Strauss specifically confronts charges that he eliminates the conscious self-understandings of social actors from structural analysis. While recording again his rejection of those versions of the subject found in existentialist phenomenology (in existentialism, 'contemporary man becomes enclosed in a self-enclosed tête-à-tête, and falls down in ecstasy before himself'),²⁰ Lévi-Strauss affirms that his exclusion of reflexivity is only a methodological bracketing.

One must admit [he writes] that only subjects speak, and that every myth ultimately has its origin in an individual creation. This is undoubtedly true, but in order to move to the level of myth, it is necessary precisely that a creation does not remain individual; and that in the course of this transition it essentially discards those features with which it was contingently marked at the outset, and which can be attributed to the temperament, talent, imagination, and personal experience of the author.²¹

Could there be a clearer restatement, however, of the Saussurian contrast of *langue* and *parole*, transferred to a social context? The activity of human subjects is 'individual' and 'contingent', as compared to the supra-individual character of the collective, represented by myth. The logical chasm which separates the 'individual' from the 'social' is as great as it ever was for Durkheim or Saussure.

I wish to claim that this inadequacy is one which marks structuralist thought from Saussure onwards, and which is closely connected to the lack of a conception of the duality of structure. Structuralist thought has no mode of coping with what I shall call *practical consciousness* – non-discursive, but not unconscious, knowledge of social institutions – as involved in social reproduction.

One of the few places where Lévi-Strauss discusses questions relevant to practical consciousness is in a passage in *The Raw and the Cooked*, where he writes as follows:

Although the possibility cannot be excluded that the speakers who create and transmit myths may become aware of their structure and mode of operation, this cannot occur as a normal thing, but only partially and intermittently. It is the same with myths as with language: the individual who conscientiously applied phonological and grammatical laws in his speech, supposing he possessed the knowledge and virtuosity to do so, would nevertheless lose the thread of his ideas almost immediately.²²

There is a confusion here between *discursive consciousness*, or that which can be brought to and held in consciousness, and *practical consciousness*: a confusion which derives from the idea (already implicit in the Saussurian polarities) that either something is conscious (discursively available), or else it is unconscious. There is a vital sense in which all of us *do* chronically apply phonological and grammatical laws in speech – as well as all sorts of other practical principles of conduct – even though we could not formulate those laws discursively (let alone hold them in mind throughout discourse). But we cannot grasp the significance of such practical knowledge if we interpret it separately from human consciousness and agency, or what I shall call the *reflexive monitoring of conduct* that is central to human activity: if we place an *epoché* upon the conscious and the practical.²³

2. We can give this criticism more concrete form by considering Lévi-Strauss's evaluation of Mauss's theory of gift exchange. Mauss's theory, he claims, involves elements of a 'phenomenological' kind, that have to be discarded. We must not be deflected by the experience or ideas of the participants in such exchanges themselves, but have to treat the gift exchanges as a 'constructed object' governed by 'mechanical laws' of reciprocity, and separated from 'statistical time'. However, as Bourdieu has pointed out, far from clarifying the nature of the gift, treating the process of exchange as a formal structure in this way eliminates essential features of what a gift is. In Bourdieu's words:

The observer's totalising apprehension substitutes an objective structure fundamentally defined by its *reversibility* for an equally objectively *irreversible* succession of gifts which are not mechanically linked to the gifts they respond to or insistently call for: any really objective analysis of gifts, words, challenges or even

women must allow for the fact that each of these inaugural acts may misfire, and that it receives its meaning, in any case, from the response it triggers off, even if the response is a failure to reply that retrospectively removes its intended meaning.³⁴

The removal of the temporal components of the gift, in Lévi-Strauss's analysis, represses the fact that, for the gift exchange to occur, the counter-gift must be given at a later time, and must be different from the initial gift; *only in such ways is a 'gift' distinguished from a 'swap' or a 'loan'*. A whole range of strategic possibilities, moreover, in the practical activity of the gift exchange exist, and exist only, because of the irreversible time dimension. The point is not merely that these are complementary to Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of exchange as a code, but that they are not conceptually recoverable from the latter.

3. These observations connect directly to the encounter between structuralism and hermeneutics.³⁵ Saussure's structural linguistics was able to avoid direct exposure to problems of hermeneutics because the idea of difference as pure form, coupled with the doctrine of the arbitrary nature of the sign, made language into an insulated system of relations. Lévi-Strauss has accepted that this conception is untenable, and does not attempt to separate form wholly from content. But this actually prevents him from carrying over the implications of the 'phonological revolution' into anthropology with the degree of 'closure' that he seems to claim. The issues that have always dominated hermeneutics – the contextuality of meaning and problems of translation³⁶ – are dealt with by Lévi-Strauss only in terms of the 'context' of structure itself, defined objectively. The example of the gift shows that this is deficient: what counts as a 'gift' cannot be defined internally to the structural analysis itself, which presumes it as an already constituted 'ordinary language concept'. In this regard Ricoeur is surely correct when he argues that Lévi-Strauss's structural analyses of myth, far from excluding 'meaning as a narrative', bound to the contexts of its reproduction, actually presuppose it.³⁷ Structural analysis presupposes hermeneutics in so far as the latter is taken to be concerned with the interpretation and repair of meaningful communication, grounded in the intersubjectivity of practical day-to-day life.

4. At this juncture we may briefly revert to Lévi-Strauss's treatment of history and his approach to epistemology – issues that are closely

connected, since the latter is the basis of his view of the former. Lévi-Strauss's argument that the dominant modes of thought established in modern Western culture are in some key respects discrepant from the conceptual operations of the primitive *bricoleur* at first sight would appear again to lead back to hermeneutics. If this is not the direction which Lévi-Strauss takes, it is because of the structural homology of mind which he considers underlies all human thought, whatever the 'substance' that it employs. This is a 'sociological Kantianism' (rather than an explicit epistemology), like its Durkheimian prototype, since it expressly lacks a transcendental subject. Lévi-Strauss consequently has to deny that there is any privileged access to the structure of myth, either by those concerned in transmitting it or by the anthropological observer. It makes no difference, according to him, whether 'the thought processes of the South American Indians take shape through the medium of my thought, or whether mine takes place through the medium of theirs'.³⁸

Now this might be a defensible standpoint if Lévi-Strauss's structural constitution of those 'thought processes' could be corroborated or validated in a manner comparable to that of linguistic hypotheses. But, as Culler shows, no such corroboration can be forthcoming. The approach of the linguist draws upon the recursive properties of language as part of the process, and as the means whereby, these properties are made available for study. The linguist draws upon his or her own competence, or that of others, as a speaker of a particular language, in both *devising and validating* characterisations of it.³⁹ The study of myth cannot draw recursively on its object in this way; Lévi-Strauss's 'spiralling' procedure is not a substitute for it – although it is the closest that he comes to acknowledging the hermeneutic circle. His standpoint hence oscillates between relativism and dogmatism, in respect of the structural oppositions he claims to identify in myth. There is no way to rebut the charge made by critics that, quite contrary to his own assertions, his analyses reflect categories of Western society imposed upon other cultures.⁴⁰

5. Since it resolutely brackets any kind of reflexive understanding as only a 'surface manifestation' of deeper cognitive forms, Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology has no mode of reflecting upon its own origins, as itself the product of a particular set of socio-cultural circumstances, as Sartre and other critics have emphasised. 'His-

tory', as reflexive consciousness applied to the development of human society, is not just one code among others. Nor can that 'code' be adequately explicated through the synchronic/diachronic division that Lévi-Strauss inherits from Saussure, as modified by Jakobson.⁴¹ Jakobson's discussion of historical phonology is less distant from Saussure's view than it is sometimes presumed to be. Diachrony is held by Jakobson to produce imbalances that lead to readjustments on the level of synchrony, hence connecting the two. But history here is still understood as a succession of synchronic systems; diachrony and synchrony are not separated, nor is the separation of synchrony from diachrony seriously undermined.⁴²

Derrida's critique of the sign

The influence of Lévi-Strauss over the development of semiotics in the 1950s and 1960s was considerable, however critical some of the leading figures in that field may have been of his work in certain respects. Structures were usually in that period treated as given codes, examined within closed and discrete systems. Barthes's early formulations of semiotics, for example, cover a range of systems of signs that are treated as so many separate instances of myth, which are only in a very general way claimed to reflect features of modern bourgeois culture. His analysis of eating, for instance, quite closely echoes the type of interpretation offered by Lévi-Strauss. The dishes arranged on a menu are regarded as expressing basic oppositions – 'savoury'/'sweet', etc. – that are combined syntagmatically in the sequence that constitutes the meal.⁴³ However, Barthes proposed that a mythology of modern society has to incorporate a critical stance, thus partly recovering the meaning of myth as 'false consciousness' from which Lévi-Strauss dissociated himself. There are two principal respects, according to Barthes, in which myth can be shown to act to conceal a system of class domination in contemporary capitalism. One is that, in myth, what are expressions of definite social forms become represented as natural and 'inevitable' occurrences; the other is that myth eclipses the conditions of its production.

In these points there is already a reversal of the characteristic emphases of Lévi-Strauss, and a movement away from structure towards structuration as an active historical process. As continued

and radicalised further by Barthes, Derrida and the 'Left Heideggerians' of the *Tel Quel* group, this trend of thought is both highly critical of the structuralism of Saussure and Lévi-Strauss and yet at the same time a continuation of it. Lévi-Strauss adopted from Saussure a version of the *langue/parole* differentiation, reformulated as a distinction between code and message. The other authors mentioned above, however, are much more concerned with the relation of signifier and signified as elements of signification.

At first sight Lévi-Strauss and Heidegger appear as quite alien to one another, and it might seem as if there is a complete break in continuity marked by Derrida's interest in the second thinker. However there are certain overall – although admittedly distant – similarities between the views of Lévi-Strauss and Heidegger. Lévi-Strauss's belief that the concept of 'man', as distinct from 'nature', is a creation of European culture subsequent to the Renaissance, and his distancing from notions of 'self' and 'consciousness', have some resemblance to Heidegger's attempt to break with traditional views of philosophy as anchored in the knowing subject. Lévi-Strauss's 'Being' is not that of Heidegger, but the assertion of the former that the objective of structural anthropology is 'to understand Being in relation to itself, and not in relation to oneself'⁴⁴ has a certain loose affinity with the standpoint developed by Heidegger. For Heidegger, 'language speaks', and human subjectivity is constituted through the pre-given categories of language; for Lévi-Strauss 'Les mythes se pensent dans les hommes, et à leur insu'.⁴⁵

What has been called by one commentator (Jameson) the 'most scandalous aspect of structuralism', its aggressive anti-humanism, represents, not the denial of subjectivity, but a demand for an account of its origins. In Lévi-Strauss, following the 'geological' analogy, such an account progresses no further than the attempt to disclose the operation of unconscious elements that govern cognition. The subject is recovered in the analysis only as a set of structural transformations, not as an historically located actor. Structural analysis in this conception is limited to a deciphering process. In a sense, this culminates in the same sort of dilemma as Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, save that the perspective is reversed. Husserl, having bracketed intersubjectivity in order to uncover the categories of knowledge in the ego, was unable satisfactorily to reconstitute it phenomenologically. Lévi-Strauss, having

placed an *epoché* upon reflexive consciousness and history, so as to uncover unconscious structures, appears unable conceptually to retrieve the purposive subject – even as regards his own work, which is portrayed as the encounter of abstract categories of mind. Lévi-Strauss's critique of humanism thus remains undeveloped, as compared with that of Althusser, Foucault and Derrida, all of whom however refuse the appellation 'structuralist'.

In emphasising the 'structuring of structure',⁴⁶ as a continual process of production, Derrida breaks in a radical way both with Saussure's distinctions between *langue* and *parole* and between synchrony and diachrony. His concern with the signifier/signified relation, and with difference, still connects back to Saussure, but necessarily in altered form. The decisive contribution of Saussure's linguistics, according to Derrida, was to show, against previously established philosophical traditions, the inseparability of signifier from signified: that they are 'two sides of one and the same production'.⁴⁷ Saussure was not able to pursue the full implications of this, because he still retained the established notion of the sign, treating the signified as a determinate 'idea' or a 'meaning' fixed by the conjunction of word and thought. He thus left open the possibility that the signified could exist as the 'pure concept' or 'pure thought', independent of the signifier, much as idealist philosophers have traditionally argued. It is important to see that Derrida's critique of the 'metaphysics of presence' underlies his attack upon 'logocentricism' and his advocacy of the significance of writing, rather than vice versa. The integral fusion of signifier and signified entails that no philosophies which retain an attachment to 'transcendental signifieds' can be sustained; meaning is created only by the play of difference in the process of signification. 'Writing', as Derrida uses the term, does not refer to a script as such, to the physical 'presence' of inscriptions on a page, but to the spacing inherent, in his view at any rate, in the notion of difference. Difference, as articulated in a process of either speaking or reading, presumes a 'spatial' dimension which is also simultaneously a 'temporal' one, involved in the linearity of syntagmatic relations. 'Space', Derrida says, 'is "in" time; it is time's pure leaving-itself; it is the "outside-itself" as the self-relation of time.'⁴⁸

Derrida's work can thus be seen as giving a new impetus to Saussure's formalism at the same time as it disavows the connection of that formalism with *langue* and synchrony: substance, or the

'concrete', is repudiated both on the plane of the sign (rejection of the 'transcendental signified'), and on that of the referent (an objectively given world that can be 'captured' by the concept). For each of these, which may be said to approximate respectively to idealism and positivism, Derrida substitutes the productivity of chains of signification. Like Heidegger, Derrida has to regard himself as within traditions of Western metaphysics which he tries also to step outside; hence his proclivity, like that of Heidegger, for terminological innovation which displays a distance from established categories of language. '*Différance*' indicates that difference involves an integration of the 'spatial' and the 'temporal' that I mentioned previously: to differ is to defer. Once the synchronic/diachronic contrast is abandoned, difference is recognised to exist only within the temporal process of deferring, the continual loss of the present to future and to past. Structuralism here comes face to face with its apparent adversary, historicism, and adopts it: the concepts that Derrida operates with are placed 'under erasure' to indicate the constant process of mutation which all signification implies.

The present, once grasped, is past: hence, for Derrida, signification only operates through the 'trace', the moment of difference that occurs within a signifying chain. The 'a' of *différance* – in French, at any rate – is not heard; it remains silent. Derrida points out, 'like a tomb'.⁴⁹ *Différance* is not a word or a concept, but the play of negation; it is *not*, has no existence, no 'being present'. All signs, and all texts, include traces of others.

This chaining process means that each 'element' – phoneme or grapheme – is constituted from the trace which it carries in itself of other elements of the chain or the system ... There are only differences from differences and traces of traces ... *Différance* is thus a structure and a movement which can only be grasped in relation to the opposition of presence/absence. *Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of traces of differences, of the spacing whereby elements are connected to one-another.⁵⁰

This is not, however, a recovery of history, any more than it is the case in Heidegger's philosophy. Derrida retains the view – which even if it is at odds with it, still has a resonance of Lévi-Strauss's conception – that 'history' is a metaphysic, and contains within it

'the motivation of an ultimate repression of difference'.⁵¹ The identification of sequences of events of a determinate character remains wedded to a metaphysics of presence. For Derrida, art and the text are machines not for the suppression of time, but for its expression. The historicity of a work of art does not lie in the events, or their traces, which led up to its creation, but in the play of differences which are endlessly reinterpreted. A text, like writing more generally, displays most strikingly what would be called in another tradition the 'hermeneutic autonomy' of the object.

If a partial *rapprochement* between phenomenology, in its Heideggerian form, and structuralism has been attempted in the work of Derrida, another point of contact between the two philosophical traditions is also to be found in the writings of Kristeva, who has drawn upon Husserl. (Derrida has also written extensively, although critically, on Husserl.) Kristeva, like others associated with the *Tel Quel* group, is interested primarily in the theory of literature as productivity, but regards as one of her main objectives a reincorporation of the speaker within structuralist theory: 'One phase of semiology', she accepts, 'is now over: that which extends from Saussure and Peirce to the Prague School and structuralism ... A critique of this "semiology of systems", and of its phenomenological foundations, can only be made if it begins from a theory of meaning, which must necessarily be a theory of the speaking subject.'⁵²

This is still a 'de-centred' subject, explicitly contrasted to the Cartesian *cogito*, and Kristeva does not accept the main features of Husserl's phenomenological programme. However, according to Kristeva, Husserl's concept of intentionality, suitably modified, allows us to relate the signifier/signified differentiation to a theory of consciousness, by treating consciousness as made up of object-constituting mental acts. Consciousness, in other words, is not an amorphous 'substance', but is the predicative activity of a 'positioned' subject. However, the capacity of the subject to engage in such activity is not to be explicated through a phenomenological reduction, as in Husserl, but via the mastery of language: and we have to replace Husserl's abstract transcendental ego with a genetic account of the development of conscious identity as interdependent with, and reflecting the fractured nature of, the unconscious. Thus she emphasises 'the fundamental divergence that separates the phenomenological "lived experience" and its "impulses" from the

productive and/or destructive Freudian semiotic impulses which are prior to the distinction between "subject" and "object"'.⁵³

In pursuing the latter theme, Kristeva leans heavily upon Lacan's interpretations of psychoanalytic theory, as yielding an account of the 'production of the subject'. The psychoanalytic theory of psychic development connects the emergence of the 'I' with the entry of the child into signification, and thus with the signifier/signified relation. What Husserl called the 'thetic', and took to be an inherent property of mind, Kristeva treats as a stage in the development of the child: it is the stage at which the subject/object split becomes installed. The detachment of basic drives from the mother onto 'outside' objects coincides with the capacity of the child to distinguish itself symbolically as an 'I' from potential predicates. This is therefore at the same time the moment of signification, in which the sign becomes installed in place of a real relation. The child enters simultaneously into the twin dimensions of signification, the paradigmatic and syntagmatic, the first being structured about the symbolic relation 'speaking subject/outside', the second about that of 'subject/predicate'.⁵⁴

Spacing, abstract and practical: Derrida and Wittgenstein

In this section I propose to draw some contrasts between Derrida's views and those of the later Wittgenstein, suggesting that Wittgenstein's philosophy helps illuminate some of the weaknesses which Derrida's standpoint shares with structuralist thought as a whole. Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, and even his technique of deconstruction, can be seen to have important features in common with Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Both philosophers reject the view that meaning or the signified is an event, idea or mental process that in some way accompanies speech.

Différance is not an alien conception to Wittgensteinian philosophy: it could be said that for Wittgenstein meaning is created and sustained by the play of difference 'in use'. Now of course one should not exaggerate the similarities between Wittgenstein and Derrida on this point. Wittgenstein did not, as Derrida does, develop an explicit notion of difference as negation. Wittgenstein could not agree with Saussure that language is a system 'without positive terms'. But language to Wittgenstein is a system of differ-

ences in the sense that the meanings of words are not constituted through the nature of utterances or marks as isolated items, but only through the ways in which they acquire an identity through their differentiation as elements of language-games. Wittgenstein gives a good deal of emphasis, like Derrida, to *repetition* in the sustaining of linguistic identity. Wittgenstein's interpretation of language is not, as many commentators tend to present it, an a-temporal one; on the contrary, time is integral to it.⁵⁵ The meanings of terms are never 'present' in their utterance or enunciation, and 'exist' only in the continual process of their actualisation within forms of life: difference here is always also deferral, as it is for Derrida. According to Wittgenstein, much as Derrida argues, the traditional concerns of Western metaphysics have been bound up with the pursuit of illusory essences, the search to encompass the 'plenitude of the sign'. Signs do not express pre-formed meanings or concepts; words or utterances do not 'contain' ideas.

But the routes each then takes away from the metaphysical preoccupations of Western philosophy diverge. Wittgenstein's aphorism that such preoccupations arise when 'language goes on holiday' is not so much an argument against the misuse of words, as an emphasis upon the inevitable interweaving of language and the practical conduct of social life. I think one can argue that we can discover here one of the main continuities, and at the same time a basic contrast, between the work of Wittgenstein's early and later periods: in the coexistence of language with 'what cannot be said'. In the *Tractatus*, 'that whereof we cannot speak' appears as an abrupt finale, a blank void which looms when we have exhausted the logical elucidation of language. Now one way of reading the transition between Wittgenstein's earlier and later philosophies is to suggest that Wittgenstein came to the view that the 'limits of language' do not have to be consigned to such a void. Language is still seen to be intimately dependent upon the non-linguistic, or what cannot be put into words, 'what cannot be said'. But what cannot be said is no longer a mysterious metaphysic, that cannot even be talked about. What cannot be said is, on the contrary, prosaic and mundane. It is what has to be done: the meanings of linguistic items are intrinsically involved with the practices that comprise forms of life. This is a move of major significance, in my judgement, as compared to the orientation characteristic of structuralism, in which 'that which cannot be said' is characteristically

identified with the unconscious or, in Derrida, with writing. It provides the main source of the following critical objections that can be made against Derrida's views.

1. A critique of Derrida cannot be most profitably approached via a reassertion of the priority of the spoken word over the written,⁵⁶ since Derrida does not use 'writing' in the ordinary sense. The thesis that writing is more fundamental to language than speaking, Derrida makes clear,⁵⁷ does not depend upon the proposition that the spoken word is an ephemeral event, while the text has a greater permanence. It depends upon the proposal that writing expresses *différance*, the spacing that alone makes the utterance possible. *Différance* is that which cannot be said, since it precedes and lends form to the act of speaking – or to that of the inscription of marks on paper. But here the prejudices of Saussurian linguistics return to haunt their critic: the spacing of Derrida's 'writing' derives only from the injection of the temporal into the spacing of the formal differences of *langue*.⁵⁸ *Différance* is *langue* interpreted as structuration; it does not reconnect, as Wittgenstein's analysis reconnects, what cannot be said with what has to be done. Derrida's *différance* acknowledges only the spacing of the signifier. Language is a 'situated product' only in the juxtaposition of the mark and traces of marks. For Wittgenstein, on the other hand, language is a situated product involved in the temporal, material and social spacing of language-games – or so I want to interpret Wittgenstein here.

2. In Derrida, as in other structuralist writers, the distinction between signifier and signified replaces that between meaning and reference which is prominent in Wittgenstein. The major limitation in virtually all structuralist thought is that it carries over – and compounds – the flaws inherent in Saussure's treatment of the signified, as deriving from the arbitrariness of the sign. Saussure employed the notion of the arbitrary character of the sign so as to create a gulf between sign and referent, the result of which, however, as I have stated, is that 'signified' sometimes means 'idea', 'concept' or 'thought', sometimes the referent or object. The connection between word and object is not to be found in any feature that the signifier shares with the object, including ostensive reference. Now the later Wittgenstein, of course, also rejects any notion that the nature of linguistic terms can be explicated either in terms of 'corresponding' features of the object-world, or in terms of

ostensive reference. But the Wittgensteinian identification of that which cannot be said as the *practical organisation of social life* entails that this rejection does not lead in the direction of an attempted retreat *from the object to the idea*. Whatever the obscurities that may be involved in the account of reference that is implied in the later Wittgenstein's philosophy, it is clear that, for Wittgenstein, to know a language is to have knowledge of an object-world as a relation of practice.³⁹ To know a language is to be able to participate in the forms of life within which it is expressed, and which it expresses. Wittgenstein's discussion of 'social speaking' as the origin of signification opens out to the conjunction of *langue* and *langage* (rather than just *parole*) in a way in which structuralism does not – offering, indeed necessitating, a bridging of the analysis of language and hermeneutics. For the 'spacing' of language appears in the organisation of differing social practices, not in the abstract order of the signifier/signified relation. Hermeneutics, or *problems of the mediation of language-games as semantic orders*, are as basic to the Wittgensteinian conception as the notion of the constitution of meaning within the relational systems of forms of life.

If Quine and Davidson are right, there may be a closer tie between meaning and reference than Wittgenstein was apparently prepared to acknowledge,⁴⁰ but this is not really relevant to the argument at this point. The retreat from reference on the part of structuralist thought has proved to be as incapable of repair within the language of structuralism itself, as the recovery of intersubjectivity was for Husserl in the transcendental phenomenological reduction. Nowhere is this clearer than in Derrida. Writing is purified structuration, bereft of any possibility of the recovery of context or of the semantic. The 'deconstruction' of texts is supposed to demonstrate their character as productivity, but such production turns out to be nothing more than the play of 'pure difference'. Writing, in Derrida's formulation, breaks with everything that might relate a text to an object-world: the 'horizon of communication as communication of consciousness'; the 'semantic or hermeneutic horizons ... as ... horizons of meaning'; and 'the concept of context'. This break is declared to follow from the spacing that 'constitutes the written sign' – held 'to be found in all language'.⁴¹

3. The identity that permits difference is thus quite explicitly taken by Derrida to derive from the constitution of codes themselves.

whether inscribed or spoken. The internal identity of codes is what separates them from any connotation of reference. But this reiterates, in a new guise, the problem that arose in respect of Saussure's attempt to constitute difference as pure form. Derrida seems not to notice, or chooses to ignore, that even to mention the identity of a code presumes some component of reference: *that which designates the elements of the code as belonging together*, as being 'vocalisations', 'marks', etc. The argument that codes or writing are constituted by their 'internal identity' is used by Derrida to dismiss the relevance of reference altogether. The spacing of writing makes for its endless repeatability and 'dissemination': 'the unity of the signifying form only constitutes itself by virtue of its iterability, by the possibility of its being repeated in the absence ... of its "referent"'.⁴²

This appears to assimilate the lack of a referent 'present' at the time of an utterance with the absence of any connotation of reference at all as involved with the 'signifying form'.⁴³ The two are obviously not the same. Reference stubbornly intervenes even in the most formal identification of codes of spacing themselves. If this can be forgotten, or left out of account, it is because of the persistent assimilation which writers influenced by Saussurian concepts have made between referent and signified. This was presaged, as I have already noted, by Saussure's own tendency to merge the two, as a result of the impetus provided by the doctrine of the arbitrariness of the sign.

4. Derrida's denunciation of the 'presence' of the idea as the essence of signification leads him to retreat from the signified as far as possible, into the signifier. He does not take the more radical step of rejecting the signifier/signified distinction altogether. If Wittgenstein's account of meaning is along the right lines, however, the signifier/signified distinction must be discarded. For the nature of language, and of meaning more generally, cannot be explicated in terms of a twofold notion of this sort. The problem – which as I have tried to indicate, can be traced right through from Saussure – does not concern the signifier. One of the most important and illuminating contributions from the structuralist literature has been to demonstrate that any type of material form can participate in semiosis, that it is, can 'carry' meaning. The problem concerns the signified. The 'withdrawal from the object' into the internal play of differ-

ence, which Saussure initiated, cannot be accomplished; hence the nature of the signified has either been left in obscurity, or the term has been used ambiguously to include both concept and object signified. For Wittgenstein, signifier, concept and object signified are to be explicated in terms of their incorporation within the practices which compose forms of life. 'Don't look for the meaning, look for the use' does not imply that meaning and use are synonymous, but that the sense of linguistic items can only be sought in the practices which they express and in which they are expressed.

The de-centring of the subject

Rejection of the signifier/signified distinction has immediate implications for the critical assessment of Lacan's 'structuralist reading' of psychoanalysis, which has strongly influenced the latter-day development of the 'theory of the subject' within structuralist philosophies. I shall address these implications directly elsewhere, and shall consider here only general themes related to the 'de-centring of the subject'.

The 'scandalous' rejection of humanism characteristic of the structuralist literature has its origins in a mistrust of consciousness or 'subjectivity'. This was presaged in Saussure's formulation of the priority of *langue* over the individual, subjective character of *parole*. To this we must add the impact of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud as radical critics of the claims of the Cartesian *cogito*; each can be seen as questioning, in a profound way, the reliability of consciousness as 'transparent to itself'. The structuralists' demystification of the claims of consciousness is dominated by the thesis that subjectivity is constituted in and through language. As Ricoeur puts it, 'the pure act of the *cogito* is empty, and remains to be mediated by the world of signs and the interpretation of those signs'.⁶⁴ The implications of such a standpoint are several, and important. Instead of taking consciousness as a given, it stresses the need for a genetic account of its production; consciousness is not regarded as a unitary or indivisible substance, but as a fractured and fragile set of processes; and the constitution of the 'I' is acknowledged to come about only through the 'discourse of the Other', that is through signification.

These notions are developed in an interesting way in Kristeva's work, which departs quite substantially from the emphases of either

Levi-Strauss or Derrida. Both in the mode in which she utilises a phenomenological treatment of intentional consciousness, and in her interpretation of the 'positioning of the subject', she moves away from earlier versions of structuralism. But even in her writings we do not find an adequate analysis of human agency in the sense in which that term is normally understood by Anglo-Saxon philosophers of action. Her 'predicating subject' is still not far removed from the unconscious/conscious dualism, conceived above all as a linguistic relation, that dominates structuralist theories of the subject. Such theories have usually tended to retain elements of the Cartesianism they have sought to reject: the 'I think' is shown to express linguistic structures that precede or underlie the self-consciousness or reflexive capacities of the subject. As Lacan expresses it: 'the S [signifier] and the s [signified] of the Saussurian algorithm are not on the same level, and man only deludes himself when he believes his true place is at their axis, which is nowhere.'⁶⁵ But subjectivity here appears only as a series of moments brought about by the intersection of signifying structures. The reflexive, acting subject is but dimly recovered in such an analysis.

In criticising Searle's theory of speech acts, in conformity with her general standpoint, Kristeva argues that speech acts 'should be seen as signifying practices', and interpreted within 'a general theory of signifying activity'.⁶⁶ But replacing the notion of 'act' with that of 'practice' is specious if the analysis does not at the same time incorporate the emphasis that speech-act theory shares with Wittgenstein's view. *There are no signifying practices; signification should rather be understood as an integral element of social practices in general.*

We must actually repudiate the *cogito* in a more thoroughgoing way than Kristeva does, while acknowledging the vital importance of the theme that being precedes the subject-object relation in consciousness. The route to understanding this is not to be found through a sort of reconstituted *cogito*, but through the connection of *being and action*.

It is relevant to sketch in at this point the general outlines of a theory of the acting subject that is developed in much more detail in the following paper. This view depends upon stressing the importance of the 'reflexive monitoring of conduct' as a chronic feature of the enactment of social life. In this conception, reasons and intentions are not definite 'presences' which lurk behind human social

activity, but are routinely and chronically (in the *durée* of day-to-day existence) instantiated in that activity.⁶⁷ The intentional character of human actions is: (a) not to be seen as an articulation of discrete and separate 'intentions', but a continuous flow of intentionality in time; and (b) not to be treated as a set of conscious states that in some way 'accompany' action. Only in the reflexive act of attention are intentions consciously articulated: normally within discourse.⁶⁸ The reflexive monitoring of action draws upon 'tacit knowledge' which, however, can only partially and imperfectly be expressed in discourse. Such knowledge, which is above all practical and contextual in character, is not unconscious in any of the senses in which that term is usually employed in the structuralist literature. *Language appears here as a medium of social practice*; the practical nature of 'stocks of knowledge' is well emphasised both by Schutz and Wittgenstein. The stocks of knowledge applied in the production and reproduction of social life as a skilled activity are largely 'unconscious' in so far as social actors can normally only offer a fragmentary account of what they 'know' if called upon to do so; but they are not unconscious in the sense given to that term by structuralist writers.

The significance of the reflexive monitoring of action against a background of tacit knowledge – phenomena at the core of all day-to-day social activity, but alien territory to structuralism – is well pointed up by Bourdieu's discussion of the gift relationship, alluded to earlier. It is only if one succumbs to what might be called a *genetic sociological fallacy* that an account of human agency appears as incompatible with the unconscious in the Freudian sense. The fallacy is to assume that, because the subject, and self-consciousness, are constituted through a process of development – and thus that the reflexive actor is not a 'given' either to philosophy or to social science – they are merely epiphenomena of hidden structures. The de-centring of the subject is quite as noxious as the philosophies of consciousness which are attacked if it merely substitutes a structural determination for subjectivity.

Texts

One of the major emphases that structuralism shares with hermeneutic phenomenology⁶⁹ is the insistence that a gulf divides the

text, as a particular articulation of language, from whatever intentions an author may have had in writing it. In Lévi-Strauss, mythology is regarded as peculiarly apposite to structural analysis because myths 'have no author', and 'exist only as they are incarnated in a tradition'.⁷⁰ Derrida specifically associates the autonomy of the text with the separation of 'writing' from 'communication', and thereby from its author; the supposition that knowledge of the author can in any significant way illuminate the meanings generated by the text is dismissed as another example of the metaphysics of presence.⁷¹ The interpretation of a text, the *Tel Quel* group emphasises, cannot be treated as the identification of a core of meaning supplied by its author, which relates that meaning to the 'con-text' of its creation. There is no reading of a text, but only readings, the result of the inherent productivity of writing or, in Derrida's words, 'its essential *différance*'.

The relevance of authors' intentions to the interpretation of texts, and more broadly to the interpretation of meaning, has of course been much discussed in various disciplines, ranging from literary criticism to the history of ideas.⁷² I do not want to consider here the problem of the role authors' intentions may play in validating critical interpretations of texts. I want rather to take issue with the conceptualisation of intentional activity that has been presumed in such literature. Much of this literature must, from this regard, be dismissed in the light of the Wittgensteinian critique of intention. Intention, or purposes, about the purposive character of human action. Intention, or purposes, have been regarded, in other words, as discrete mental events that are in some way correlated with the creation of texts. It is important to see that Wittgenstein's rejection of this view also extends to another element of the 'metaphysics of presence' that Derrida also repudiates: the existence of a finite set of 'rules of interpretation' governing interpretations of meaning. The 'rule-following' which Wittgenstein identifies designates practices which express the recursive character of social life, and which are constituted only in and through those practices; such rules are therefore never fixed or given presences.

It is just through this recursiveness that we can grasp the nature of social practices as in a continual process of production and reproduction. Social practices from this standpoint do not 'express' the intentions of social actors; nor on the other hand do they 'determine' them. *Intentions are only constituted within the reflexive*

monitoring of action, which however in turn only operates in conjunction with unacknowledged conditions and outcomes of action. (For fuller discussion, see below, pp. 56-9.) From this point of view we can begin to recover the text, not just as involving the inherent productivity of language, but as itself a situated production, without on the other hand denying the 'autonomy of the text'. Structuralism has not generated accounts of the interpretative work that is presumed in the everyday constitution of intersubjectivity. A concentration upon the internal structuring of the text, stripped of referential components, replaces the participatory and practical interpolation of meaning within the conduct of language-games. Hence intersubjectivity is drawn upon in an unacknowledged way, tacitly presumed by textual analysis, but not theorised. This is undoubtedly in some part simply because of the central place which the text has assumed in structuralist thought: or rather, a particular type of conception of texts 'con-structed' as relational forms, separated from what Husserl called 'the naive intersubjectivity which is the unarticulated basis of the life-world'.

It should be noted that the view I am proposing is not identical to the conception of 'literary competence' suggested by Culler in criticising structuralism. Culler proposes that literary competence can be seen as consisting of tacit 'sets of conventions for reading literary texts', and as a 'rule-governed process of producing meanings'.⁷¹ We can certainly accept, with Culler, that authors and readers bring more to a text than their knowledge of a language. They bring knowledge of a variety of social conventions: or, more accurately put, their very knowledge of language is inseparable from the social practices in the context of which language is constituted and reconstituted. However knowledge cannot be grasped simply as a rule-like semantics. Culler's proposal amounts to a sort of ethno-semantics of the reading of literary texts, if 'ethno-semantics' is understood in the manner of Goodenough and Lounsbury.⁷² According to Goodenough, the task of ethno-semantics is to elucidate the content of culture, where 'a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members'; and where this knowledge is explicated as definite sets of statable rules.⁷³ But to complement the typical structuralist emphasis upon the primacy of the semiotic with an accentuation of the importance of semantic rules is not satisfactory unless we attempt also to comprehend the

monitoring of rules and practices in day-to-day activities. This demands acknowledging the significance of 'ethno-methods' as the means whereby accountability is sustained: ethno-methods that are tacitly relied upon by every structuralist theorist of the text who, no matter what he or she might argue about texts that are subject to analysis or 'de-construction', still supposes that the text in which those arguments are expressed is intelligible to an indefinite audience.

Let me summarise the main elements of my view.

1. The production of a text, like the production of a social practice, is not the outcome of an 'intention', or an 'aggregate of intentions'. Rather, the intentional character of the activities concerned has to be treated as a chronic feature of the reflexive monitoring of action. A text is therefore not to be regarded as a 'fixed form', which is then somehow related *en bloc* to particular intentions; it should be studied as the concrete medium and outcome of a process of production, reflexively monitored by its author or reader.
 2. Inquiry into the process of production of a text has to investigate the whole range of what I call in the following paper the 'rationalisation of action':⁷⁴ not merely its intentional component, but the reasons and motives that are involved in that production as a skilled accomplishment. The 'knowledge' that is thereby drawn upon by an author will be largely tacit and practical in character: mastery of a certain style, awareness of particular features of an expected or potential audience, etc. Moreover, this leaves a large conceptual space for the operations of the unconscious.
- It follows from my earlier arguments that the distinction Kristeva makes between 'pheno-text' and 'geno-text' is not, as it stands, an adequate basis for understanding these phenomena. Her identification of the *chora* that is at the origins of semiosis seems valuable, but intervening between the subterranean 'operations' of the unconscious and the pheno-text are the constituting features of practical consciousness.⁷⁵
3. All this bears upon what an 'author' is, as an acting subject. An author is neither a bundle of intentions, nor on the other hand a series of 'traces' somehow deposited within the text. Foucault says that writing 'is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears'.⁷⁶ But to study the production of the text is at the same time in a definite sense to study the production of its author. The author is not simply 'subject' and the

text 'object'; the 'author' helps constitute him- or herself through the text, via the very process of production of that text. The importance of this is easily seen if we contrast the emergence of the 'personalised' author of the modern novel or poem with the 'anonymous' authors of myth or of medieval legend.

4. To argue that texts can be illuminatingly studied as situated productions is to insist that there are connections between the two ways in which 'meaning' is ordinarily employed in English: what someone means to say, write or do, and what that which is said, written or done means.²⁹ But this does not imply a return to a form of subjectivism. One of the main tasks of the study of the text, or indeed cultural products of any kind, must be precisely to examine the divergencies which can become instituted between the circumstances of their production, and the meanings sustained by their subsequent escape from the horizons of their creator or creators. These meanings are never 'contained' in the text as such, but are enmeshed in the flux of social life in the same way as its initial production was. Consideration of the 'autonomy' of the text, or the escape of its meaning from what its author originally meant, helps reunite problems of textual interpretation with broader issues of social theory. For in the enactment of social practices more generally, *the consequences of actions chronically escape their initiators' intentions in processes of objectification.*

The foregoing considerations allow us to take a position in respect of current rhetoric about the disappearance of the subject, or the 'end of the individual'. The pressing task facing social theory today is not to further the conceptual elimination of the subject, but on the contrary to promote *a recovery of the subject* without lapsing into subjectivism.³⁰ Such a recovery, I wish to argue, involves a grasp of 'what cannot be said' (or thought) as *practice*. Advocacy of the need to complete the dissolution of the subject reads ironically when taken against the background of Anglo-American sociology which, with some exceptions (most notably, symbolic interactionism), has hitherto been dominated by positivism. For positivistic philosophies lack any account of the reflexive subject, just as they lack a theorisation of institutions and history. The 'I' of Cartesian philosophy does not even appear in positivism, as a result of its phenomenalist premisses: one might point out that the most radical and thoroughgoing attempt to erase the subject is found, not in

structuralism, or in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipe*, but in Mach's positivism. Failure to see this is reinforced by the tendency of structuralist authors to lump together the Cartesian *cogito*, the various forms of idealism, together with positivism or empiricism as all forms of philosophy founded in the subject. In their endeavour to dissolve the subject, structuralism and positivism thus have an important element in common, and in the context of the social sciences in the English-speaking world it is all the more necessary to insist that the de-centring of the subject must not be made equivalent to its disappearance. Any form of social theory which merges the de-centring of the subject, as a philosophical tenet, with a propaedeutic of the end of the individual as either a desirable or inevitable movement of contemporary social change, becomes subject to the charge of ideology that critics are so fond of levelling against structuralism. It is useful here to contrast Foucault with Adorno and Horkheimer. The end of the individual, perhaps, signals the final passing of the age of bourgeois liberalism: not however as a fruitful historical transition, but rather *as swamped by a spreading totalitarianism*. A critical appraisal of such a phenomenon is hardly possible if social theory succumbs to the very processes which it should be concerned to comprehend.

Structuralism: a résumé and a forward look

The importance of structuralist thought for contemporary social theory, I want to claim, consists primarily in certain major themes which it has helped to bring into prominence: themes whose further development, however, cannot be satisfactorily pursued from within structuralist premises, as I have identified them in this paper. There are altogether seven respects, I think, in which structuralist thought is of particular significance, especially when considered in the light of the typical preoccupations of Anglo-Saxon sociology. I shall outline these only cursorily here: but they inform all my concerns in the succeeding papers in this book.

First, structuralist theory *points to the significance of spacing through difference* in the constitution of both language and society. This is an emphasis involved, in varying ways, in the work of Saussure, Lévi-Strauss and Derrida. Derrida's conception of *différance* is of great interest to social theory. But Derridean *différance* is associated too closely with the spacing of writing; the conception of

spacing that can be discerned in Wittgenstein is superior to this in referring to the involvement of language with social practices. Social practices occur not just as transformations of a virtual order of differences (Wittgenstein's rules), and differences in time (repetition), but also in *physical space*. I shall argue in the following paper that the theory of the structuration of social systems should be based upon this *threefold connotation of différance*.

Second, and closely associated with the first point, structuralist thought *attempts to incorporate a temporal dimension into the very centre of its analysis*. In Saussure this is found in the syntagmatic aspect of language, even if the pronounced division introduced by the separation of the synchronic from the diachronic severs this from processes of linguistic change. The syntagmatic/associative opposition is lacking in functionalism, which incorporates time only as diachrony or 'dynamics' (see pp. 210–14 below). Structuralist theory has been able to generate a concept of structuration via the overcoming of the synchronic/diachronic distinction in a way not open to functionalism.¹¹ We have to recognise the limitations of this. It has not led to a capacity to develop explanatory accounts of social change; and in Derrida, it eventuates in a form of historicism, that denies the possibility of history in its own name. In attempting to escape the 'metaphysics of presence' Derrida, like Heidegger, reaches a view which tends to exorcise historical explanation in the very acknowledgement that everything is chronically in a state of movement. In Lévi-Strauss, the notion that historical understanding is only one code among others also effectively prevents a recovery of that understanding as a means of explaining social change. Structuralist thought hence has not developed a 'self-understanding' of the conditions of its own production as an intellectual tradition, and is vulnerable to the sorts of attack it has frequently drawn from authors such as Lefebvre and Goldmann, for whom it is merely an ideology of advanced capitalism.¹²

Third, whatever objections might be made against Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of history, it contains some extremely valuable insights. As against historicism, which so radicalises historical mutation that it becomes impossible to escape from it – even in order to produce historical analyses – and which thus characteristically terminates in some or other form of relativism, Lévi-Strauss points out that '*distance in time*' is in some important respects the same as '*ethnographic distance*'. Moreover, in emphasising the contrasts

between those types of society which operate in 'reversible time' and which although 'surrounded by the substance of history ... try to remain impervious to it', as compared to those which 'turn it into the motive power of their development',¹³ Lévi-Strauss helps to lay the ground for a theory of social reproduction.

Fourth, structuralist theory offers the possibility – not fully realised thus far – of formulating a *more satisfactory understanding of the social totality than that offered by its leading rival, functionalism*. According to the latter, society may be posited as a pattern of relations between 'parts' (individuals, groups, institutions). Saussure's structural linguistics, by contrast, suggests the notion that society, like language, should be regarded as a 'virtual system' with recursive properties. The elaboration of this point, however (or so I shall claim), demands a conceptual distinction that is found neither in structuralism nor in functionalism: a distinction between 'structure' and 'system'.

Fifth, we find in structuralism a move of major significance for social theory: *an attempt to transcend the subject/object dualism*. Although this is not unique to structuralist thought, and is approached from variant perspectives by hermeneutic phenomenology and in the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein, the structuralist authors have elaborated it most fully. We can acknowledge the importance of this contribution while still emphasising that little is gained if we merely replace subjectivism by some sort of objectivism. The subject/object dualism can only be satisfactorily repudiated if we acknowledge that this is not a dualism but a *duality*.

Sixth, the critique of humanism and the theme of the *de-centring of the subject* have to be approached with caution, but nevertheless are of essential importance to social theory. The de-centring of the subject implies an escape from those philosophical standpoints which have taken consciousness as either a given, or transparent to itself. This should not lead, however, to the disappearance of the reflexive components of human conduct, or to their treatment as some sort of epiphenomena of deeper structures. Reflexivity has to be reconstructed within the discourse of social theory not just in respect of the members of society whose conduct is the object of study, but also *in respect of social science itself as a form of human endeavour*.

Seventh, *structuralist theory has made permanent contributions towards the analysis of the production of cultural objects*. The further

Notes and References

Introduction

1. Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1971).
2. Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (London: Hutchinson, 1976).
3. Anthony Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (London: Hutchinson, 1977).
4. William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longman, 1943) p. 254.
5. For a discussion, see Alvin I. Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970) pp. 123-4.
6. See also Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 144ff.
7. Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, pp. 23-4.

Chapter 1

1. The nature and extent of the influence of Durkheim over Saussure has been a matter of some dispute. See, for example, E. F. K. Koerner, *Ferdinand de Saussure* (Braunschweig: Hunold, 1973) pp. 45-71.
2. Cf., for example, Barthes: 'I have been engaged in a series of structural analyses, all of which are concerned to define a number of extralinguistic "languages"...' Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1964) p. 155.
3. *New Rules of Sociological Method* (London: Hutchinson, 1976); 'Functionalism: après la lutte', in *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (London: Hutchinson, 1977).
4. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Peter Owen, 1960) p. 14.
5. There has been much subsequent debate about this issue. Some have accepted Saussure's view of the relation of semiology and linguistics; others have reversed it, taking semiology to be derivative of linguistics.

- Except when referring to Saussure, I shall use the term 'semiotics' rather than 'semiology'.
6. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 68.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
 8. *Ibid.*, pp. 83 and 85.
 9. However, critical editions of the *Cours* produced by de Mauro, Engler and Godel have demonstrated, among other things, that Saussure did not claim a priority for synchronic linguistics over historical linguistics.
 10. Cf. for a relevant recent discussion, David Lewis, *Convention* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).
 11. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 67.
 12. Emile Benveniste, 'The nature of the linguistic sign', *Problems in General Linguistics* (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971) p. 44.
 13. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976) pp. 6ff.
 14. Frederic Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language* (Princeton University Press, 1974) pp. 32-3.
 15. C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (London: Routledge, 1960) pp. 5-8.
 16. Noam Chomsky, 'Current Issues in Linguistic Theory' (The Hague: Mouton, 1964) p. 23.
 17. For Lévi-Strauss's early thoughts on Durkheim, see his article 'French sociology', in Georges Gurwitsch and Wilbert E. Moore, *Twentieth Century Sociology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945). On Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss, cf. Simon Clarke, 'The origins of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism', *Sociology*, vol. 12 (1978). See also Yvan Simonis, *Claude Lévi-Strauss ou la passion de l'inceste* (Paris: Aubier, 1968) pp. 81ff.
 18. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (London: Allen Lane, 1968) p. 62.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 280. Compare also Jean Pinget, *Structuralism* (London: Routledge, 1971) upon which Lévi-Strauss has commented approvingly.
 20. Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) p. 98.
 21. *Structural Anthropology*, p. 82.
 22. Interview with Lévi-Strauss, *Le Monde*, 13 Jan 1968. See also *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) pp. 31ff.
 23. Cf. Ino Rossi, 'Structuralism as a scientific method', in Rossi, *The Unconscious in Culture* (New York: Dutton, 1974) p. 77.
 24. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1966) p. 252. See also the comments on psychoanalysis in *L'Homme nu* (Paris: Plon, 1971) pp. 561ff.
 25. *The Savage Mind*, p. 256.
 26. Lévi-Strauss nevertheless frequently emphasises the inescapability of beginning from historical study: 'Even the analysis of synchronic structures... 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.' *Structural Anthropology*, vol. I (London: Allen Lane, 1968) p. 21. This is said partly in criticism of Malinowski. See also Lévi-Strauss's inaugural lecture, in the second volume of *Structural Anthropology* (London: Allen Lane, 1977) where frequent nods are made to the historians. A typical later statement is the following: 'I am not therefore rejecting history. On the contrary, structural analysis accords history a paramount place, the place that rightfully belongs to that irreducible contingency without which necessity would be inconceivable.' *From Honey to Ashes* (London: Cape, 1973) pp. 474-5. On the other hand, Lévi-Strauss has never ceased to hold that it is the aim of anthropology 'to elucidate, by a kind of backward course, all that... [myths] owe to historical process and to popular thought' (vol. I, p. 23). Characteristic is Lévi-Strauss's reading of Marx's aphorism: 'Men make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing' which, Lévi-Strauss says, 'justifies, first, history, and, second anthropology' (*ibid.*); that is to say, the conscious and the unconscious. But another reading would be that human social life is enacted under conditions of bounded and alienated understanding, as expressed in both unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of action.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 236. Cf. also G. Charbonnier, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss* (London: Cape, 1969) pp. 39ff.
 28. Lévi-Strauss, 'J.-J. Rousseau, fondateur des sciences des hommes', in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1962).
 29. 'Functionalism: après la lutte'.
 30. *L'Homme nu*, p. 572.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 560.
 32. *The Raw and the Cooked*, p. 11.
 33. For a relevant discussion, cf. Maurice Godélier, 'Mythe et histoire: réflexions sur les fondements de la pensée sauvage', *Annales*, vol. 26 (1971).
 34. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) p. 5; cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (London: New Left Books, 1976) pp. 479ff.
 35. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, 'Structure and hermeneutics', in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). Ricoeur remains one of the most penetrating critics of structuralism. On the other hand, even in his later publications he confines his remarks on structuralism mainly to Saussure, the Formalists and Lévi-Strauss. Ricoeur, it seems to me, gives too much and too little to structuralism, thus defined. Too much, because he seems prepared to accept major features of structuralist thought *en bloc*, within defined limits; too little, because in trying to fit structuralist analysis within a more encompassing hermeneutics, he does not sufficiently take into account the radical nature of the challenge that structuralist thought poses for hermeneutic phenomenology. Some of the differences between phenomenologists and structuralists were aired at a symposium

- at Cerisy-la-Salle in 1966, reported in J. Ricardou, *Les chemins actuels de la critique* (Paris: Plon, 1967).
36. George Steiner, *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford University Press, 1975); cf. also Dufrenne, who confronts 'the problem posed by the extraordinary diversity of languages', pointing out that 'the arbitrary character of language, having been shown to be of comparatively little significance at the level of the elements of a language, reasserts itself quite definitely at the level of the language taken as a whole', Mikel Dufrenne, *Language and Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood, 1968) p. 35.
 37. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, p. 86.
 38. *The Raw and the Cooked*, p. 13.
 39. Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1975) p. 48; cf. also Tzvetan Todorov, *Poétique de la prose* (Paris: Seuil, 1971) p. 247.
 40. Cf. Stanley Diamond, 'The myth of structuralism', in Rossi, *The Unconscious in Culture*.
 41. R. Jakobson, 'Principes de phonologie historique', in N. S. Trubetskoj, *Principes de phonologie* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964). According to Lévi-Strauss, the distinction between synchrony and diachrony 'is the very aspect of the Saussurian doctrine from which modern structuralism, with Trubetskoj and Jakobson, has most resolutely diverged; and about which modern documents show that the master's thought has at times been forced and schematised by the editors of the *Course*'. *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 2, p. 16.
 42. Lévi-Strauss frequently seems to assimilate the diachronic and syntagmatic. There are examples of this in *Structural Anthropology*, and in the *Mythologiques* volumes.
 43. Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (London: Cape, 1967) pp. 27ff.
 44. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (New York: Atheneum, 1967) p. 62.
 45. *Le Cru et le cuit* (Paris: Plon, 1964) p. 20.
 46. Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967) p. 411.
 47. Derrida, *Positions* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972) p. 28.
 48. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
 49. On 'pyramid', an allusion taken from Hegel, and 'tomb', see Derrida, 'Le puits et la pyramide', in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972).
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
 51. Derrida, *L'Écriture et la différence*, p. 50. Derrida writes approvingly of Lévi-Strauss's criticisms of those who have accorded history an undue place in social science and philosophy. History here 'has always been the accomplice of a teleological and eschatological metaphysics: that is to say, paradoxically, of that philosophy of presence to which it is believed that history can be opposed' (*ibid.*, p. 425). On the other hand, Derrida adds, Lévi-Strauss only replaces one type of

- metaphysics of presence by another: in spite of the latter's disclaimers, a type of classical formalism.
52. Julia Kristeva, *Semiotike: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).
 53. Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974) p. 33.
 54. *Ibid.*, pp. 114ff.
 55. Cf. Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge University Press, 1975) p. xix and *passim*.
 56. Ricoeur, 'Structure, word, event', in *The Conflict of Interpretations*.
 57. See 'Signature, événement, contexte', whose title echoes that of Ricoeur's article, in Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972); this is translated in *Glyph*, vol. 1 (1977). (See also footnote 67).
 58. Cf. Derrida's comment, made in the course of discussing trends in philosophy in France, that the object of contemporary philosophy is 'neither to abolish nor to destroy meaning. It is rather a question of determining the possibility of meaning deriving from a "formal" organisation that itself has no meaning...'. *Marges de la philosophie*, p. 161.
 59. In this sense, Wittgenstein is not well served by some of his followers, who have effectively translated his emphases into a type of idealism: most notably, Winch.
 60. Cf. the various discussions in Gareth Evans and John McDowell, *Truth and Meaning: Essays on Semantics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). But see also Putnam's analysis in *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1978) pp. 97ff.
 61. 'Signature, événement, contexte', pp. 181-2.
 62. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
 63. Derrida says (*L'Écriture et la différence*, p. 413) that it is because we cannot finally escape metaphysics altogether that the signified cannot be done away with: 'For the paradox is that the metaphysical reduction of the sign needs the opposition [of signifier/signified] which it reduces.' Cf. also Derrida's comments in an interview with Lucette Finas, in Lucette Finas *et al.*, *Écarts* (Paris: Fayard, 1973) pp. 303-12.
 64. Ricoeur, 'The question of the subject', in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 244.
 65. Jacques Lacan, 'The agency of the letter in the unconscious', *Écrits* (London: Tavistock, 1977) p. 166.
 66. Julia Kristeva (interview with J.-C. Coquet), 'Sémanalyse: conditions d'une sémiotique scientifique', *Semiotica*, vol. 4 (1972) pp. 328-9.
 67. Cf. Searle's comments on Derrida's discussion of Austin in 'Signature, événement, contexte', in 'Reiterating the differences: a reply to Derrida', *Glyph*, vol. 1, p. 202.
 68. Cf. my *New Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 81-4, for further discussion.
 69. As expounded by Gadamer in particular. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975). Gadamer, however, rejects the thesis (which he associates with Valéry) that

- 'every encounter with [a] work has the rank and justification of a new production. This seems to me an untenable hermeneutic nihilism... [Valéry] transfers to reader and interpreter the authority of absolute creation which he himself no longer desires to exert' (p. 85).
70. *The Raw and the Cooked*, p. 18. The latter phrase is strikingly reminiscent of G. Lamer.
 71. 'Signature, événement, contexte', p. 182.
 72. One focus of debate is that involving Gadamer, Betti and Hirsch. For Hirsch's latest contributions, see E. D. Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago University Press, 1976).
 73. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, p. 126.
 74. Ward Goodenough, *Description and Comparison in Cultural Anthropology* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970).
 75. Goodenough, 'Cultural anthropology and linguistics', in Dell Hymes (ed.), *Language in Culture and Society* (New York: Harper, 1964) p. 36.
 76. *New Rules of Sociological Method*.
 77. Kristeva writes: 'The text is not a linguistic phenomenon; in other words, structured signification does not appear in a linguistic corpus as a single level of structure... The process of meaning generation can be grasped in two ways: 1. the creation of the material of language, and 2. the creation of the "I" which is in a position to make meaning appear.' *Semiotike*, p. 280.
 78. Michel Foucault, 'What is an author?', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977) p. 116; cf. Williams's remarks on the origins of the term 'author', in Raymond Williams's, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977) pp. 192-3.
 79. Relevant to this is the somewhat comic exchange between Derrida and Searle in *Glyph*, vols. I and II, in which Derrida goes through absolute contortions in order to defend himself against Searle without having to employ the terminology, 'What I meant was...'
 80. Cf. Frederic Jameson, 'Imaginary and symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, psychoanalytic criticism, and the problem of the subject', *Yale French Studies*, no. 55/6 (1977), p. 382 and *passim*.
 81. Cf. 'Functionalism: après la lutte'.
 82. Cf. Henri Lefebvre, *L'idéologie structuraliste* (Paris: Anthropos, 1971). Still one of the more interesting discussions of structuralism and Marxism is Lucien Sebag, *Marxisme et structuralisme* (Paris: Payot, 1964).
 83. Charbonnier, *Conversations*, p. 39.
 84. Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (London: Macmillan, 1977) pp. 4ff.

Chapter 2

1. Most of the concepts I discuss here have been introduced in a preliminary way in *New Rules of Sociological Method*, and in 'Notes on the theory of structuration', in *Studies in Social and Political Theory*.

2. See, for instance, G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963); Theodore Mischel, *Human Action* (New York: Academic Press, 1969); Richard Taylor, *Action and Purpose* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966); Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of Action* (Cambridge University Press, 1973).
3. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964) pp. xlvii-xlix.
4. Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1949); cf. 'Durkheim's contribution to the theory of integration of social systems', in Kurt H. Wolff, *Emile Durkheim* (New York: Harper, 1964).
5. In Hollis's terms, however, the 'action frame of reference' would constitute a form of 'weak actionism', defined as a view which 'takes the actor to be plastic and his actions to be caused by the normative structures requiring them'. Martin Hollis, *Models of Man* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) p. 85.
6. Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1970) p. 180.
7. E. Paci, *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972). For an attempt to place Paci's writings in a general sociological context, see Barry Smart, *Sociology, Phenomenology and Marxian Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1976).
8. In non-Marxist sociology, Berger and Luckmann's *Social Construction of Reality* (London: Allen Lane, 1967) is closest to this type of standpoint. Their approach, however, completely lacks a conception of the critique of ideology. Moreover, notwithstanding the interest of some of their formulations, their work remains close to Parsonianism in stressing the centrality of 'internalisation' of values as crucial to the existence of 'order'.
9. Marx, *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1973) p. 712.
10. Charles M. Sherover, *Heidegger, Kant and Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971) p. 284.
1. See *New Rules of Sociological Method*, chap. 2.
2. This is pointed out by Schutz. Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (London: Heinemann, 1972) pp. 8ff. For the conception of *durée*, see Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1910).
3. *New Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 75; I have slightly amended the original formulation.
4. See, for example, R. S. Peters, *The Concept of Motivation* (London: Routledge, 1958) pp. 12ff.
5. A mistake which I made; *New Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 75. I did not see that the view that the 'could have done otherwise' of agency is logically distinct from the obverse of any condition of social constraint or compulsion contradicts the case I made later that the concept of action logically entails that of power.
6. J. L. Austin, 'Three ways of spilling ink', *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 75 (1966).