

STRUCTURALISM : A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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This study underlies the basic propositions of structuralism based on the works of a number of post structuralists namely Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Lacan, Foucault, and Althusser. The main thrust of these assumptions which I outlined in ten proposition (*) are treated briefly for reason of space and the reader is asked to refer to the works of these theorists for further theoretical as well as empirical elaborations.

The structuralist perspective drawing on modern linguistics, psychoanalytic theory, and critical epistemology, attempts to establish a new grounding for the aims of methods of the social science. The work of Levi-Strauss aims at articulating a distinctive character of social anthropology. The central themes of structuralism have more recently been reconstructed in the writings of post-structuralists, namely Lacan, Barthes, Althusser, and Foucault. The formulations of structuralism sparked serious debate within literary criticism, psycho-analysis, history, anthropology, critical theory, and philosophy. The field of sociology remained outside such debate and sociologists have not produced an adequate monograph about structuralism. This can be attributed in part to the fact that the work of a number of structuralists was not available in English until recently. The interpretations available were often carried out by individuals not trained in sociology, and thus, overlooked the relevance of the perspective to sociology. Structuralism was subject to a criticism that did not question the basic properties of the perspective as such, but

(*) from Abderrahmane Azzi, *Structuralism and Its Contribution to Sociological Theory*, Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation. NTSU, USA, 1985.

engaged in discussions of categorizations such as whether the perspective is a form of neo-positivism or an ideology of the left, etc. Thus, the possible contributions of the structuralist perspective were disregarded before having established any solid roots in sociological analysis. The structuralist perspective, in addition to being what Merton calls another healthy paradigm, challenges the main thrusts of such theoretical and methodological orientations as empiricism, reductionism, and humanism and helps solve persistent theoretical problems in sociological inquiry. The work of structuralists, although it incorporates a variety of endeavors, is guided by common propositions. The following delineate propositions that constitute the thrust of the structuralist perspective.

PROPOSITION I:

Cultural Phenomena Are Systems of Language; They Are Expressed in Language, and Are Guided by the Principles that Guide Language.

The systems of representation such as kinship, myth (Levi-Strauss), discourse (Lacan), art, and literature (Barthes) are systems of language; to be known, they must be expressed through the medium of language. The priority of language stems in part from the fact that language acquired a privileged position and reality took the aspect of linguistic form. Thus, thoughts originate in words and not the other way around. Language is the most universal cultural phenomenon. The content of language is contingent, but the structure of language is universal. The content of myths varies cross-culturally, but the structure of such myths is the same and universal. The arbitrary character of the linguistic sign made language an appropriate subject to scientific inquiry.

Language is a social product and a collection of necessary conventions adopted by the social body to permit individuals to exercise the faculty of speech. Language is a social institution. Language, however, must be studied in itself and not in relation to something else. Thus, a number of sociologists have suggested that language plays such and such role or relates to such and such

content, but have not examined language in itself. Language is a self-contained whole subject to scientific inquiry. This is based on the view that each element of language has its place and relation to other element within the system of language. Hence, the structure of myth can be understood in terms of how each element relates to other elements in a myth. The substance of myth cannot reside in the isolated elements that enter into the composition of a myth, but in the way those elements are combined. Myth resembles an orchestra score presented in a unilinear series and where the task of the performer is to establish the correct disposition.

The structuralist view maintains that cultural phenomena must be systematically analyzed through techniques and methods borrowed from linguistics, i.e., syntax, phoneme, binary opposition, metaphor, and metonymy. This can make the covert meanings of phenomena explicit. The relations existing at the level of structure of such phenomena as the problem of incest and totemism can be reduced to those of binary opposition. The problem of incest, thus, is a cultural phenomenon that reflects an attempt to overcome the contradiction in the binary; nature and culture. Totemism similarly provides a logical model capable of overcoming contradictions between nature and culture. Here, Levi-Strauss is critical of the functional analysis of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown and that of Durkheim that regard totemism as another phenomenon that serves to maintain social solidarity. This is a tautological argument that takes as a reason what, in the best circumstances, is only a consequence. Totemism instead is a phenomenon that represents a union of opposites: nature and culture. Totemism, reflecting on the nature of non-human species, is a type of reality that permits man to engage in theoretical speculations based on empirical observations; such speculations relate to two types of relations: one is natural and the other is cultural.

Linguistic techniques and methods opened the way to the scientific description of kinship in the so-called primitive society. The system of kinship, thus, can be analyzed on the basis of the rule of formal interdependance and within the syntax of such rule. The circulation of women through marriage between families and

clans constitutes messages the same way words circulate between members of the group. The kinship system is communication that obeys the syntactical rules of language. The relations between the sexes are a form of communication like language. The structure of cultural phenomena provides an understanding of the structure of the human mind, for such phenomena are the result of a number of inherent mental categories (Levi-Strauss). Cultural phenomena, as systems of language, are not limited to kinship and myth, but incorporate art and literature (Barthes), the patient's speech (Lacan), and written texts (Althusser and Foucault).

PROPOSITION II

Cultural Phenomena, Like Language, Are Systems of Signs. Each Cultural Phenomenon Consists of Two Parts : The Signifier (The Concept) and the Signified (The Content of Signification).

The study of signs derives from Saussure's suggestion that the linguistic sign unites, not a name and a thing, but a signifier (a concept) and a signified (a sound image that reflects the psychological imprint of the sound and the impression that it makes on the senses). This provided a basis for the study of different aspects of human culture in so far as these, like language, can be viewed as systems of signs. Thus, a cultural phenomenon is composed of a signifier (that which is apparent and explicit) and a signified (that which remains beneath the surface and implicit). As such, a stone axe is not merely a thing, but a sign that stands for something (Levi-Strauss), and a theatrical play is not only a play, but a phenomenon that signifies something (Barthes). The signifier and the signified are interrelated. The analysis of the signifier permits one to discover the covert meanings underlying the overt content of cultural phenomena. The Oedipus myth is treated as a signifier that signifies man's reflection on the belief in the autochthony of man and the actual knowledge that man is born from the union of man and woman (Levi-Strauss). The tourist guide can be viewed as a signifier that signifies an attempt to suppress the reality of everyday life of a given society and reduce such reality into monuments (Barthes). The patient's dreams are signifiers that signify

needs and desires (Lacan). Modern culture sought to suppress the relation between the signifier and the signified. Thus, a novel is only a novel and a painting is made for the sake of art and cannot be related to any value system. This reduces cultural phenomena into nothingness. The aspect of nothingness in modern culture is not accidental, for such tendency serves to prevent individuals from critical evaluation and participation in the production of their own culture. The role of the critical writer and sociologist is to uncover the meaning underlying the manifest content of cultural phenomena, for these phenomena do not only express reality, but signify it as well (Barthes). Lacan carries the analysis of signs beyond that of the patient's speech and suggests individuals present themselves to one another as signifiers. Thus, communication takes place at the level of signifier, a level that reflects the diversity and complexity of meaning inherent in human speech. The signifier does not manifest itself at the surface level, but remains underneath the conscious expression of cultural phenomena.

PROPOSITION III

Cultural Phenomena Are Manifestations of Structures; a Structure Is Characterized by Totality, Dynamic Transformation, and Self Regulation.

The different cultural phenomena are manifestations of structures that do not manifest themselves at the surface level, but remains beneath the conscious expression, and thus, unconscious. Hence, a myth is not a structure as such, but a manifestation of deep and unconscious structure. The structuralist perspective maintains Piaget's triangular basis of structure : the structure as a totality, the structure as a system of dynamic transformation, and the structure as self-regulated.

The Structure as a Totality

The different elements of a structure are interrelated and governed by a unity of elements. Thus, each element cannot be

understood in isolation from other elements comprising that unity. The structural analysis seeks to examine not particular elements, but the way in which such elements relate to one another in a structure (the syntactical rule of language). Thus, the presence of the dragon and the Sphinx in the Oedipus myth does not explain the myth. The importance of such figures resides in the way in which they relate to other elements comprising the structure. The different elements of speech (Lacan), novel (Barthes), and writtent text (Althusser and Foucault) do not exist in isolation, but acquire their significance in relation to other elements of a structure and must be studied as such. This is apparent in the analysis of the patient's dreams in which the analyst attempts to establish the missing link between the different events of the dream. The analyst seeks to punctuate the patient's discourse and suggest the way events express the unconscious that is structured like language (Lacan). The study of art and literature indicates that elements of cultural phenomena closely relate to a structure. Thus, a particular character of a novel does not appear accidentally, but represents the way a culture evaluates certain position, i.e., the manual worker often is portrayed as someone who is merely motivated by economic need of immediate gratification. The analysis of written texts also indicates that the interdependence of various concepts reflects a problematic (Althusser).

The Structure as a System of Dynamic Transformation

The structure of cultural phenomena is not static. The elements and the structure are interdependent based on mutual influence, and as such, the structure is both structuring as well as structured. The structure of knowledge can be altered when the amount of change in elements is so great that it amounts to a break with the previous structure. The different elements of the work of Cuvier, Ricardo, and Bopp have brought irremediable alterations to knowledge and gave rise to a new structure of knowledge centered around man as the object of study (Foucault).

The Structure as Self-regulated

The notion of self-regulation is interpreted to mean that the dynamism of the structure lies beneath the observable. The

concept "structure" should not be identified with what is directly observable, for what is observable is a manifestation of a deep structure. This structure remains unconscious while it makes comprehensible the observable (proposition IV).

PROPOSITION IV

The Underlying Structures of Cultural Phenomena Are Unconscious; the Unconscious Structures, However, Are Accessible Through Linguistically Mediated Form.

The study of the unconscious traditionally identified with Freud's model of psychical apparatus, is a persistent theme in the structural analysis of such domains as mythology (Levi-Strauss), discourse (Lacan), literature (Barthes), and written texts (Althusser and Foucault). The structure of cultural phenomena can be explained and accounted for in terms other than those of the conscious level. The structure of myth cannot be explained as the surface content of the story it tells, for the conscious explanations are merely secondary elaborations. This explains why the native cannot provide "rational" justification for his system of thinking and why the modern man does not question such rituals and customs as table manners, type of dress, and many of his religious and political attitudes (Levi-Strauss). Levi-Strauss suggests the unconscious activity of the mind appears to be the same for all minds, primitive and civilized. The structures of cultural phenomena are the product of the same instrument : the human mind.

The theme of the unconscious is also apparent in contemporary culture. The interest in a therapeutic situation is not to be directed towards the conscious reasons and rationalizations given for conduct, but to the determining factors that are found in the unconscious life of man. The conscious level of speech can hide the unconscious factors restricted or suppressed by the superego. Lacan provides a distinct insight on Freud's concept of the unconscious, an insight which places the unconscious in the domain of sociological inquiry. Lacan suggests the view that the unconscious is merely the seat of instincts must be "re-thought."

This provides little understanding and even a misunderstanding of Freud's theory, a misunderstanding that is perpetuated by ego psychology. The unconscious underlies man's desires that pertain to relations validated by the community and the symbolic order in general. This is consistent with Backer's view who argued that the traditional view of the Oedipus complex leads to the death of meaning in human relations, and that such relations are guided by factors other than instincts such as the desire for prestige and what Becker called "the desire to be noticed", both of which come from others.

The concept of the unconscious is necessary for the study of such phenomena as art and literature, for such phenomena tend to hide the link and connection between the physical conditions of life and the ideas and institutions prevalent in a society (Barthes). The unconscious also relates to history. The apparent continuity in the development of knowledge overlooks shifts or discontinuities that do not manifest themselves at the conscious level. These shifts can be articulated through the analysis of texts that suggest new propositions, isolate new facts, build up new concepts, and advocate new modes of inquiry. Thus, the seventeenth century sought a shift in the episteme of knowledge when man was made the object of study. This led to the rise of such sciences as biology, economics, and philology that relate to man's being, work, and language (Foucault is more interested in the work of Ricardo that constitutes a break with previous view of labor than in that of critical Thinkers. The unconscious also characterizes other texts. Thus, critical writings embody a distinctive epistemology of which the author was unaware. The epistemology is critical of the problematic of the classical text and attempts to establish a new problematic of political economy through the discovery of missing words in classical text (Althusser).

The unconscious exhibits itself through language. The unconscious is present in myth, patient's speech, and written texts in general. The unconscious can be analyzed through principles borrowed from linguistics such as the syntactical relation that exists between the different parts of a dream, for the unconscious itself is structured like language. The structuralist view does not

disregard conscious expressions of cultural phenomena, but uses such expressions as a necessary bridge to the unconscious.

PROPOSITION V

Structural Analysis Is Based More on the Synchronical than on the Diachronical Aspect of Cultural Phenomena.

The themes of synchrony and diachrony were introduced by Saussure who argued that language is not a text subject to comparative analysis through time (diachronically), but a self-whole and must be studied in itself (synchronically). This resembles the metaphor of a game of chess. The fact that the game passed from Persia to Europe is independent from the internal rules of the game. Thus, the structural analysis examines not the evolution of myth through time, but the internal structure of such a myth cross culturally. The structure of myth does not lend itself to the process of evolution and it is the same everywhere. The structure is the product of the same instrument: the human mind. The manifestations of cultural phenomena cannot be attributed to the mind, but to the artificial conditions of social environment.

Levi-Strauss questions the perceptions of primitive thinking which postulate that such systems of thinking relate to an elementary stage in the development of knowledge. This view is a misconception based on an evolutionary scheme that regards one society as the most advanced expression of evolution and others as merely survivals of earlier stages. The primitive tends to build intelligible systems of thoughts on more abstracts level such as myth and religion. These are self-contained systems which do not subscribe to the evolutionary process. The primitive like the civilized observes, experiments, classifies, and theorizes. Thus, primitive thinking is as valid as civilized and what is primeval is not inferior. The mental activities of the primitive and the civilized do not differ in kind, but in the type of phenomena to which they are applied (Levi-Strauss).

The structuralist view does not disregard history, but demystifies the concept of time, for little history in the study of such

phenomena as mythology is better than no history at all. Yet, history falls outside the domain of structuralist inquiry. History records transformations over time (not structurally) and organizes its facts in relation to conscious expression, not just in relation to unconscious conditions of cultural phenomena. The synchronical analysis is apparent in the study of critical text. The economic, political, ideological, and scientific spheres of social life are understood when analyzed synchronically : the way in which they relate to one another in a system. The ideological sphere, for example, cannot be analyzed in isolation, for it is defined in terms of its relation to economic, political, and scientific spheres of a system. The relation between spheres, however, is less determinant because of the relative autonomy of each sphere and the mutual influence that spheres exercise upon one another (Althusser).

PROPOSITION VI

The Different Historical Transformations Reflect Shifts, Ruptures, Breaks, or Discontinuities, and Do Not Lend Themselves to Uniform Models of Temporarization.

The development of knowledge is characterized by shifts and discontinuities. Hence, each historical period has an episteme : a mode of being that guides knowledge at a period in history. The episteme of a period can be altered when the amount of change in elements is so great that it amounts to a break with the existing system. The limitations of the evolutionary scheme are apparent in historical analysis. The major break in the development of knowledge occurred in the seventeenth century with the rise of science which made man the object of knowledge. This in particular can be articulated through the analysis of madness and criminology. The seventeenth century witnessed a shift in man's perception of madness when the mad were isolated and confined. This shaped a whole range of man's thinking and dealing with madness, particularly the creation of houses of confinement and asylums and the development of the science of psychiatry. The seventeenth century altered man's view of criminology. The

emphasis shifted from the punishment of the body to that of the soul. This led to the birth of prisons as institutions that not only isolated the criminal, but also sought to rehabilitate his soul and make him able to function in society. Foucault maintains that such institutions, whether mental hospitals or prisons, cannot liberate man from madness or criminal tendencies, for such institutions categorize the mad and the criminal and deny them any status of identity in the community.

The world of institutions gave rise to a broken language where the language of the outsiders predominates and that of those inside is reduced to silence. Hence, such institutions perpetuate what they sought to eliminate. The discontinuity in historical analysis is apparent in the work of Althusser. Critical theory is anti-historicism, Althusser suggests. Thus, each historical period has a distinct mode of production that is not an accumulation of events, but a phenomenon separate from the previous mode of production. There are forms of superstructure whose elements are secondary manifestations and have no privileged position in the system. Thus, the French Revolution was a historical break that gave rise to a bourgeois mode of production, and the Russian Revolution similarly was another break that set the conditions for a socialist mode of production.

PROPOSITION VII

The Object of Structural Analysis Is not Man the Possessor of Meanings, but the Structure of Cultural Phenomena of Which Man Is the Fabricator.

The structuralist perspective does not grant man a special status in the social world, for man is not a thing, but an activity governed by structure. The perspective proposes a shift from too much self-examination and the heroic vision of man as the source and the creator of his own history and institutions to the rules governing his thinking and behavior. Hence, man as such does not possess meanings. The meanings rather reside in the activity of man that cannot be understood in isolation, but in relation to

- (1) R. PINTO : "La liberté d'opinion et d'information, contrôle juridictionnel et contrôle administratif"; Paris, Domat Monchrestien, 1957 ; pages 41 et 37.
- (2) B. VOYENNE : "Le droit à l'information" R.E.S. Aubier Montaigne 1970 ; 221 pages, p. 71 et 75.
- (3) J. SCHWOEBEL : "Pour un Statut de cogestion dans la presse" *Eco. et Humanisme* ; p. 31.
- (4) J. KAYSER : "Mort d'une Liberté" ; Paris, Ed. Plon, 1955, p. 7 et 26.
- (5) A. PAYSANT : "Droit à l'information et statut de l'entreprise de presse" F.F.S.J.-C.E.D.I. ; Université de Caen, 1976, p. 19.
- (6) B. POURPRIX : "La presse gratuite" – *Eco. et Humanisme* – p. 53.
- (7) J. SAUVAGEOT : "La presse quotidienne et ses paradoxes" *Le Monde* 22-25 septembre 1970.
- (8) F. BALLE : "Institutions et publics des moyens d'information". Ed. Montchrétien ; p. 197.
- (9) P.J. LAMINANA : "L'Etat et l'Information", Thèse d'Etat, Paris 2, 1967 ; p. 15.
- (10) Paul BRET : "Information et Démocratie" – Ed. M. PUGET – 164 p. page 19 (c'est nous qui soulignons)
- (11) J. RIVERO : op. citée, p. 473.
- (12) F. BALLE : op. citée, p. 207.
- (13) J.P. LAMINANA : op. citée, p. 18.
- (14) J. RIVERO : op. citée.
- (15) F. TERROU : cours cité, p. 109.
- (16) R.G. SCHWARTZENBERT ; "L'Etat Spectacle". E. Flammarion, 1977, p. 306.
- (17) R. DUMAS : "Le Droit de l'information" ; Thémis, PUF., 1981 ; 607 p., p. 40.
- (18) A. PAYSANT, J. SCHWOEBEL : "Pour un statut de la presse" ; F.F.S.J.C. EDI Université de Caen, 1976, 171 p., p. 170.
- (19) Revue *Après-demain* n° 159 – décembre 1973 ; p. 22.
- (20) F. BALLE : op. citée, p. 208.
- (21) "Les libertés publiques : réflexions du comité pour une Charte des libertés". Ed. Gallimard ; 1976, 283 pages.
- (22) F. BALLE : op. citée, p. 212.
- (23) Les cahiers de la communication : Radio-Télévision : La fin du monopole ? La loi du 29 juillet 1982 – Ed. Dunod – N° spécial – Vol. 3 – 1983.

structures (Levi-Strauss), symbolic order (Lacan), power (Barthes), mode of production (Althusser), or episteme (Foucault).

The activity of the primitive such as his systems of myth, rituals, magic, and kinship relates to structures that remain unconscious. The patient's speech relates to unconscious desires that pertain to the symbolic order. The different forms of art and literature, as activity of man, are languages whose signification relates to power structures. The critical expistemology rejects man's essence of freedom and rationality, and as such, it is anti-humanism. Critical analytical method does not start from man, but from social and economic conditions that give rise to his activity. The content of a text does not depend on the life of its author, such text rather is caught up in a system of reference to other works that relate to a particular episteme. Thus, the works of Cuvier, Ricardo, and Bopp relate to an episteme that made man the object of scientific inquiry. The episteme remains to be discovered for it governs those who work under its aegis. Thus, the concern with discipline and punishment since the seventeenth century derives from an episteme that seeks to acquire knowledge about the human subject : the normal and the mad.

PROPOSITION VIII

The Different Aspects of Cultural Phenomena Closely Relate To Power, but that Power at Times Is Both Structuring and Structured Due to the Complexity and the Mutual Influence That Exists Between and Among the Different Spheres of the Social System.

The relation between cultural phenomena and power is an integral part of structural inquiry. Cultural phenomena such as the processes of discipline and punishment, literature, speech, and ideology cannot exist outside the domain of the exercise of power. This relation often is obscured when the unofficial language, which resists the language of power, is reduced to silence and the different expressions of cultural phenomena are viewed as signifiers without signification. Power and language are interrelated. Speech is not merely a verbalization of conflict, but

to very object of man's conflict (Foucault). Human speech is the object of man's desire (Lacan). The struggle for the control of language in particular gives new dimension to social control in that such control is carried out through the most diffuse and effective means that constitute the core of cultural phenomena : language. Hence, the perceptions of madness are the result of a discourse closely related to the power of reason. The language of madness, as unofficial language, is excluded from the common discourse. The individual is mad if his discourse is not part of the common discourse. The man, once categorized as such, is isolated and confined and his discourse is treated as null and void. The process of punishment is part of the exercise of power. Thus, when the human body was the property of the sovereign, punishment was directed against the body of the condemned. Later, when the human body was the property of a society governed by a social contract, punishment shifted to the soul of the criminal in an attempt to resocialize him. Literature, whether it is art, novel, sport, or theater, is related to social class. The content as well as the style of literature relates to the interest of a social class. Thus, classical literature was a language of the elite. Modern literature, although a plurality of texts, is a reflection of what Barthes calls the "bourgeois condition" and retains the basic feature of a classical text : instrumentality (Barthes). Power is a major theme in critical text. The political, ideological, and scientific spheres of a system relate to the economic condition that constitute the basis of power (Althusser).

The extent to which power is used is dependent on the object to which power is applied. The control of language is not always dominated by a group, but at times language can be a product of many participant individuals. The distinction between language, as a collective contract, and speech, as an individual act, informed Barthes' analysis of such cultural objects as food, fashion, furniture, and architecture. These systems do not merely originate from a group that deliberately elaborates the codes of such systems, but also from individuals who give these systems a particular character (Barthes). The control of the economic sphere of a system does not necessarily translate into the control of the political, ideological, and scientific spheres because of the relative

autonomy of each sphere and the mutual influence that these spheres exercise upon one another (Althusser).

PROPOSITION IV

The Criteria Underlying the Study of Cultural Phenomena Are Universal in Character.

The expressions of cultural phenomena vary cross culturally, but the structures governing such expressions are the same. These structures, which remain unconscious, are not relative but universal. Thus, the structure of totemism and the Oedipus myth is the same : an attempt to overcome contradictions between nature and culture. Levi-Strauss makes a distinction between relativism and universalism, a distinction widely accepted in psychoanalysis. The relative, made possible by customs and traditions, is cultural and the universal is natural. The problem of incest is not merely a cultural phenomenon, but a stage that marks the transition from nature to culture, and as such, it is a universal phenomenon (Levi-Strauss). The aspect of universalism also characterizes the study of the unconscious that underlies the manifest content of human speech. The nature of the unconscious is dependent on a symbolic order, but the unconscious as a structure is present in any discourse (Lacan). The theme of universalism is inherent in Barthes' analysis of the way cultural phenomena relate to power and in Althusser's postulation of the way different spheres of a system relate to one another. Thus, a cultural element cannot be studied in isolation, but in relation to other elements of culture (Barthes and Althusser).

PROPOSITION V

Structural Inquiry Is Based on Empirical Observations. However, the Observable Is Only a Necessary Bridge To the Unconscious Structures of Cultural Phenomena.

The study of cultural phenomena is dependent on observable facts such as the different elements of myths, novels, theatrical

plays, and other texts. The observable, however, is not examined as an end in itself, but as a necessary step that uncovers the unconscious structure of the phenomenon in question. That is, the surface levels of phenomena are to be explained by unconscious structures. This becomes necessary in the light of the fact that the human subject cannot provide justification (which are unconscious) for his thinking and behavior. The subject may not have adequate concepts that constitute the basis of expression. The thoughts of the subject do not exist in isolation. The separation of thoughts from society is an error that relates to the complexity of modern society that obscures the real link between the physical conditions and ideals prevalent in society. The structural analysis, however, is dependent on empirical observations. Thus, the different elements of a myth are necessary to uncover the underlying structure of such myth. Here, Levi-Strauss maintains that the different versions of a myth do not alter the main theme of myth, for such myth is governed by a structure. This eliminates the problem of the plurality of versions that has been the main obstacles of the progress of mythological studies (Levi-Strauss). The manifest content of speech is necessary to uncover the unconscious desires of the speaker. The analyst brings into light such facts as memories, childhood experience, emotional development, family relationships, life style, and intellectual capacities to help delineate those desires that remain beyond the conscious expression of the speaker (Lacan). The elements of literature are to be studied as signifiers whose signification relates to the distribution of power. Barthes questions objectivity in the study of cultural phenomena for such objectivity leads to a type of language whose dominant feature is instrumentality. The writer, rather, must be engaged in the social world and make a choice (Barthes). Critical text is an attempt to construct theoretical concepts and general laws operating behind the economic scene (Althusser). The study of texts of periods of history is necessary to discover the unconscious intentions and activities which take place despite the authors and which relate to a particular episteme (Foucault).

The properties of structuralism expressed in these propositions constitute its contribution. These can be reduced to four

essentially: the study of cultural phenomena as systems of language using principles developed in linguistics; the thesis that the structures of such phenomena are unconscious; the analysis of the internal composition of phenomena as synchronic totalities containing their own means of intelligibility; and the postulation that sense data are only a necessary means to uncover the underlying structures of phenomena. These characteristics distinguish structuralism from other theoretical perspectives in sociology. It remains to be seen how this perspective compares and contrasts with other other theoretical perspectives and cross-culturally. This will be a next endeavor.