CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS:
THE
ANTHROPOLOGIST
AS
EVERYMAN

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A Study of Man Paper
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Let us suppose for a moment that astronomers should warn us that an unknown planet was nearing the Earth and would remain for twenty or thirty years at close range, afterwards to disappear for ever. In order to avail ourselves of this unique opportunity, neither effort nor money would be spared to build telescopes and satellites especially designed for the purpose. Should not the same be done at a time when one-half of mankind, only recently acknowledged as such, is still so near to the other half that except for men and money its study raises no problem, although it will soon become impossible for ever? If the future of anthropology could be seen in this light, no investigation would appear more urgent and no other could compete with it in importance. For native cultures are disintegrating faster than radioactive bodies, and the Moon, Mars and Venus will still be at the same distance from the Earth when that mirror which other civilizations still hold up to us will have so receded from our eyes that however costly and elaborate the instruments at our disposal we may never again be able to recognize and study this image of ourselves which will be lost and gone for ever. 

It is highly ironical that social anthropology owes its origins in the mid-nineteenth century to historical conditions which even then were in the process of corrupting its field of study, the world of men. Like a fungus growth spreading across and destroying the surface of a painting but leaving certain isolated fragments untouched, some as if by chance, others perhaps because they contained some element which made them resistant, Western imperialism reached into remote corners of the globe, bringing new forms of social life to the notice of the budding discipline, only to destroy or contaminate with its touch the societies in which these forms were embodied. The tragedy of the situation, not only for anthropology but for all mankind, was that the healthy growth of the fungus was preferred to the original, with not a thought spared for the ancientness and the
variety of its composition. Anthropology has always been a salvage operation, an attempt to recreate the whole picture from the fragments. Fortunately some fragments remain: some left unscathed because of geographical inaccessibility, others because they have successfully resisted change. But year by year the fragments become fewer, and the task confronting the anthropologist becomes more difficult, with the position today more critical than ever. The so-called primitive societies with which anthropology has traditionally concerned itself with are either disappearing completely, under the influence of disease, population dispersal, and other factors, or undergoing such great and rapid changes as Western culture overtakes them that they now appear to fall outside the realm of anthropological research. 2 Australia provides only too ready an example of this dual process: the traditional tribal groups which remain - and it is suspect to call any of them traditional any longer - have such a long history of contact with whites that none of the old ways of life can have escaped modification of one sort or other; as to the other aborigines, living on reserves or in urban fringe areas, and aborigines in name only, contact takes on biological and sociological as well as historical dimensions; in short, all aborigines, both full- and part-blood, are at varying stages along the path towards problems they raise and are obliged to face are shared by other ethnic groups living in Australia as well as those whites who occupy the same status positions in the Australian class structure. If, from this, it appears that, in Australia, the process of decomposition is
in its terminal stages compared, for example, with the position in New Guinea, the future of the latter as a field of anthropological studies holds very little promise, for, although the breakdown of tribal life may not be proceeding sufficiently fast in terms of Australia's caretaker role in the area, it is already far advanced. Here as elsewhere it would seem that the anthropologist will shortly have to yield the field to the sociologist. Does this mean, in the words of its officiating prophet, Claude Lévi-Strauss, that anthropology has "reached the point where it has nothing left to study"?3 This is an important question to which we shall return. But there is another question closely linked with it which will lead us more directly to the heart of Lévi-Strauss's ideas.

It is not so much a new question as the earlier one couched in slightly different terms and at a somewhat different level: if primitive societies disappear, where will the anthropologist, who until now has conducted fieldwork among them, be able to live the highly subjective experience which fieldwork entails and which prepares him and makes him fit to examine man and his works objectively on a global scale? One of the great contributions which "savage" peoples can make to modern Western man is to show him alternative and viable ways of life, to provide him with a wide range of models for social existence from which he might have chosen had he not decided to follow the path of technological advancement and to create a type of society whose principal attribute is the ability to absorb vast numbers of heterogeneous elements borrowed from other cultures into a dynamic and
apparently homogeneous whole. For the anthropologist the importance of "savage" societies is even more basic:

... Unlike the natural sciences, the sciences of man cannot originate their own experimentation.

Every type of society, of belief or institution, every way of life, constitutes a ready-made experiment the preparation of which has taken thousands of years and as such is irreplaceable. When a community disappears, a door closes forever locking away knowledge which is unique.

However, the anthropologist immediately finds himself in a paradoxical situation, for the societies he studies because of their strangeness and remoteness are for this very reason apt to revolt or offend him, and worse still, to remain inaccessible to him. This feeling of repugnance is not confined to the anthropologist, but occurs wherever man encounters "ways of life, thought or belief" to which he is unaccustomed, even to the extent that he will sometimes deny the status of humanity to those groups of men which exhibit them. This attitude often takes extreme forms, more than sufficient instances of which might be culled from Australia's past, not only from the history of white-aboriginal relations, but from the state of affairs which prevailed between native groups even before the white man arrived. In short, to think of the attitude as peculiarly white is to be unnecessarily naive, as the following striking example drawn from Race and History reveals:

In the Greater Antilles, a few years after the discovery of America, while the Spaniards were sending out Commissions of investigation to discover whether or not the natives had a soul, the latter spent their time drowning white prisoners in order to ascertain, by long observation, whether or not their bodies would decompose.
For the anthropologist it is vital that he overcome this almost "natural" repugnance to societies other than his own, an operation which, according to Levi-Strauss, involves his spending considerable time in contact with them, combined with active participation in their way of life, thereby accomplishing "that inner revolution that will make him into a new man."  

But there is more to this "inner revolution" than simply gaining a sympathetic outlook towards foreign cultures; for real sympathy of this sort reveals two different facets: firstly, the acquired ability to recreate the synthesis which constitutes a foreign culture, and to grasp its validity; in other words, to see societies as functioning wholes or systems in which each custom and institution has a part to play, no matter how strange or odious this may appear in itself. The second facet is really the reverse of the coin: in accepting the functional value of this or that foreign custom or institution we call into question the corresponding beliefs or values in our society which they seem to contradict. This at once raises several problems: why should the anthropologist question various aspects of social life in his own society when he is quite prepared to accept such bizarre customs as cannibalism as important and even valid institutions in some primitive society? If he is unwilling to make moral judgments on aspects of life in primitive societies, should he not maintain the same attitude with regard to his own society? Or is it that the anthropologist is more willing to accept strange customs and institutions because he is less willing to
accept those of his own society? Is it from a feeling of alienation that he is driven to seek in other societies the social satisfactions and refuge he failed to find in his own society?

Questions such as these form the backdrop to much of Lévi-Strauss's masterly confessional work, *A World on the Wane*. One wonders, however, how much the themes developed in this work are due to his being a Frenchman, as well as, and often despite, his being an anthropologist.

II

It is well known that anthropology, especially in its empirical aspect, has in large measure grown up in what the French would call the Anglo-Saxon countries: England, the United States of America, India, various countries in Africa, Australia. Lévi-Strauss would see this as no accident. It is more than mere coincidence that the greatest colonial power, Great Britain, was at the forefront of anthropological research. The reason is obvious: it is simply a function of the vast area of the world it colonized. Further, if Britain or any other colonial power was undismayed in taking over lands inhabited by native peoples it was because it did not classify these peoples as human beings but as things: things which could be hunted like wild animals, things which could be sold as slaves, and ultimately, things which could be studied as things. However much this oversimplifies the situation - it does not, for example, explain the intellectual forces at work
in Europe which led to the development of anthropology in England, Germany, and to a lesser extent, France, and not in Spain or Portugal, all of which had vast colonial empires—it contains more than an element of truth. Certainly the tendency of Western societies to dehumanize other human societies helps account for Lévi-Strauss's absolute insistence on the necessity of fieldwork and his scathing references to "armchair" anthropologists, like Frazer and Tylor, who were content to sit in their offices, elaborating lofty metaphysical constructs from scraps of information sent from all round the world like so much raw material to be woven or recast into whatever the prevailing intellectual fashion demanded.

Anthropology has only progressed because there were men willing to dirty their hands and dig out the raw material. Long before 1925, which marks the date of the establishment of Australia's first Chair of Anthropology, at the University of Sydney, the wealth of research already conducted on the aborigines had been performed almost entirely by amateurs—A. W. Howitt, R. H. Mathews, E. M. Curr, R. Brough Smyth, F. J. Gillen, Sir William Baldwin Spencer, W. E. Roth, John Mathew, and others—attracted toward ethnographic enquiry through having conceived a keen interest in the native population. And living, in the main, in close contact with their subjects, they achieved a high degree of objectivity; or if one prefers, a high degree of objective sympathy. The important point for our present purpose is this: these amateurs were rarely obliged ever to look far afield for native informants; few of them
undertook the long and burdensome expeditions with which modern fieldworkers are familiar; in short, the aborigines simply formed part of their normal daily environment.

We are led to a further point. One wonders whether the "ethnological experience," as Lévi-Strauss calls it, has the same value or significance for the anthropologist living in the Australian or an equivalent setting as it does for anthropologists from countries where native populations have no direct influence on their way of life. The "ethnological experience," although not general in Australia, has been made by a sufficient number of people, both in and out of the anthropological profession, to suggest that it can arise, in time, merely through the constraint of the contact situation.

Lévi-Strauss himself comes close to this realization when, in acknowledging his debt to the American anthropologists, Lowie, Kroeber and Boas, he notes that in America it was "possible to leave one's university and enter primitive territory with no more difficulty than we encounter in leaving Paris for the Basque country or the Mediterranean." If Lévi-Strauss was initiated into the ways of the "primitive" with the eating of koro, a whitish worm which the Kaingang Indians of Brazil extract from trees, the eating of the witchetty grub would hardly hold the same meaning to a white Australian.

III

But there is more to the "ethnological experience" than overcoming an initial repugnance to native habits and practices,
whether they be culinary or any other. It involves as its essential feature the acquired ability to grasp a society as a whole or as a system, to perceive how certain basic structural principles or "mental categories" underlie what Marcel Mauss, who formerly occupied a personal Chair of Anthropology at the Collège de France and to whom Lévi-Strauss has acknowledged a debt, called "the total social fact." Immediately, however, we are faced with another question; why should the anthropologist seek to discover these basic structural principles in so-called primitive societies rather than in his own society? Part of the answer lies in the history of anthropology, part, too, as we have already suggested, in the strangeness and remoteness of primitive societies, which present the anthropologist with modes of existence outside his normal range of experience, and which, because of these factors, oblige him, it is hoped, to adopt an aloof and objective viewpoint. The third reason is perhaps the most important as it hinges on the traditional anthropological distinction between "primitive" or "small-scale" societies and "modern" or "large-scale" societies, postulated in various forms by Spencer, Maine, Weber, Durkheim and others. Lévi-Strauss takes up this traditional distinction, but makes it more flexible by couching it in new terms. He says, in effect, that the study of primitive societies is of especial value because they exhibit the qualities of what he calls authenticity and meaningfulness to the highest degree. The concept of authenticity refers to the type of social relationships to be found in primitive societies; primitive societies
are, to a far greater degree than the others, based on personal relationships, on concrete relations between individuals . . . The small size of the societies known as 'primitive' generally permits of such relationships and that, even where this is impossible because the societies of this type are too extensive or scattered, relations between individuals who are extremely remote from one another are based on the most direct kind of relationship, of which kinship is usually the prototype.12

On the other hand in modern societies,

our relations with one another are now only occasionally and fragmentarily based upon global experience, the concrete 'apprehension' of one person by another. They are largely the result of a process of indirect reconstruction, through written documents. We are no longer linked to our past by an oral tradition which implies direct contact with others (storytellers, priests, wise men, or elders), but by books amassed in libraries, books from which we endeavour - with extreme difficulty - to form a picture of their authors. And we communicate with the immense majority of our contemporaries by all kinds of intermediaries - written documents or administrative machinery - which undoubtedly vastly extend our contacts but at the same time make those contacts somewhat 'unauthentic'. This has become typical of the relationship between the citizen and the public authorities.13

The concept of "meaningfulness" is more difficult to define, but it clearly relates to the level of authenticity to be found in the two types of society. If primitive societies are somehow more authentic, then it would seem that the principles underlying their organization must be operating at a more meaningful level. This is borne out, initially, by the relative ease with which they can be seen at work in primitive societies; further, the uniformity and generality of their application have generated a characteristically homogeneous social life, against which the heterogeneity exhibited within
any Western society stands in sharp relief. In Western societies it is as though the basic principles of social life which are probably everywhere the same have been translated into a multiplicity of codes, with every individual operating and understanding, to a greater or lesser extent, and with varying degrees of success, those codes which correspond to his various roles and statuses and which constitute a set, other individuals sharing the same codes, but no two individuals sharing exactly the same set. The greater the multiplicity of codes the less the denominator common to them all expresses any one of them. A breakdown in communication becomes increasingly likely.

Certainly it is a very convenient way of envisaging a society, that is, as a language. Without some form of language, whether it be oral, genticulatory, or any other, no human society could exist. Possibly because of this there seems to be a ready-made comparison between the two phenomena, often applied in likening the process whereby a child becomes acculturated to that of learning a language. From here it is not a difficult step to conceiving of all aspects of social life as various languages or codes which have to be learned as parts of a vast communications network by which people maintain contact with one another. To Lévi-Strauss this conception must be of some intellectual satisfaction for not only does it dovetail neatly with his view that language marks the transition from nature to culture, from animal to man, but, further, it harmonizes perfectly with his concept of anthropology as a
semiological science, the study, to use the words of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, of "the life of signs within society."14

As a conception of social life it is even more valuable than this might suggest. The aim of every science is to be objective and anthropology is no exception. The observer must not only transcend "his own personal beliefs, preferences, and prejudices". He must aim at a higher objectivity still:

The observer must not only place himself above the values accepted by his society or groups, but must adopt certain definite methods of thought; he must reason on the basis of concepts which are valid not merely for an honest and objective observer, but for all possible observers. Thus the anthropologist does not simply set aside his own feelings; he creates new mental categories and helps to introduce notions of space and time, opposition and contradiction, which are as foreign to traditional thought as the concepts met with today in certain brands of the natural sciences.15

In other words, anthropology aims at translating social life into a sort of universal "social" language, which unlike those of ordinary existence, is capable of translating the whole reality and of being understood by all.

If when faced with the incredible variety and diversity exhibited by the societies of man we feel inclined to consider this a well-nigh impossible task we would do well to pay heed to the advances made by structural linguistics which, for the purpose of analysis, have reduced all human languages, on the phonological level, to a relatively small number of binary oppositions; vocalic/non-vocalic, tense/lax, voiced/unvoiced, etc. Lévi-Strauss hopes to perform the same type of operation
in the social sphere. Before a child learns to speak it is capable of producing an extremely wide range of sounds. Learning to speak consists in determining the sounds which are meaningful for the language system of the society to which one belongs, and of arranging them in some meaningful order. A large number of sounds is forgotten; certain combinations are considered impossible. For a society, the range of choices open to it is equally vast, if not vaster, and the selection made serves the same purpose, to create a meaningful, functioning system. The anthropologist has to act as a sort of "social linguist", to analyse the system of signs which is society, and to determine its underlying structures.

IV

It would be difficult, as some have done, to deny the validity of the comparison between language and society, or even to debate the legitimacy of adopting language as the model of society; after all, language is itself an essential part of social life. A more questionable aspect of Lévi-Strauss's general approach is, perhaps, the way in which he conceives the transition from the intensely subjective experience of fieldwork to the extreme objectivity of his "social linguistics". According to Lévi-Strauss whatever antagonism exists is resolved in the anthropologist's own mentality.

The first point to be made in clarifying this problem is that fieldwork never or hardly ever involves full participation by the anthropologist in the life of the society being studied.
Not only does evidence suggest it is undesirable (full participation, described derogatively as "going native", would obscure certain aspects of social life which might otherwise be observed); there is the additional factor, that if we study primitive societies, the distance inherent in the situation, and maintained consciously or unconsciously by the observer, is impossible to overcome. Indeed if it were not unavoidable it would be expedient that this element of "distantiation" should exist:

Anthropology is . . . in a fairly comparable situation to that of astronomy. We would know much more about the planet Mars if we could walk on its surface instead of looking at it from 35 million miles away. But this sort of study would have to do with geography, physics, chemistry, and perhaps even biology, and no longer astronomy. Indeed, astronomy can be defined as the science which allows the discovery of certain essential properties of objects from which we are extremely remote. The remoteness of these objects is important in this regard since their properties would be less easily perceptible if we looked at them from closer range.

Astronomy and anthropology are frequently linked in Lévi-Strauss's writings, and, indeed, the comparison is striking in its aptness. Let us examine its implications. When we look at the night sky what we perceive differs to an astonishing degree from the reality as established by astronomers. From simple visual observation of the heavens we would be justified in thinking that the celestial bodies, apart from a few obvious exceptions, were arranged in a flat plane, not so very far above our heads. Certainly there is nothing to indicate their real size and real position, or the real relations which
exist between them. Astronomy, however, seeks to establish these realities, which are almost always at a far remove from the appearance. Occasionally reality and appearance coincide: for example, the Pleiades form a visual group which is also a genuine stellar cluster and not the result of a line-of-sight effect; however, we would be deceived in thinking that the stars comprising the cluster are close together for the real diameter of the group exceeds fifteen light years. In addition to removing the earth and with it man from the centre of the universe, astronomy has introduced into its analytical machinery, concepts such as distance, size, composition, motion, temperature, colour, and luminosity, which go far towards explaining the universe around us; anthropology has helped perform an analogous operation, demoting Western man from his position of superiority as the measuring rod of all human societies, and arriving at different elements whereby the whole human social behaviour might be understood. But if astronomy has helped make the universe more vast and discerned differences between heavenly bodies which formerly appeared similar, anthropology has made the world of man less strange; it has universalized man and discovered similarities where none was suspected.

To reduce the distances between human societies, says Lévi-Strauss, we must penetrate beneath the concrete to the reality, to the underlying structures, to the structural laws of the human unconscious which will explain all human social behaviour. Anthropology, as Lévi-Strauss freely states, is soon reduced to a psychology:
The further a way of thought is removed from our own, the more we are condemned to seeing it in only essential properties, common to all thought. Consequently, anthropology might collaborate with child psychology and animal psychology, but only in so far as the three disciplines acknowledge that what they are striving to do, through different means, is to grasp common properties, which very likely reflect the structure of the brain.18

But if anthropology as a psychology is obliged to adopt the "astronomical" viewpoint, firstly, because it has no alternative, and secondly, because this viewpoint offers distinct advantages, allowing properties of human societies - what Marcel Mauss called "facts of general functioning" - to emerge which might otherwise remain hidden under a mass of exotic and incomprehensible surface detail, how can it guarantee the reality of these structural categories which exist only at the unconscious level? How can we have access to them?

The anthropologist is in an avowedly difficult position. He has no elaborate equipment at his disposal comparable to the telescope or spectroscope of the astronomer, or to the microscope and dyes of the histologist, to enable him to explore beneath or beyond the normal perceptual reality; in short, he is his own instrument of observation. The message contained in this is clear: the only objectivity to which the anthropologist can aspire must be achieved through his own subjective experience. Consequently, to no one does the old Socratic motto - Know thyself - more apply. This self-knowledge can only come, Lévi-Strauss says, from the physical and mental
stress of fieldwork, from being cast into "a world in which everything is foreign to him, and often hostile".\textsuperscript{19} He must learn to recognize the prejudices and habits he has acquired from his own society;\textsuperscript{20} he must analyze the factors in his own personal background which have directed him into anthropology.\textsuperscript{21} Only in this way can he prepare himself to grasp the Other in the Self, to discover that humanity which he shares with all other men and which allows him to identify himself with them. More, it allows him to break the bonds of his own specificity; it provides the bridge whereby he can have access to the thought of others, and through that to the unconscious structures of the human mind:

I became convinced that . . . Knowledge was not founded upon sacrifice or barter: it consisted in a choice of those aspects of a subject which were true - which coincided, that is to say, with the properties of my own thought. Not at all, as the neo-Kantians claim, because my thought inevitably exerted a certain constraint on the object under study: but rather because my thought was itself such an object. Being 'of this world', it partook of the same nature as that world.\textsuperscript{22}

Objectivity and subjectivity are thus reconciled. But although the reconciliation, couched in these terms, may be more of the nature of a necessary connection, when put to the test it threatens to disintegrate at every moment. Obviously we can only understand why people think and act in certain ways by trying out their mode of thinking or acting on ourselves. Indeed social life depends on the success of this operation; so for that matter does any system of communication. A strong element of "common-ness" must exist.
However, the very fact that conversations are so full of misunderstandings and wrong interpretations should serve as a warning. One of the ways of avoiding these is repetition, or by expressing the same meaning in different words. But more important for our present argument are the reasons why these misunderstandings occur, one of the principal of which, undoubtedly, is the readiness of the listener to interpret what he has heard in terms of interests and preoccupations which relate to events in his own psychological history. If we read observer for listener, we can now see the predicament in which the anthropologist finds himself: how far can he be certain that his interpretations of social life related to the mainsprings of human thought and not to peculiarities of his own psychological make-up, as far removed from the basic structures of human thought as the social manifestations of them he is observing?

If individual psyches and social behaviour are both reflections, or better, projections, of basic structures of the human mind, it suggests that there is only one level at which interpretations can have any explanatory value, and that is at the level of the structures themselves. Otherwise we are left with a series of images, projected from an unknown source. The danger then is that images may be assigned to a single category on the basis of misplaced or fictitious affinities.

Anthropology in the English-speaking world, wary as it is of the grand theorists who tend to emerge out of Europe like prophets out of the desert, has shown little willingness to be
convinced by Lévi-Strauss. His fecundity and brilliance are admitted but suspicion remains; indeed, suspicion is now hardening into open hostility. No doubt there are many reasons for this, not the least of which being, as Lévi-Strauss himself rather bitterly claims, that many of his professional colleagues have not, or can not, read him. Be that as it may, most criticisms which are made appear to be levelled, perhaps, not directly or explicitly, at the doctrine we have just discussed and which we might easily label "the anthropologist as Everyman". Part of the problem is, of course, that Everyman could never be like Lévi-Strauss. And so the accusations run: he is charged with imposing his own mentality on the world; with endowing with intelligence what can only be intelligible; with revealing more about himself than about the proper subject of his investigations:

An analysis of his . . . work is illuminating for it reveals an obsession with the nature/culture opposition and the notion of alliance. The patterns of Lévi-Strauss's thought emerge clearly, but what of the Indians? 23

The list of obsessions could easily be lengthened: for example, does thought really operate through a series of binary oppositions, as Lévi-Strauss assumes, or is this merely a characteristic of his own mode of thought and that of Frenchmen in general? When Geertz criticizes him for his concept of the "cerebral savage" he is really criticizing him as the "cerebral anthropologist" who wants to cast the world in his own image. 24
Allowing for a certain degree of exaggeration these criticisms are not without justification. On the other hand, it would be wrong to direct them only at Lévi-Strauss, for the personal involvement which is so much a part of anthropology inevitably means that all anthropologists would have to plead guilty to similar charges. In any case, they fade into insignificance when placed alongside the greater charges which Lévi-Strauss would lay at the door of those "armchair" anthropologists to whom we have already referred, aloof and prepared to reduce the remarkable plentitude and variety of social life to a number of forms, empty of content and empty of meaning. For if Lévi-Strauss were obliged to claim any single virtue as his own it would be that he has shown that form and content are indissoluble; that the social life of any tribe, group or community, constitutes, in all its manifestations, a meaningful and systematic whole, a set of variations on a given theme. The dry and sterile reign of formal analysis, when kinship ruled supreme, has succumbed to a more republican regime; and the excesses born of the revolution are the price we must expect to pay for a more liberal and fruitful approach.

This new approach comes at a time when social anthropology, faced with the disappearance of primitive societies must seek to ensure its future and discover a new and acceptable field of interest. Its future lies in only one direction, the study of modern Western societies, and coupled with them, societies in transition. However, their
study according to anthropological techniques raises several major problems. The first of these is the vast weight of information readily available and the difficulty presented in processing it. Sociology has found one answer in the use of statistics. Structuralism ideally offers another and more acceptable solution, claiming as it does that a phenomenon even as complex as modern Western society can be reduced to a not unmanageable number of structural principles without sacrificing, in the analysis, any features of the concrete reality.

There is a second problem: if anthropology is to retain its intimate relationship with its object of study, where, in large-scale societies, will it find those manifestations of social life which are both authentic and meaningful and with which it must continue to concern itself? Happily, despite the outward impersonality of relationships in Western society, there are subsumed within it numerous smaller units in which relationships of a more authentic type play an important role: small-scale communities, factories, clubs, and many others. Anthropology never made it its expressed intention to confine itself solely to "primitive" societies, and although the latter traditionally occupied the position of the major area of inquiry, the stage has now been reached where this position must shortly be usurped by modern large-scale societies, in which over the last thirty years, anthropologists have evinced a steadily growing interest.
How will this change of focus, brought to bear on societies with which we are already familiar, affect the element of "distantiation" on which the "astronomical" viewpoint depends? How will we determine "facts of general functioning" when we observe from such close range? There is an associated problem: if ultimately the value of fieldwork in primitive societies lies in the psychological revolution this produces in the anthropologist, in the "anthropological doubt" created by the confrontation of personal ideas nurtured in one society with ideas directly counter to them and current in the society under investigation\textsuperscript{25}, how will this experience be achieved in the future? Lévi-Strauss himself provides the answer in the first set of questions:

There is no reason to limit the anthropologist's role to the analysis and reduction of . . . external distances; he can also be called upon to take part . . . in the study of phenomena which exist within his own society but which are also characterized by 'distantiation', either because they concern only one section of the group and not the whole of it, or because, even though they are of an over-all nature, they are deeply rooted in the unconscious. Instances of the former case are prostitution and juvenile delinquency and, of the latter, resistance to food or health changes.\textsuperscript{26}

This suggests that there are differences embedded in our own society which allow for fields of experience, if not as great remove from our own experience as those encountered in primitive societies, then certainly at a great distance from it. And undoubtedly the varieties of social life which arise out of the differences would require for their understanding, the same effort of sympathy demanded of the
ethnologist when he enters a primitive tribe. Just as one's personal ideology and the ideology of the society in which one lives never exactly coincide, our relationships with our fellows always involve a conflict between ideologies; we have the advantage, at least, in a study of our society that we are aware of these conflicts; in short, we are continually in a condition of "anthropological doubt", for, much more than men in primitive society, we are obliged increasingly to question and modify our opinions and beliefs in dealing with our fellows, each of whom represents a set of attitudes and values as diversified as the society from which they derive.

And if diversity is the mainspring upon which its social organization rests - and Lévi-Strauss contends that every society must achieve an "optimum diversity" for the purpose - then the distinctions and differences upon which the diversity depends - differences of age, wealth, class, education, employment, etc., - must be reflected in differences of opinion, belief, or attitude, which, as long as they exist, render inconceivable the prospect that men will ever arrive at a complete understanding of other men. While this is so, Lévi-Strauss believes, the future of anthropology remains assured, and its task remains unchanged: to establish the differences and their meaning; to analyze the ways in which men think and act; and from the study of men, to arrive at a picture of Man, valid for all men, in all places, at all times.
References and Notes


4. Ibid., p. 16.


9. Ibid., p. 64.

10. Ibid., p. 140.

11. It would be tempting to find in the preceding discussion the explanation for the relative lack of interest shown in A World on the Wane in the English-speaking world, despite the elegance of John Russell's translation and its enthusiastic reception by the critics (notably Susan Sontag).


13. Ibid., p. 367.


16. Cf. C. Lévi-Strauss, "Today's Crisis in Anthropology", op.cit., p. 17: "Doubtless, the property of anthropology has always been to investigate on the spot or 'from within'. But only because it was impossible to investigate at a distance or 'from without'". This passage makes eminently good sense; unfortunately the translation completely
inverts the meaning of the original French which might be rendered as follows: "Doubtless, the property of anthropology has always been to study 'from without', but only because investigation from within was impossible."

Of course the anthropologist has to live within a society to carry out an ethnographic investigation into it; but this does not make him an integrated member of that society.


See also, Y. Simonis, Claude Lévi-Strauss au la Passion de l'Inceste. Paris, 1968, Chapter IV.


20. It has often been suggested that the anthropologist should preface any monograph he might write with a statement of his personal background so that researchers might take any possible prejudices arising out of it into account. The situation is closely akin to that of the psychoanalyst: "The principle is universally recognized today that the professional psychoanalyst must have a specific and irreplaceable practical background, that of analysis itself; hence all the regulations require that every would-be psychoanalyst be psychoanalysed himself. For the anthropologist, fieldwork represents the equivalent of this unique experience". C. Lévi-Strauss, "The Place of Anthropology in the Social Sciences", op.cit., p. 373.

21. If Susan Sontag ("The Anthropologist as Hero". Against Interpretation. New York, 1966, pp. 69-81) attributes Lévi-Strauss's entering anthropology to a feeling of alienation from his own society, or "intellectual homelessness", Lévi-Strauss himself would perhaps add that this is so for many, if not most, anthropologists. And though this feeling of alienation need not be a precondition of his choice of profession, the anthropologist is bound, sooner or later, to experience it: "The conditions of his life and work cut him off from his own group for long periods together; and he himself acquires
a kind of chronic uprootedness from the sheer brutality of the environmental changes to which he is exposed. Never can he feel himself 'at home' anywhere: he will always be, psychologically speaking, an amputated man". C. Lévi-Strauss, A World on the Wane, p. 58.

22. Ibid., p. 59.


