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The Crisis of Late Structuralism

Perspectivism and Animism: Rethinking Culture, Nature, Spirit, and Bodiliness

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THE PASSING OF LÉVI-STRAUSS

The death of Claude Lévi-Strauss in November 2009 was an event that called for due commemoration of a brilliant anthropological career. It was also an occasion that called upon his epigones and critics among Amazonian anthropologists, as well as the many thinkers from other lines of intellectual and cultural work who were inspired and influenced by his ideas, to contemplate the nature of his contribution and the extent to which it remains a vital force which continues to influence theoretical work in the social and cultural disciplines.

The excitement stimulated by the earlier works of Lévi-Strauss derived from three original theoretical contributions. Firstly, the new theoretical and methodological approach represented by his synthetic concept of “structure”, fully presented for the first time in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949), combined the mathematical idea of a group of transformations constrained by one or more invariant principles (not previously applied in anthropology, although used at least a century earlier in economics by Marx among others), the semiotic notions of classification developed by Saussure in his concepts of the sign and the field of signification, the componential phonology of the Prague School linguists Troubetzkoy and Jakobson, psychological associationism, gestalt ideas of pattern perception, and anthropological notions of comparative typologies of kinship systems and cultural systems of categories. It was a bold and creative synthesis drawn from disparate sources, many of which were unfamiliar to the anthropologists of the day.

Secondly, Lévi-Strauss offered a powerful new idea of the ultimate object of anthropological analysis, the “fundamental structures of the

human mind,” which he conceived as the invariant constraints governing the groups of transformations comprising his structural models, rendered accessible by the methodological application of his new concept of structure. These were invariably conceived as psychological or social psychological principles like reciprocity or the distinction between nature and culture. They constituted sign posts on the way to Lévi-Strauss’s ultimate goal of reducing culture to psychology and psychology to the natural processes of perception and unconscious association that produce the categories of cognition and classification. The end of this analytical trajectory as Lévi-Strauss conceived it was the revelation of nature as both the ultimate transcendental subject and the source of the cognitive features of objective reality. These ideas comprised Lévi-Strauss’s idea of anthropology’s way of answering the big question that was its reason for being, to wit “what is the nature of humanity”? He was perhaps the last major anthropologist to make the quest for an answer to that question the focus of his career.

Thirdly, Lévi-Strauss can be said to have discovered a new subject matter for anthropological analysis: the apparently arbitrary and meaningless details of indigenous myths, cosmologies and systems of knowledge, which he recognized could be analyzed as the code of logical oppositions and identities that constituted the cognitive structures of culture.

The three-fold analytical program based on these three fundamental theoretical innovations exercised great influence on anthropology and related fields, even among many who remained skeptical of Lévi-Strauss’s own analytical practice and his ultimate theoretical goals. It took time for critical thinkers to digest the ideas and clarify their problematic aspects both in theory and in application. Among the many criticisms that have been leveled at the structuralist edifice, three stand out for their relevance to this paper. Firstly, there is a fundamental flaw in Lévi-Strauss’s application of his theoretical model of structure, which can be summed up as applying the right model to the wrong level of the data. Lévi-Strauss followed the conventional conceptions of contemporary semiotics and kinship studies in conceiving the formal organization of individual kinship systems or myths as synchronic tableaux of relations or feature contrasts, leaving no room for internal transformations such as those of mythical plots or developmental cycles of families. He was therefore obliged to try to apply his structural model of groups of transformations bounded by invariant constraints to sets of multiple myths or kinship systems, each considered as a unitary “transform” or “variant” of a master structure (embodied by the invariant principle or principles that supposedly comprise the boundary condition of the group) that cannot be located or defined within any member of

the group—nor, as it has turned out, anywhere else. Neither Lévi-Strauss nor any other avowed structuralist has ever succeeded, to my knowledge, in producing a single analysis of the structure of any “group” of “variants” of any cultural construct or kinship system that actually meets the formal requirements of “invariance” specified by Lévi-Strauss. This does not mean that the model itself is unviable or inapplicable, only that it has not been applied where it should have been, to wit the internal transformations comprising the developmental processes or plots of the individual systems in question (kinship systems or mythical narratives), which do form “groups” of transformations constrained to remain within invariant limits by the overriding requirement of reproducing the system of relations or schematic pattern of symbolic actions in question. If this were done first, the results of these analyses might then be compared at a second level as a “group” of analogous cases, but what one would be comparing would be quite different from the synchronic “variants” that comprise structuralist analyses. A fatal consequence of the synchronizing of the internal patterns of relations comprising the “variants” or “transforms” of structuralist analyses is the flattening of their constituent elements into inert, disarticulated relational or sign-elements deprived of many of the intentional and dynamic (transformative) meanings they have in their original systemic context. This is a point with equal relevance to structuralism and some of its more recent offspring.

The other two main points of Lévi-Strauss’s original structuralist synthesis are also adversely affected by the unviability of his approach to structural analysis. His inability to apply his structural model to the structure of individual systems or “transforms” meant that he was never able to define invariant constraints coordinating any “group” of transforms as “fundamental structures” with the precision demanded by his group-theoretic definition of structure. His characterization of his procedure for analyzing “groups” of myths in the “overture” to *The Raw and the Cooked* (1969) as analogous to a growing crystal which is clearly structured at its center but fuzzy and ill-defined at its periphery metaphorically evokes his failure to find the structure of any such group—which means, given his definition of structure as the invariant law of the group, his failure to find the structure of any myth. The massive outpouring of unstructured analyses of mythical patterns and transformations comprising the four volumes of the *Mythologiques*, stimulating as they are, represent by Lévi-Strauss’s own theoretical standards the failure of his structuralist quest for fundamental structures (Lévi-Strauss 1964:9-40).¹

When he moved on from kinship structures to myth and systems of

knowledge as his principal subjects, Lévi-Strauss's attempts to translate the significata of the semiotic elements of myths and cosmological systems were likewise hobbled by his inability to recognize the significance of the fact that such individual elements are regularly transformed in the course of the myth or social process in question—transformations that apply to their signification as well as to features of their form or relations with other elements. In the Gê and Bororo myths of the origin of cooking fire that constitute the initial subject of *The Raw and the Cooked*, for example, the fire makes its first appearance as the distant sun in the sky, which men use to warm meat that they must cut into small pieces and set out on rocks to catch its rays, then descends to earth as the burning end of a log in the house of the jaguars, who use it to roast big pieces of meat, and finally ends up being carried by men to their village, where it is broken up and used to light other cooking fires (Lévi-Strauss 1964:43-86). Each of these transformations of the fire carries a different signification, and this series of transformations conveys a cumulative meaning that is the point of the myth. Lévi-Strauss analyzes the fire only as the sign of the operation of cooking, a function it exercised in the pre-cultural house of the jaguars, missing completely the significance of its use at the end of the myth as a general means of making other fires, the essential step to full human culture.

In approaching a critique of the development of structuralism or the ideas of its more recent theoretical epigones, it is essential to bear in mind that none of them have developed as purely academic anthropological projects. Rather, they and their authors have all to varying degrees led double lives as public intellectuals, engaged in supra-academic controversies of their times. Since its beginnings shortly after World War II, structuralism was framed by its advocates as much as a critique of Modern Western philosophical and social thought, in particular existentialism, Marxism, hermeneutics, and structural-functional social anthropology, as an anthropological approach concerned with the kinship systems and myths of indigenous Australian and Amerindian cultures. The brilliant career of Lévi-Strauss exemplifies this double focus of the structuralist project, with its combination of anthropological interest in the more remote and exotic cultures of aboriginal Australia and the Amazon and its borrowings from currently modish scientific theories of structural linguistics and semiology, Merleau-Ponty's work on the psychology of perception, and what Lévi-Strauss called the new "mathematics of Man", the "qualitative math" of set theory, cybernetics and information technology that became popular

following World War II (Lévi-Strauss 1955).

The success of structuralism as an intellectual movement owed much to this double focus, with its seductive methodological implications that the “fundamental structures” of human mental operations, manifested in their purest and simplest forms in the cultural productions of the most “primitive” (i.e., by implication, the most “natural”) human cultures, bear a family resemblance to the new methods of structural analysis in linguistics and group theory, thus lending their scientific cachet to structuralist anthropology. This complex intellectual heritage helps to understand one of the more problematic aspects of structuralism and its more recent offshoots from an anthropological perspective, namely its tendency to reify general conceptual categories such as “nature” and “culture” and to treat them on the same footing as ethnographic evidence for indigenous ideas about what can be defined in terms of these categories as “natural” or “cultural” phenomena. One consequence of this is a tendency to treat entities or relations that can be attributed to one category or the other as internally homogeneous, rather than as complex amalgams of both. This tendency is accentuated by a theoretical reliance on Saussurean semiology, in particular its concepts of the sign, the field of signification, and the distinction of *langue* and *parole* as models for cultural classifications and cosmologies, which push analyses in an idealist direction towards the abstraction of epistemological and classificatory categories from forms of material activity and social relations.

As an anthropologist working with Gê-speaking people of Central Brazil, who have played a central role in the formation of Lévi-Strauss’s ideas about Amazonian social structure and mythology, I have inevitably found myself carrying on my ethnographic and theoretical work in a personal and conceptual dialogue with Lévi-Strauss: conceptual, because his writings pointed me toward problems and ideas that became central to my own work; and personal, because like many fellow Amazonianists I found him to be a lively and interested interlocutor, invariably receptive and generous with his time when I would call on him when in Paris. I began my work with the Kayapo in 1962, when the influence of Lévi-Strauss was at its height, and “structuralism” had become a focus of intense interest and controversy, not only in France but increasingly in Anglophone, Hispanic and Lusophone anthropological and cultural circles. Since the end of the ‘60s, I have witnessed (and to a small degree participated in) the decline of its intellectual eminence, which was hastened, if not caused, by the events of May 1968 in Paris.

MAY 1968 AS ANTI-STRUCTURALIST REVOLT

The waning of the influence of structuralism as a theoretical approach within anthropology, as well as in literary and cultural studies more generally, that began after 1968 was gradual and never total. While Lévi-Strauss continued to teach and produce published works at an amazing rate, he nevertheless became an increasingly isolated figure without direct intellectual heirs. Structuralism, however, has enjoyed a prolonged half-life in various ostensibly “post-structuralist” and “deconstructionist” recensions, which have continued some of structuralism’s most fundamental tenets in different terms. Chief among these was Lévi-Strauss’s failure to produce “structural” analyses which satisfied his own criteria for structure, thus making him, in effect, a pioneer of post-structuralism *avant l’heure*.

The students and workers of May ‘68 did not adorn their barricades with banners calling for the defense of *langue*, but with the demand to *prendre la parole*. They had not sought to defend existing structures but to deconstruct them. They were not concerned with the contemplation of objectified patterns of unconscious thought but with subjective action that might change and create new forms of consciousness as well as materially transform existing social relations. Parisian philosophers reacted to what they perceived as the 1968 crisis of structuralism as a perspective founded upon a contemplative, Saussurean notion of structure by repudiating the aspects of Lévi-Strauss’s thought that appeared most out of keeping with the new ideological climate, which had been germinating in the universities, factories and other social contexts before it burst into the open in the demonstrations of May ‘68.

That the epigones of the structuralist hegemony managed to conserve key aspects of Lévi-Strauss’s theoretical synthesis and to recycle them as components of the new ostensibly anti-structuralist positions they developed is an impressive tribute to the hold that structuralism had acquired over the French cultural imagination. An even more telling tribute is how many, in their haste to redefine themselves as post-structuralists, energetically asserted, against the evidence of their own previous writings, that of course they had never been structuralists. The post-1968 succession of hybrid theoretical formations that followed did not so much overtly confront and overcome the theoretical and analytical problems of structuralism as readapt them in new forms that would appear to make virtues of its theoretical vices. It is this post-1968 succession of hybrid theoretical formations, juxtaposed with the continued outpouring of new but theoretically repetitious work by Lévi-Strauss himself, that I refer to as the crisis of Late Structuralism.

The most notable among the hybrid positions to emerge in the immediate aftermath of the events of 1968 came from philosophers and public intellectuals rather than from anthropologists. They included Derrida's heterodox interpretation of Saussure's theory of the sign, which Lévi-Strauss had employed as the basis of his concept of structures of sign-elements, as the basis of decentered anti-structures (Derrida 1967). Derrida managed this by reinterpreting Saussure's notion of the arbitrariness of the signifier-signified relation as an existential gulf of "différance" of the supposed original unity of signifier and signified. The original model for Derrida's notion of *déférence* may be sought in Lévi-Strauss's notion of the incest tabu as a requirement that men should give away their consanguineal female relations as sexual partners in reciprocal affinal exchanges with other men, thus deferring the primal unity of familial relations, rather than follow their supposed natural preference to retain them in incestuous (pre-social) unity.

A different tack was taken by Foucault's inversion of Lévi-Strauss's use of Saussure's concept of *langue* as the model of his conception of structure (which Foucault himself had employed in his pre-1968 structuralist period. In a clear break with Lévi-Strauss, Foucault offered a transvaluation of Saussure's fundamental distinction of *langue* and *parole* which artfully co-opted the rhetoric of the movement of 1968, substituting for *langue* as the foundational category of his "post-structuralist" system the complementary Saussurean category of *parole*, reworked and rebaptized as *discours* (Foucault 1968). His conception of discourse, however, departed from Saussure's concept of *parole* in its denial of any role for the subject as speaker. Instead, he continued to conceive it in the approved austere Lévi-Straussian fashion as subjectless, like *langue*, in effect as a kind of activated form of *langue*, now understood as a structuring demiurge of "power", imposing subjective identities on social persons to enable them to serve the needs of power, which turn out to be the requirements of social structure. Althusser produced an analogous theory of the subject as an "interpellation" of society as a corollary of his "structuralist Marxist" theory of ideology (Althusser 1971).

These avowedly anti- or post-Lévi-Straussian theoretical positions were actually formulated as continuations of essential aspects of the theoretical framework of Lévi-Straussian structuralism by other means, above all the concept of the subject as an epiphenomenon of impersonal, unconscious linguistic or ideological structures, and the consequent irrelevance or illusoriness of subjective consciousness, agency and material activity.

THE CRISIS OF LATE STRUCTURALISM: ANIMISM AND PERSPECTIVISM AS SUCCESSORS

Anthropologists were also influenced by the social and ideological upheaval of the late 1960s and the new emphases on social action and subjective agency that followed from them, but they also responded to distinct influences arising from their discipline's concerns with the interaction of human subjects with the natural environment and the social meanings and cultural treatments of the human body. All of these concerns informed the reactions within the discipline to the twin crises of Lévi-Straussian structuralism: the failure of his own project of structural analysis to reveal the structures he sought, and the rejection of structuralism as a quietist theoretical dead-end incapable of dealing with the realities of the contemporary social and cultural inequities of French society, in particular its class structure and educational system, but also, in the cases we shall consider here, to the post-structuralist and deconstructionist reactions of Foucault, Derrida and others.

Among anthropologists deeply engaged with, and influenced by, Lévi-Strauss's theoretical framework, the two most important critical tendencies that have emerged have been the revival of theoretical and ethnographic work on Animism by Descola, Bird-David and others (Bird-David 1999; Descola 1994, 1996, 2005, 2009), and the development of Perspectivism as an approach to indigenous Amazonian, and more broadly, Amerindian cosmological notions by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, his students and associates (Viveiros de Castro 1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2004). In both cases, the theorists who initially developed these positions either began as Lévi-Straussian structuralists (the case of Viveiros de Castro, a Francophone Brazilian closely involved with Lévi-Strauss and French anthropology) or as in the case of Descola (a student of Godelier with ecological and Marxist leanings) formulated their ideas in a critical dialogue with his vision. Both of these approaches began by challenging Lévi-Strauss's central conception of the relation of nature and culture, and of its role as the frame of his vision of anthropology as "entropology", the reduction of culture to the status of an epiphenomenon of nature. Lévi-Strauss conceived the reduction of culture to nature as operating through the medium of the determination of subjective consciousness by an objective "Kantian" unconscious constituted by the neurological apparatus of perception and the Gestalt-like patterns of association it transmitted to the conscious mind.

Perspectivism proceeded by turning Lévi-Strauss's reductionist proposition inside out through an equally radical but opposite reduction

of nature to culture, achieved through the elevation of subjective perspective over objective associationism as the determining constituent of the “spiritual” identities of all creatures, animals and humans alike. The foundational claim of perspectivism is that indigenous Amazonians believe that animals, as the archetypal “natural” creatures, subjectively identify themselves as humans, the archetypal cultural beings. Animism arrived at an analogous claim for the universality of the spiritual identity, presumed to be essentially human and thus cultural, of humans and all natural entities (including animals, plants and some inanimate beings such as celestial bodies) by way of Descola’s ethnographic documentation of the social relations between human and non-human beings among the Achuar, resulting in a pragmatic blurring of the boundary between the natural and cultural domains through a spiritual and material infiltration of each domain by beings from the other category.

Both animism and perspectivism thus take as their point of departure a reconception of the relation of nature and culture through an exploration of indigenous conceptions of the common subjectivity of cultural and natural beings, while diverging on a series of philosophical and theoretical points. Both tendencies have moved away from basic aspects of Lévi-Strauss’s thought, as well as from each other, but both have continued in different ways to work within the framework of Lévi-Strauss’s master concept of the categorical opposition of nature and culture as the basic concern of Amazonian, and more broadly Amerindian cosmologies, despite their otherwise heterodox reformulations of its terms. Both sides have presented their positions in rhetorically provocative articles clearly intended to invite critical engagement. I offer the following remarks in the spirit of a collegial response to this invitation, from the perspective (sic) of yet another former fellow traveler of the structuralist project.

NATURE AND CULTURE: THE WOLVERINE AND THE PANSY

The attraction of structuralism for both anthropologists and humanist intellectuals in its earlier years seemed only to be intensified by its rejection of foundational concepts and concerns of conventional philosophical, textual and anthropological analysis—e.g. consciousness, meaning, production, history, form (as distinct from “structure”), the subject (including perspective, intentionality, agency, Freudian psychodynamics and affect), and all aspects of language falling within the Saussurean category of speech or discourse, from syntax, deixis, object reference, and discourse forms such

as narrative, to the social pragmatics of speech in context), to select a few headings from a longer list. Another factor contributing to the curious prestige of structuralist analyses was their preoccupation with the exotic and apparently arbitrary and unmotivated details of indigenous myths, rituals and cosmologies involving unfamiliar animals, plants and natural forms, which it was the great achievement of Lévi-Strauss to bring within the purview of a theoretical vision able to recognize their significance.

Lévi-Strauss's concern with these particulars was integral to his conception of the great theme of the Amerindian myths, as well as that of structuralist anthropology: the relation of nature and culture. Lévi-Strauss conceived of this relation on two levels. On the one hand, he interpreted the Amerindian myths recounting the differentiation of humanity and culture from a state of nature once shared on more or less equal terms with animals as expressions of the natural mental processes of perception and association through which he believed cultural forms are constructed. On the other hand, he sought to understand how the sensuous forms and properties of natural entities such as flowers or animal species are unconsciously appropriated by the perceptual apparatus and related to one another by cognitive psychological processes of association to form cultural structures like classification and representation. Lévi-Strauss has thus always conceived of the process of construction of basic cultural structures as psychological and unconscious, rather than as an aspect of intentional (conscious, subjective) social interaction, and conceived the product of the process, the structures or structural variants themselves, as abstract synchronic patterns rather than as including the transformational operations through which they were produced. Cultural structures, in other words, may be conceived as practico-inert transforms of a more inclusive set of related structural "variants," but not as themselves transformational processes.

The synthesis at which he arrived, set out in *The Savage Mind* (in French, *La Pensée Sauvage*, a pun meaning both "natural thought" and "wild pansy") was concisely evoked by the visual layout of the book's cover, which shows a picture of a wild pansy below the French title on the front and a wolverine, celebrated in the text for its intelligence, on the back cover. The book as an object thus constitutes a "sensuous gestalt" (the term comes from Merleau-Ponty, to whom the book is dedicated), encoding the message of the book that the human mind, in its natural state, is constituted by the relation between the sensuous forms of the natural world (the pansy) and the natural mental faculties of perception and association (the wolverine). Culture and the ideational content of subjective consciousness are represented by the pages of text encompassed by the

two covers. Structural analysis as Lévi-Strauss conceived it thus became a sort of ironic reductionism, or in his term an “entropology”, revealing how human cultures in their very attempts to construct representations of their differentiation from nature ironically succeed only in producing constructs which reveal in their form and content culture’s true character as an epiphenomenon of nature. The outcome of the structuralist analysis of human cultural forms is therefore the reduction of humans and their cultures to their true status as products of nature’s interaction with itself, employing humans as the unwitting medium of the process.

For Lévi-Strauss, the important point was the natural quality of the faculties and substantive contents of human mentation and culture, but in emphasizing this he was also obliged to recognize the logical implication that these natural sensory and cognitive faculties could not be conceived as exclusively human, but must be understood as qualities of mind and intelligence shared with other natural beings, which is why the wolverine found its way onto the back cover of *La Pensée Sauvage*. In this way, Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism opened the possibility of a more radical theoretical exploration of the sharing of mind or spirit by humans with animals and other natural entities.

The major obstacle to this opening appeared to be the limitations of the major constituents of structuralist theory itself, associationist psychology, the approach to structure as synchronic pattern abstracted from the transformational processes of its production, and above all the strait-jacket of Saussurean semiotics, with its fixation on *langue* to the exclusion of *parole*, signification to the exclusion of reference and meaning, and abstract objectivity to the exclusion of subjective consciousness, intention and agency. As these limitations became increasingly evident to later generations of *structuralistes* receptive to new anthropological interests in subjectivity, agency, and the integration of human culture in ecological systems, the ascetic grandeur of Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist vision came to be felt more and more as the product of an ironic limitation all its own: the theoretical and methodological inadequacy of his use of his own concept of structure. New ethnographic work carried out in the light of new interests in cultural modes of subjective consciousness, constructions of bodiliness, and interactions with the environment led to attempts to formulate more holistic approaches to the relation of culture and society with animals, plants and the natural environment. It must be emphasized, at the same time, that much of this new work took inspiration from Lévi-Strauss’s ideas of the natural sources of mind and culture, following out the implications of his suggestions that the structures and contents of mind and intelligence are not specifically human possessions, but are shared

with natural beings. Descola's revision of animism, with its emphasis on relations with plants as well as animals and other natural entities, was in the forefront of this new cultural ecology.

Lévi-Strauss conceived the nature-culture relation ambiguously as both external and internal: externally as a boundary between human culture and the world of nature beyond the village; and internally as the psychological divide between the mental processes of perception and association and the consciousness of the cultural subject. Across this psychological frontier, the former confront the latter as objective extensions of the external natural world they mediate to the latter. The forms of this mediation, in Lévi-Strauss's conception, are thus not only themselves continuations of the objective natural environment but serve as the transcendental categories of consciousness and subjectivity. Subjectivity and meaning, in this perspective, become epiphenomena of the objective forms and processes of nature. At the theoretical level, this may be taken to imply a reduction of culture to nature. This, as we have seen, was Lévi-Strauss's view, embodied by the wolverine on the cover of *la Pensée Sauvage*—the exemplar of Lévi-Strauss's conception of the naturalness of the mental processes that also constitute the foundation of human culture and consciousness.

The wolverine itself, however, is not a cultural subject, for all its raw intelligence. Lévi-Strauss's naturalistic epistemological idealism implicitly raises but does not answer the difficult question of the existence of subjectivity, the product, if not the source, of natural intelligence and perception in humans, in "natural" beings. If human culture and subjective consciousness is asserted to rest upon a foundation of natural psychological processes and *gestalt*-like patterns of sensory features of objects of perception, are we to infer that the possession of such natural mental faculties and the ubiquity of sensory *gestalten* in the natural objective world implies the existence of superstructures of subjective consciousness, intentionality and even cultural identity on the part of all beings thus endowed? A positive answer to this question may take two main forms, one emphasizing the subjective aspect of mind as self-identity, the other the objective, material consequences of subjective identity for relations with other beings (especially humans). Either way, the structuralist concept of the relation of nature and culture as mutually external, contrastive domains becomes unsustainable. The attempt to reformulate this fundamental relationship in the context of an answer to the question of the nature of the mentality of natural beings has thus become the focus of the crisis of Late Structuralism.

The first way of dealing with the question is to recognize that if animals, plants, heavenly bodies and spirits are conceived to have subjective consciousness, then the paradoxical indication, given the

orthodox structuralist interpretation of the binary opposition between nature and culture, in terms of which subjective consciousness is relegated to the domain of culture, is that they may share the conscious identity of human (cultural) subjects. The radical implication is that what orthodox structuralists had considered the domain of nature is really a psychological and epistemological colony of the domain of culture: natural beings have, in short, become cultural beings, at least as far as they themselves are concerned. This conclusion, reached by impeccable structuralist logic, nevertheless clearly stands in contradiction to the orthodox structuralist conception of the nature-culture relation as a privative opposition of natural/objective and cultural/subjective domains. In so doing, it offers a way (however bizarre) to move beyond it.

The second way of dealing with the same question proceeds from the realization that if natural beings are conceived as possessing not only “wild” intelligence and qualities of mind (i.e., *la pensée sauvage*) but subjective identity that includes personhood and culture, so that humans might form social relations with the natural beings with whom they share a common mentality, subjectivity and spirit, the material and social boundary between cultural and natural domains itself disappears, or at least becomes porous. The resulting inclusion of animals, plants and other natural entities in the human social and cultural domain now becomes, not merely an issue of ideal categories or cultural classification, but also and equally of material, social relations and activities. We thus arrive by a different route at another contradiction of the orthodox structuralist conception of the nature-culture relation as a privative opposition of objective nature to subjective culture, which points to the possibility of a second way of answering the question, and thus a different escape route from the Late Structuralist impasse. This is the way that Descola calls the “domestication” of nature.

The former answer is the way followed by perspectivism; the latter is the way followed by the revival of animism. These, in sum, are the paths out of the impasse of Lévi-Straussian structuralism that have been followed by his more restive intellectual followers: in the former case, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (from now on, EVC) and those he has inspired, and in the latter by Philippe Descola and others who have shared his ideas. In neither case do we see a complete break with structuralism. The concern with the nature-culture relationship remains central to both, but is transformed in different ways that involve consequential departures from the received Lévi-Straussian canon. The framing of cultural analysis in terms of the nature-culture relationship remains, but in each case the meaning of its terms has been transformed in ways that open up new lines of theoretical and ethnographic inquiry, while much of the Saussurean

and formal structuralist theory responsible for the Late Structuralist crisis is tacitly jettisoned. A critical understanding of the sources of the crisis, however, provides a useful basis for understanding the common features and differences of the new Animism and Perspectivism as the two principal theoretical offspring of structuralism, and how it is that both have converged upon the issues of body and “spirit”.

ANIMISM: NATURE AS UNIVERSAL PAN-SPIRITISM

The revival of anthropological interest in animism, Tylor’s conception of the original form of religion, is primarily due to the work of Philippe Descola. Tylor’s concept was based on the idea that natural objects and beings, both animate and inanimate, possess spirits, conceived as consisting of mental faculties, affects and subjective consciousness, although not necessarily human-like personalities. Descola had noticed in his fieldwork that the Achuar formed adoptive relations of kinship with natural beings, including both plants and animals, considering them to have subjectivity, intelligence, affect and communicative abilities. Although humans participate in this pan-spiritism, spirit is not itself conceived as an intrinsically human or cultural entity, but rather as an innate product of natural powers possessed by all species, including humans, animals, plants and spirits of the dead. Subjectivity and mentality as constituted by these powers are rather believed to be universal natural attributes of all beings, and although they may be amenable to social and cultural relationships with humans, are not products of human culture. Rather, it is the possession of these powers by natural entities independently of human culture that makes possible communication with them by humans and the adoption of some of them by humans as members of human society, thus constituting them, in Descola’s terms, as elements of *la nature domestique* (Descola 1994). The universality of spirit does not imply universal homogeneity, in the sense that all species of beings possess identical spirits, any more than the universality of bodiliness implies that the bodies of all species are the same. Rather, the heterogeneous bodily forms of different species of beings correspond to distinctive spiritual forms, in many cases represented by “master” spirit beings that embody the differential attributes of their species-being. “Nature” thus comprises a world of objective differences of bodily form associated with distinctive spirit forms, for which the generic subjective faculties of spirit serve as a universal common denominator.

This is my interpretation of the ethnographic evidence, which differs in one critical respect from Descola’s. Descola considers spirit to be an

essentially human quality, so that the sharing of spirit by animals and plants comes down to a sharing of humanity. In his interpretation, it is this common humanity that makes possible the formation by humans of kinship relations with animals and plants. This does not seem to me to be a logically necessary conclusion, valid for all instances of animism in Amazonia, but Descola offers ethnographic evidence for it from his own Achuar research data and some other Amazonian societies.

It is clear in any case that animism, as Descola conceives it, has no place for the nature-culture distinction conceived in structuralist fashion as a privative opposition between the domains of human culture and nature. Rather, Descola's ethnographically based account of the interactions of (Achuar) humans and non-human beings of various kinds, many of whom enter into shared social relations, has the effect of transforming the nature-culture relation from a binary opposition of logically distinct, mutually exclusive *categories* presumed to correspond to discrete classes of beings to a social relationship (or not) between discrete natural and cultural *beings*, thus creating a shifting and permeable boundary between the natural, non-social world and a social domain understood to include both cultural humans and natural beings, where the latter are understood to be endowed with human spirit identities. Culture, in its fully developed form, thus remains conceived as a distinctive characteristic of human society, but that society, in Descola's heterodox formulation, does not form a bounded cultural unit, since it may include relations with non-cultural, although spiritually human natural beings. This still leaves unanswered the questions of the source, form and content of this common spirit. These are issues that may be clarified by a further consideration of the relations of bodiliness, subjective identities and perspectives, which properly belong to a critical discussion of perspectivism.

PERSPECTIVISM: NATURE AS ANTHROPOCENTRIC PAN-CULTURALISM

Taking its inspiration at least as much from structuralism's critical dialogue with Modernist humanism as from anthropological interpretations of Amazonian cultures, perspectivism has shaped itself through a radical polemic against tenets of Modernist Western thought from Descartes to Lévi-Strauss, as well as all received schools of cultural anthropology. EVC presents perspectivist ideas as features of Amazonian indigenous thought, but he develops his propositions not so much through ethnographically based description and analysis of Amazonian

cultures, as through a philosophical dialogue between ideal-typical formulations of Western Modernist ideas and correspondingly general representations of purportedly common Amazonian cultural ideas. This rhetorical approach serves a methodological purpose and has theoretical effects. The representation of Western Modernist ideas employed in the cultural comparison as an integral, homogeneous system of highly abstract ideal type-concepts rhetorically serves to authorize the perspectivist representation of Amazonian ideas as an equally homogeneous system of abstract concepts comparable in generality and corresponding in thematic content and philosophical concerns with the Western system with which they are compared: in short, a philosophical system not dissimilar from Modern Western speculative idealism. The result is the misrepresentation and mistranslation of the form, content and meaning of the ideal categories and social meanings of many Amazonian cultural systems, not to mention some of the Western ideas drawn upon for comparison. There is furthermore a failure to recognize fundamental features of the construction and meaning of specific categories and propositions that differentiate the Amazonian categories in question from the Modernist ideas with which they are compared. I agree with Lévi-Strauss, Viveiros de Castro and other perspectivists that there are important common ideas shared by many Amazonian systems (such as animism), but I also think that there is equally good ethnographic evidence for significant differences among the cultural constructions of different Amazonian societies, such as those societies possessing large, effectively endogamous villages with stratified systems of social groupings, like the Gê and Bororo, and those with dispersed hamlets that are effectively exogamous and unstratified, like many Tupian, Cariban, Shuar, Achuar and some smaller Arawakan groups, with the Tukanoan and Arawakan societies of the northwest Amazon appearing to combine features of both.

These conceptual and structural differences among Amazonian societies, not to mention the differences among conflicting Western Modernist philosophical and ideological positions, which receive equally short shrift, have important implications for some of the theoretical points at issue. This is not merely a matter of thematic content, but of the form and construction of what are presented as corresponding or opposing categories in these comparisons. The supposed Amazonian notions presented as counterparts of the Modern Western notions of “nature” and “culture”, and the related categories of “humanity”, “spirit”, “habitus” and “form” are prime examples of this problem. I shall return to these points in a moment. The existence of such significant variations within both cultural systems points to the inadequacy of a purely idealist approach

that is unable to account for them. This is not the place for a critique of the representations of Modern Western thought that serve as contrastive frames for perspectivist formulations of Amazonian concepts. For present purposes it will be better to go directly to the ethnographic and theoretical basis of perspectivist propositions about Amazonian ideas.

ANIMALS ARE HUMAN?

The most radical and distinctive perspectivist claim for the uniqueness of Amazonian cosmologies and epistemological perspectives as contrasted with Western ideas (including received structuralist anthropological ideas about Amazonian cultures) is that Amazonians do not, after all, conceive nature, as represented by animals, and culture as mutually distinct and contrastive categories, in the manner of Lévi-Straussian structuralism. Rather, animals, as the supposed embodiments of nature, subjectively identify themselves as humans, and thus as cultural beings. Culture and humanity are not limited to humanity, but extend to encompass nature as well (at least animal nature: the extent to which plants and inanimate entities, so prominent in Tylor's concept of animism, are included in EVC's conception of cultural identity remains unclear). Subjectively speaking, animals are really human, albeit with different outward forms, which EVC dismisses as mere "envelopes" without significant connections to the subjective identity of the essential being within. Similarly, the material forms of activities are dissociated from their essential mental content from the perspective of the animals that perform them. Animals thus supposedly see themselves as engaging in the same cultural activities as humans even as the objective forms of their activities appear to humans as animalistic and uncultured. For example, jaguars, as they guzzle the blood of their victims, conceive themselves to be sipping fermented manioc beer, a typical cultural activity of some (though by no means all) human Amazonian societies.

EVC derives this challenging revision of received structuralist and Modernist ideas from his reinterpretation of Amazonian myths and related ideas from a number of Amazonian peoples. The myths in question relate that before the development of human culture in its contemporary form, humans and animals coexisted on relatively undifferentiated terms, sharing language and, on the animals' side, the prototypes of cultural implements such as cooking fire, bows and arrows, dwelling houses, ways of hunting, collecting and preparing food, and the spinning of cotton string. Animals and humans could assume each other's forms, converse, and even in some cases marry. Each species nevertheless had its own characteristic bodily

form, essentially that which it has today, and humans were marginally cleverer than the animals (and meaner—they sometimes lied to the animals or played tricks on them). According to EVC, the animals identified themselves with humans and came to think of their behavior as cultural, and continue to do so until the present day.

This last part of EVC's interpretation, however, is not supported by the actual texts of the variants of the myth with which I am familiar.² According to these Gê and Bororo variants, ancestral humans did not yet possess culture in the mythical era when they and the animals coexisted. Rather, as I have mentioned, it was the animals rather than the ancestral humans who initially possessed prototypes of key cultural products. The humans had to steal or otherwise acquire these before they could learn to produce them and thus create culture in the full, contemporary sense. The human development of culture and the acts that led to it disrupted the Edenic coexistence of the ancestral humans and animals, and resulted in the loss by the animals of the proto-cultural possessions and skills they had had. Animals thus became fully differentiated from humans as completely natural beings, and humans correspondingly became fully differentiated from them as contemporary cultural humans.

EVC's interpretation of this myth (he seems to include the Gê and Bororo myths, which Lévi-Strauss takes as the point of departure of *The Raw and the Cooked*, among the "Amazonian myths" to which he refers) provides much of the foundation for the theoretical edifice of perspectivism. It proceeds from the assumption that the ancestral humans of the myth, those who cohabited as equals with the animals, were identical for all relevant purposes with contemporary humans: that is, that they were already cultural beings. This assumption is essential to his thesis that the animals of the mythical era, in identifying with their contemporaries, the ancestral humans, thereby identified themselves as beings with culture in the contemporary sense. EVC further interprets the myth as evidence that contemporary Amerindians believe that the descendants of the animals have continued to identify as human, cultural beings down to the present.

The main features of the mythical narrative (or at least the Gê and Bororo variants), however, contradict these assumptions. In them, both the humans and the animals of the mythical era are described as being more like each other than is the case of contemporary humans and animals. The myth tells how the contemporary forms of each became differentiated through a process in which the ancestral humans transformed themselves into modern humans through their invention of culture, while the ancestral forms of the animals became less like humans, losing their proto-cultural possessions, and thereby became totally natural beings like modern

animals, completely lacking cultural traits. The perspectivist interpretation of the myth, in short, gets it exactly wrong at least as far as this set of myths is concerned. The whole point of these myths is not how animals became and continue to be identified with humans, thus subverting the contrast between nature and culture, but how animals and humans became fully differentiated from each other, thus giving rise to the contemporary differentiation of nature and culture. Rather than recount how the mythical community of humans and animals resulted in a lasting identification of the latter with the former, the myths tell the opposite story of how the mutual differentiation of the species, and with it of their respective subjective identities and perspectives, actually came about as a corollary result of the one-sided possession of culture by humans.

The perspectivist interpretation not only misconstrues the overt message of the Gê variants of the myth, but also rests upon other inferences that find no support in the mythical narrative. These inferences do not logically follow and appear to proceed from an unexamined anthropocentrism. To begin with, the myth's account of the original state of relative undifferentiation between humans and animals does not include any explicit assertion that the animals subjectively identified themselves with humans. What the myths say is that animal and human identities, and thus also, in perspectivist terms, their perspectives, were relatively undifferentiated. Both possessed language and some other proto-cultural traits, but they both also possessed animal traits, such as devouring their meat raw. That the ancestral animals adopted some quasi-human traits no more implies that they thereby identified with the proto-humans than that the ancestral humans, by eating their meat raw, thereby identified themselves as animals.

The implicit anthropocentrism of the perspectivist formulation appears more starkly in other propositions of perspectivist theory, such as those dealing with the "spirituality" of animals and participation in social relations with humans. EVC assumes these aspects of animal character and behavior must be the result of the animals' identification with humans, on the grounds that "spirit" and the capacity for social relations are intrinsically human attributes. Neither Amerindian cultures in general, Amazonian cultures in particular, nor the myths in question, however, offer any support for this anthropocentric assumption. On the contrary, indigenous Amazonian myths, cosmology and ritual practice provide ample evidence for the opposite assumption, to wit that all entities, not only animals but plants and even some inanimate objects, possess spirits in their own right. It follows that they may have the capacity, if not necessarily the propensity, to enter into social relations with humans, but this does not

make them identify as humans. In this respect the ethnographic evidence is consistent with a non-anthropocentric version of animism rather than an anthropocentric perspectivism.

THE NATURE OF CULTURE AND THE RELATION OF CULTURE TO NATURE

These critical reservations about perspectivism's self-presentation as a revolutionary transformation of orthodox structuralist and Modernist conceptions of the nature-culture contrast and its claim to have identified the basic principle of Amazonian cosmologies serve to bring into sharper focus the continuities of perspectivism and structuralism in other essential respects. Perspectivism actually retains the orthodox structuralist conception of the relation of nature and culture as a privative binary opposition of mutually exclusive classificatory categories defined through the contrastive presence or absence of traits: thus culture is defined by the possession of distinctive features like language, cooking fire, manioc beer, etc., and nature, as the opposing category, is defined by the absence of these features. Closer attention to the ethnographic detail of the myths on which both structuralist and perspectivist notions of these categories are based, however, reveals that this way of thinking misunderstands indigenous conceptions of the nature of culture as well as the domain or condition of nature, and most importantly the ubiquity and role of mediations between the two such as those constituted by the prototypes of cultural items possessed by the ancestral animals in the myths).

The myths do not represent the transition from the relatively undifferentiated coexistence of humans and animals to fully developed human culture and acultural animality as a simple process of the loss or acquisition of traits. They emphasize the importance of the possession of the proto-cultural possessions of the animals (the cooking fire, bow and arrows, manioc beer etc.) as a crucial transitional stage between the two. The essence of fully developed culture, as contrasted to the half-way house of the animals' prototypes, is rather described as the ability to *produce* these things, and most importantly, what this ability further implies, *the reflexive ability to produce the process of producing them, as a generalized and infinitely replicable form of activity.*

What is involved here is not merely classification, or even a simple cognitive or perceptual process of objectification, but a reflexive process of meta-objectification, in an abstracted and generalized form: that is, of the process of objectification itself. This clearly requires a different level of

cognitive operations from that involved in the simple possession and use of individual objects, even those that may constitute prototypes of cultural artifacts. This is the difference, for example, between the one-piece cooking fire possessed by the jaguars in the Gê myths of the origin of cooking fire, and the use of a specimen piece of that fire to light other cooking fires at the climactic end of the myth (Turner 1985:87-96). The ancestral animals in the myths possess objects like cooking fire or beer or bows and arrows, but these are represented only as singular possessions, as if they were, as far as their animal owners are concerned, self-existing or self-objectifying things, or found objects that the animals appropriated but never made. The animals are nowhere described as having the cultural ability or power to produce or copy such things. When humans acquire them from the animals, by whatever means, the animals simply lose them. They cannot make others to replace them, because they cannot produce production.

Culture comes fully into existence when the ancestral humans not only come into possession of these objects but become able to objectify and replicate the processes of objectification (in pragmatic terms, production) by which they are produced: how to use fire to make fire, how to ferment manioc to make manioc beer, or how to transform the surface forms of their bodies with painting or ornaments to produce or regulate in culturally standardized ways the internal bodily processes of transformation that give rise to aspects of social personhood.

The products of such a process, whether material artifacts or conceptual objects of knowledge, cannot be understood as simple, internally homogeneous classes in a semiotic order of signification or ethnoscientific taxonomy, but as complex schemas composed of heterogeneous elements and levels of features, comprising transformational steps in a process of mediating relatively natural to relatively cultural forms (for example, from the appropriation of “natural” entities such as fire or game animals, to the use of the fire to cook the flesh of the animals, and on to the use of the fire to cook itself, that is, to make fire). The cooked meat, as a representative cultural product, can be opposed in good structuralist fashion to raw meat as an instance of the binary contrast of culture to nature, but what has made it a cultural artifact is the transformative operations condensed within it, not merely the cooking but the lighting of the cooking fire. Culture is thus not opposed to nature as a simple, mutually exclusive binary contrast of semantic features, but rather consists of a complex, reflexive, transformative relation to it. This process both contains and overlies its basic natural components as a series of incremental levels in a hierarchy of transformational operations (schemas) of increasing generative (productive) power. Cultural things, in other words, are compounds of natural content (the meat, the physical body

of the social person) and the transformative activities through which it is objectified (i.e. transformed into) cultural forms. Culture, understood in these terms, neither excludes nor suppresses natural contents or qualities, but rather retains and reproduces them through the employment of more abstract and generalized meta-forms of the processes and powers that produce them.

The emphasis of my discussion of the meaning of myths on the role of the serial transformations of symbolic elements like the cooking fire may recall the critique of Lévi-Strauss's one-dimensional, synchronic conception of the signification of the semiological elements of myth offered in the introduction to this paper. An integral part of that critique was the recognition that the "fundamental structures" of culture and the mind that Lévi-Strauss hoped to reveal through the structural analysis of "groups" of myths should properly be sought at the level of the invariant principles governing the internal transformations comprising the structures of individual myths or kinship systems. These transformations, of course, are not limited to the individual symbolic or semiotic elements of cultural constructs such as myths, but may involve more complex constructs such as tropes (Turner 1991, 2006) or episodes of mythical narratives (Turner 1985). In the case at hand, I suggest that the progressive transformations of the cooking fire as the central theme of the mythical allegory of the emergence of culture from nature conform to the principle that the efficacy of transformational activities (such as cooking) varies directly as the power of those activities to produce (and thus transform) themselves. Production, considered as a self-objectifying and self-transformative activity, is thus of the essence of culture and its differentiation from nature.

This relatively sophisticated conception of the relation of nature and culture as a transformational process rather than a synchronic, practico-inert semiological contrast is clearly formulated in the Gê and Bororo myths, but is rendered invisible by structuralist analysis like that of Lévi-Strauss in *The Raw and the Cooked*, with its conceptual filter of Saussurean semiotics that blocks recognition of the cultural significance of the activities by which the objects and categories in question are produced. This is a fundamental point of disagreement between the Amazonian myths, as interpreted here, and perspectivism, given EVC's assertion that production is not a transformational process, leaving only exchange as a truly transformational activity capable of inducing the transformation of perspectives. On this critical point EVC shows himself an orthodox structuralist, following Lévi-Strauss's lead in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and other early writings on kinship. In these writings Lévi-Strauss uses exchange theory,

grounded in the “fundamental structure” of reciprocity, as the basis of his analysis of kinship, begging the question of how to account for the existence of the exchangers (the groups of men who supposedly gave rise to human culture by exchanging women, not to mention the men and women themselves). In sum: the transformations of productive activity, which include exchange as one of their mediating moments, are, according to the myths of at least one numerous and important group of indigenous Amazonian peoples, the principle mediators of the relation of nature to culture, and directly construct the pragmatic and conceptual structures of culture itself. Perspectivism’s failure to theorize the role of productive transformations in cultural structures is a major lacuna in its conception of perspectives. It leads to its failure to recognize the reflexive operations of objectification and meta-objectification which the myths represent as the distinctive properties of culture for what they are: the most powerful and important perspectives of all.

“MULTINATURALISM”: DIFFERENT WORLDS OR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES?

Perspectivism’s focus on Amazonian concepts of the self (for perspectivism this essentially means the epistemological subject rather than the agent of praxis) constitutes a salutary departure from structuralism’s one-sidedly objectivist theoretical perspective, and its disinterest in the role of subjective perspectives in the formation of cultural and semiotic representations, including cosmologies. The one-sided subjectivism of perspectivism would seem to qualify it as a form of relativism: if different subjects see the world differently, it might be because they have different subjective points of view, or different ways of seeing the world. EVC, however, rejects this view of perspectivism as relativism, on the grounds that Amazonians (and indeed, at several points in his argument, all Amerindians) think that although animals, from their identical perspectives as humans, see the world *in the same way*, they arrive at different ideas of it because *they see different worlds* (this is what he calls “multinaturalism”).

To understand what is at issue here one must start by asking what the differences are among the “worlds” that the animals supposedly see. The answer given by EVC is: the animal identity of the different species of animals, as seen by animal subjects of each species who identify themselves to themselves as humans. Every species is seen by every other as an animal but sees itself as a human (i.e., cultural) being. For every species, therefore,

the boundary between nature and culture is differently drawn. Each species thus sees a different “nature” than all the others. One may ask in what way this differs from the conventional “naturalist” idea that each species of animal recognizes its own kind and sees all other species as different kinds of animal from itself. The answer is that the only difference appears to be the assumption that each animal continues to identify itself as a human and thus a citizen in good standing of the domain of culture, in contrast to all the other animals. We may note in passing that this seems to leave the form of the conceptual opposition of nature and culture intact as far as its logical structure is concerned. Only its content is treated as variable (“multiple”), and this only in virtue of the psychological principle of the egocentricity of animal perspectives. The form of the worlds seen by all species remains the same.

An additional problematic consequence of EVC’s idea of multinaturalism is that having committed himself to the thesis that all animals see themselves as humans, it becomes necessary for him to maintain that the visible bodies of the different species (animals can of course see their own bodies, or parts of them, as well as those of other animals) have nothing to do with their inner subjective identities as humans. As he writes:

Manifest bodily form of each species is an “envelope” (a “clothing”) that conceals an internal humanoid form... this internal form is the soul or spirit of the animal: an intentionality or subjectivity formally identical to human consciousness. (Viveiros de Castro 2004:465)

Inner subjective identities, however, are invisible to other animals (and humans). Animals of different species therefore must see one another as animals rather than as they see themselves (with their minds’ eyes) as humans. But on what basis do they “see” the animal natures of these other species? The manifest form of the physical body has already been ruled out as a mere “clothing” irrelevant to essential species identity. How then to find a way of recognizing the significance of physical bodiliness to the perspectival animal identities of other animal species? EVC deals with this question as follows:

Animals perceive differences among species of animals not on the basis of physiological differences—Amerindians recognize a basic uniformity of bodies—but rather [of] affects, in the old sense of dispositions or capacities that render the body of each species unique... the body is in this sense an assemblage of affects or ways of being that constitute a habitus... and the body is the origin of perspectives. (Viveiros de Castro 2004:475)

I don't understand what EVC means by his claim that "Amerindians recognize a basic uniformity of bodies" (not so in any relevant sense, in my limited experience), nor what relevance the assertion that "*animals* do not perceive physiological differences among species" is meant to have to his claim about how "Amerindians" see the world (my italics). I do, however, have some other questions about EVC's use of the concept of habitus, and its place in his complex argument for the relevance of bodily form to subjective identity, spirit and perspective.

As a distinctive mode of affective orientation and behavioral disposition toward the world, the habitus constitutes a pragmatic form of perspective on it. In so many words, it constitutes part of an animal's differential perspective on the world, and thus the "different world" it sees. In sum, the habitus must be the aspect of the *body* that is the "origin" of perspectives, and as such conditions the specific "nature" seen by the species, quite apart from its putative inner subjective identity as human, which is supposedly unrelated to its bodily form, although in other connections that is the aspect of animal being that EVC claims is the basis of its perspective (indeed, the basis of "perspectivism" as a theory).

The concept of habitus is critical for EVC because it does not purport to point inward to the subjective identity of the animal, but outward to its behavior and interaction with the world. EVC defines the concept as affective rather than cognitive (in contrast to other theorists like Mauss or Bourdieu who employed the concept to denote both cognitive and affective modes of subjective perspective), and as composed of the specifically bestial behaviors of the species. It thus, by virtue of this idiosyncratic definition, becomes identified as the "natural" aspect of species identity, in contrast to the cognitive, cultural human aspect comprising its inner subjectivity. In effect, the reformulation of the concept of habitus becomes the indispensable basis for the reimportation of the structuralist opposition of nature and culture as the frame of EVC's concept of animal identity, in a way that leaves the cultural (spiritual, human) component intact and insulated from the bestial, natural bodily aspect of the creature. The fundamental principle at issue here is the mutual dissociation and irrelevance of external bodily (natural, affective) form and internal spiritual (cultural, cognitive) content.

It is no doubt in order to highlight the distinctive role of habitus in this respect that EVC asserts that "Amerindians recognize a basic uniformity of bodies", which if taken literally would mean that they do not perceive or cognitively "recognize" bodily differences among animals, which if true would indeed seem to leave affective habitus as the animals' only visibly differentiable property. Apart from the question of what evidence could possibly be found for such an assertion, the attempt to restrict the

meaning of habitus to affective dispositions seems untenable, and as soon as a cognitive dimension is admitted, the use of the concept in EVC's argument becomes contradictory. As a specific mode of material activity, the habitus of a species must obviously take into account the physical shape, size and capacities of the species' physical bodily form. It must thus constitute the framework, not only of an integral subjective (affective, but also cognitive) perspective on the world for the animal in question, but also of the objective identity of each species as it is perceived by other species. It therefore appears to stand in contradiction of the putative conceptual "uniformity" of their bodies, as well as the dissociation of bodily features and appearance as mere "clothing" from aspects of the character (affective disposition, typical modes of behavior, etc.) if not the inner spiritual identity of the species.

MULTINATURALISM AS "TYPE" AND "BOMB"

"Multinaturalism", as I have suggested above, rests squarely upon the foundation of the familiar structuralist contrast between a general, and at the most abstract level, unitary, category of culture and an equally generic, abstractly unitary category of nature. Both categories can be, and routinely are, employed at less abstract and general levels to apply to the varieties of specific cultures and natural species, respectively giving rise to multiculturalism and multinaturalism. These are simply analogous moves within a taxonomic hierarchy consisting of different levels of generality and more or less ample provision for differing subjective perspectives, not whole opposing philosophies, as EVC argues. In the same way, "naturalism" and "multinaturalism", which EVC represents as contradictory theoretical perspectives, the former being that of outmoded, pre-perspectivist Modernism and the latter the perspectivist view that is now supplanting it, are more accurately if simply understood as tags for foci on different levels of the same conceptual hierarchy. "Naturalism" does not imply a denial of differences among species any more than "multinaturalism" entails a rejection of common natural (biological) animal properties shared to varying degrees by all of them. It differs from "multinaturalism" in taking seriously the positive relationships between bodily features, habitus and the inner character and perspectives of natural creatures, but in this I believe it is closer to the thinking of most if not all Amazonian Indians than perspectivist "multinaturalism".

"Multinaturalism" in any case does not logically supplant the nature-culture distinction shared by most varieties of Modernism, including

structuralism and anthropology, which EVC collectively terms “naturalism”, as he claims. Rather, multinaturalism continues to presuppose it as the common form of the contrast between the habituses of all the different animal species and the human (cultural) identity that constitutes their “formal subjectivity”. For EVC, as I have described in the preceding section, the psychic and bodily structure of each species constitutes a logically identical microcosm of the privative contrast between spiritual, human, cultural identity and a bodily, bestial, affective, natural perspective. Thus the binary nature-culture opposition that had supposedly been shattered and transcended by the concept of multinaturalism returns as the formal framework of a potentially infinite number of cases, like the many little brooms that arise from the shattered broomstick in Disney’s film of “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” in “Fantasia”.

This metaphorical interpretation of the implications of multinaturalism for the human and natural sciences may be contrasted with EVC’s claim (as reported by Bruno Latour in his deliriously enthusiastic account of the public “*disputatio*” between EVC and Descola held in Paris in January 2009) that perspectivism and multinaturalism constitute:

[A] bomb with the potential to explode the whole implicit philosophy so dominant in most ethnographers’ interpretation of their material... [Multinaturalism is] a much more troublesome concept [than perspectivism]... Whereas hard and soft scientists alike agree on the notion that there is only one nature but many cultures, Viveiros wants to push Amazonian thought... to try to see what the whole world would look like if all its inhabitants had the same culture but many different natures. (Latour 2009:2; cf. Descola and Viveiros de Castro 2009)

This, according to Latour, is the essence of EVC’s conception of “the Amerindian struggle against Western philosophy”, spearheaded by the concepts of perspectivism and multinaturalism, which he accuses Descola of trying to reduce to “just another curio in the vast cabinet of curiosities that he [Descola] is seeking to build” (Latour 2009:2).

“Pushing’ Amazonian thought” into propositions patently alien to it (Amazonian peoples are keenly aware of, and interested in, the differences among their own cultures, let alone those of the non-indigenous peoples with whom they have come into contact, and would be the first to find the idea of a mono-cultural world absurd) may be a fascinating speculative exercise for non-indigenous intellectuals, but it has left anthropology far behind to take a place all its own as a “curio in the vast cabinet of curiosities” of perspectivist philosophy.

THE BODY AS THE “ORIGIN OF PERSPECTIVES”: BUT WHAT BODY (-IES)?

These difficulties at least have the merit of focusing attention on the centrality of the idea of the body as the “origin of perspectives”. This idea of the relation of bodiliness and perspectives actually contains several issues of critical importance to the anthropology of Amazonian cultures.

The first is that of precisely what is meant by “the body”: the physical body to be sure, but there is also a social body, which is something else again. The physical body itself is a complex entity that is not at all moments of its existence an individual entity. It originates as a union between two physical bodies of opposite sexes, is born as cultureless being more animal than human, acquires cultural personhood, then dies and is transformed into a spirit which becomes an animal-like being again who terrifies his or her surviving relatives by seeking to kill them so that they could join him or her in the spirit world (this at any rate is the Kayapo idea). The body, in short, even as a physical entity, is not an abstract object with a fixed, culturally human perspective, but a process comprising a series of transformations, each of which entails a transformation of perspectives, not all of which are cultural: in the Kayapo view, at least, we start and finish as animals.

As noted, however, there is also a social body. This is a polymorphous, androgynous entity, defined as a conjunction of relations among all the relevant social types of bodily identities constructed of contrastive values on shared dimensions like gender and social age, which formulate the signification of each bodily type through their contrastive relations to the other types that form part of the same system (e.g., bachelor youth, married woman, elder man and/or woman). The relationally defined identities of social bodiliness define perspectival relations of each embodied person to other bodily identities that form part of the same system. It is this system of contrastive values as a whole, comprising every socially marked stage of bodily development of both genders, from before birth to after death, that constitutes the external relational form of the social body (Turner 1995).

There is also, however, an internal composition of the social body, made up of the bodily senses, powers and processes that together comprise the socially relevant content of the externally related gendered and generational categories of bodily form. In some Amazonian societies, different senses, for example, are considered not only as of varying importance but also as the channels of different modes of knowledge. As Santos Granero has noted, the Kayapo associate hearing (*/-mari/*) with knowing, but it is a specific kind of knowing, passive understanding as contrasted with the

active knowledge of how to do things, which is more associated with sight (*/-omun/*) (cf. Santos Granero 2006:72; Turner 1980, 1995). Vocalization (speech and singing), though not a sensory faculty, is associated with the system of senses and modes of knowledge, since speech is the channel of the knowledge that must be internalized through the auditory channel. Smell is not much emphasized by the Kayapo, but as Santos Granero reports it is a culturally emphasized source of knowledge among the Yanésha, who however consider hearing the most important sense, followed by seeing, with smell in third place; C. Crocker reports that among the Bororo smell is the faculty through which the presence of a class of spirits, the Bope, and the presence of the dead and the giant water spirits who take part in mortuary and initiation rites are perceived (Santos Granero 2006:72,73,77; Crocker 1985). The point for present purposes is that for the Kayapo and many other Amazonian peoples, these differentiated sensory modes of knowledge are also integrally identified with distinct categories and aspects of social identity that are culturally marked by specific forms of bodily adornment (ear plugs, lip plugs, body painting in different age- and gender-related styles, etc.) (Turner 1980, 1995). The same can be said for stages of physical growth, the development of sexuality and reproductive powers, and for a man, whether or not he has acquired power by killing an enemy.

Taken together, all of these internal bodily powers, sensory forms of knowledge, and stages of growth, culturally marked by modifications of the surface of the body, collectively constitute a template or filter for the channeling, regulation and selective suppression of internal bodily powers, energies, sensory capacities and modes of knowledge as well as the contents of the external relational categories, identities and perspectives that I have called the social body (Turner 1980, 1995). It is this system of external and internal articulations of the social body, as articulated by the culturally stylized decoration of the form of the body's surface (skin, coiffure, items of costume and adornment) that in indigenous Amazonian societies shapes and defines the social meaning of the physical body to its social and natural environment. It is this complex entity, comprised of the physiological body as mediated by the social body, then, that is "the origin of perspectives". Rather than identify this point of origin with the physical body in opposition to the social identity and cultural subjectivity of the person, which seems to be EVC's point, in sum, I would argue the contrary, which is that the synthetic social and physical body is the origin of perspectives precisely because it *is* the formal (culturally defined) subjective identity of the person.

A second major issue has already been mentioned in passing, which is the

mutable nature of perspectives considered as moments of transformational social and natural processes (as distinct from their abstract ideal character as attributes of semiotic or cultural classification). EVC appears to conceive of perspectives as fixed aspects of species identities, which are essentially like synchronic signifieds in Saussurean fields of signification abstracted from discourse, social uses and processes. For perspectivism, the class as an ideal identity thus becomes the subject position that functions as the real “origin of perspectives” (as I have pointed out above, this does seem awkward for EVC’s contention that animals’ subjective identity as humans is unconnected with their bodies, which are supposedly the origin of all perspectives). There is thus for perspectivists only one, fixed perspective per species-class, or even per super-class of species (e.g., all species of animals, who collectively have the identities and thus the perspectives of humans, if only on themselves). Against this I would argue that perspectives, rooted as they are in the synthetic social and physical body, are for that reason also integrally connected with the social relations of that body to other social and physical (cultural and natural) bodies. These compound entities and relations go through developmental processes and therefore undergo regular transformations at several levels. For individuals, there are the developmental transformations of social age and status that comprise the life cycle. These are in turn bound up with the transformations of family relations and role-identities that constitute the developmental cycles of the family and domestic group, which produce *sui generis* transformations of subjective perspectives of the members of these social units.

These transformations remain within the generic class of human social relations and perspectives as contrasted to natural (animal, plant, etc.) ones. One can thus speak of hierarchies of perspectives, comprising the overall common perspective of members of the class as they go through successive transformations of their species- or class-identities. I have referred to collectively standardized transformations such as those that constitute the normative patterns of the life cycle or family cycle, but as Rosengren and also Pedersen have emphasized, there are idiosyncratic individual identities and perspectives that also go through transformations below the level of any collective social pattern. These may coexist with collective institutional patterns as I have described or they may not, as in the cases discussed by Rosengren (Pedersen 2007; Rosengren 2009).

Some transformations may produce changes in the generic human or animal subjective or spirit-identities of an individual. For the Kayapo, as I have noted above, the human life cycle does not end with death, but continues through a transformative period of separation of the spirit from the decomposing body, after which the disembodied spirit loses its human

identity and becomes “transformed into an animal” in the metaphorical language of Kayapo keening for the dead. At this point, therefore, the basic species identity itself and the human perspective that goes with it are lost and the ghostly spirit assumes the perspective and identity of an animal. It should be emphasized that such perspectival inversions and transformations are not the result of “predation” or the “cannibal cogito” as adduced by perspectivist theory to account for ambiguous instances of the juxtaposition of contradictory aspects or elements, as Wright has pointed out in an analogous context (Wright 2009:151-152).

FORM AND CONTENT, BODY AND “SOCIAL SKIN”, SCHEMA AND SPIRIT

The third major issue associated with bodiliness is the complex matter of the relation of external bodily form to inner subjective identity, a common concern of Amazonian cosmologies and concepts of subjectivity alike. It can be argued (and has been so argued by EVC) that for many Amazonian peoples, the physiological body is considered a mere “envelope” of the spirit or subjective consciousness: external physical form, in so many words, does not determine inner subjective content. In speaking of bodily form and its relation to subjective identity, spirit or perspective, however, it is essential to distinguish between the form of the physical body as a property of the species and the meta-form of the social body constructed by adornment and modifications such as coiffure, painting and clothing that together constitute what I have called a “social skin” (Turner 1980).

As a general ethnographic point, the universal practice of Amazonian cultures in altering the external form of the body through changes in adornment, painting, coiffure, dress and scarification, to mark and help to bring about transformations in the social identity and subjective perspective of persons, is inconsistent with assertions that the Amerindian peoples of Amazonia regard bodily form as modified by this “social skin” merely as an external “envelope” unrelated to the inner material and spiritual content of subjective identity and/or personhood. The critical point is that the deliberate adornment of the surface of the body is for Amazonians a means of defining and regulating the identity and social relations of the person. The importance of this practice arises from the idea that subjectivity or spirit is to an important degree the product of a person’s social relations. More precisely, it is the product of an interaction between the inner powers and senses of the body, and the modes of knowledge and capacities for growth and activity they make possible, and the external

world of social relations and activities. The natural form of the unadorned body is a *tabula rasa* across which the interchange between the internal content of bodily powers and senses and the external social world that is mediated by the meta-surface of the “social skin” takes place. In this sense the physical body considered as surface form could be called an “envelope” that does not determine the inner character of the spirit or subject, while cultural forms of bodily decoration take over the role of imposing definite perspectival form on both the inner subjective identity and external objects of interaction of the embodied person.

ANIMISM AS UNIVERSAL NATURAL SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

Many if not all Amazonian cosmological systems are founded on the principle that the forms of things immanently contain the agency or power to produce themselves, through the transformation of their own contents. The forms of things, in other words, are actually embodied processes of formation, or the potential capacity and templates for them. They contain the agency or force that impels the content of things to assume the specific characteristics and behavioral patterns proper to their species or kind. This proposition holds, in principle, for the cosmos as a whole and all its constituent units, including humans and their social groupings, animals and plants, spirits of the dead and non-living beings such as celestial bodies like the sun and moon. In practice, it applies primarily to humans and higher animals, birds and fish, but it also holds in principle for the forms of lower animals, plants and major celestial bodies. It is intuitively most directly applicable to beings which undergo developmental processes, and thus most obviously partake of the dynamic quality of formation.

The forms of things, in this view, are the guiding patterns of purposive activity that cause their objective physical contents to take on the form in question. They embody in this sense the spiritual force or subjective agency of the entity, that which makes it what it is. In the case of animate beings, their objective forms are thus conceived to be the products or manifestations of a subjective power of intentional action. An example of this is the Kayapo term */karon/* which is used equally to mean “image”, “form”, “shadow” or the “spirit”, soul, or ghost of a person or other entity. Although humans are thought of as the spirit- (*/karon/*) possessing beings *par excellence*, mammals, birds, fish and many trees, vines and other plants are also thought to possess spirit-forms and associated subjective powers.

Here we rejoin the basic notion behind the “animism” common to most

if not all indigenous peoples of the Amazon (Bird-David 1999; Descola 1996, 2005). Animism, in other words, is grounded in the idea that spirit is essentially the guiding principle, animating force, and intentional goal of the bodily process by which it is produced. The synthesis of form (or spirit) and content (or body) that constitutes a natural entity—a living being or inanimate natural entity like the cosmos or celestial bodies, in this view, can only be created and maintained by the exercise of the agency or power immanent in the form in question. The spirit of the entity is the form considered as an image or pattern that needs material content to exist. It is this need which becomes the force holding the form and content of the entity together. This unity is variable in strength, unstable, and susceptible to disruption and eventual dissolution as the subject loses its energy and power. Such dissolution can be either temporary, as in illness or shock induced by extreme fright, or permanent, as in the death of the person or organism. The spiritual force or formative aspect of the entity may thus under extreme conditions become separated from the bodily or material content of its form, but neither spirit nor body can exist independently for long without the other. Death brings the permanent separation of spirit-form from body-content, and thus dissolves the synthesis of form and content that is the basis of the objective existence of the organism. The fission of the synthetic unity of spirit and body results in the further decomposition and ultimate disappearance of its separated parts. The */karon/* or spirit-form continues to live on after the death of the body as a ghost, but gradually loses its human character, becoming an animal-like being in the forest and eventually dissolving completely. The material content (*/in/*, flesh or body) undergoes a parallel transformational process from living body to mass of dead (*/tuk/*, “black”, “dead”, or “in transformation”) rotting flesh, finishing as a disarticulated jumble of white bones.

BODILINESS, SPIRIT AND THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF ANIMISM

The Kayapo think of their own bodies as hybrid combinations of natural animal qualities of form and content, supplemented by acquired formal attributes of social identity. The former are exemplified by internal physical processes located primarily in the central trunk of the body, such as growth, digestion, sexuality and reproduction. These natural energies and powers become transformed and directed into socially patterned activities of various kinds that are associated with transformations of

bodily form, including the natural processes of growth, aging, and puberty, and the cultural modifications of the surface of the body such as painting, hair-styling, and the wearing of ornaments. These modifications of surface form serve as a two-way filter that gives specific social meaning to relations between the embodied person and external entities with whom he/she interacts.

“Nature”, in other words, is an integral component of human social bodies and thus of social persons. Natural forces and aspects of being (things that exist of themselves independently of human social activity) thus constitute essential components of central sites of social space-time and “culture”, as well as the peripheral natural zones of forest and savanna. The structure of human society, in sum, like human beings as individual embodied persons, incorporates fundamental “natural” forms of space-time, agency, and powers, including those inherent in the animal content of human bodiliness and reproductivity. Human beings, moreover, undergo transformations to and from animal forms of being and identity in the course of their life and death cycles: fetuses in the womb and newborn babies are thought of as animal-like beings with special affinities and vulnerabilities to influences from animals and ghosts. The latter are likewise considered to lose their identities as humans and to end their existence as animal forms (they are addressed as having transformed themselves into animals in mortuary chanting and keening). Human culture is thus conceived more as an incremental transformation of these natural elements, a “super-nature”, as it were, than a qualitatively distinct order of existence contrasted to “nature” in a mutually exclusive binary contrast with an excluded middle. The essence of this cultural increment is the application of natural transformational processes (such as fire) to themselves (as in the use of fire to make fire), thus generalizing and replicating what in nature remain relatively isolated processes.

As beings with specific forms and spirit-identities shared with the other members of their species, humans and animals are similarly occupied with the form-giving, spirit-directed processes of growing, aging and dying, producing and reproducing, objectifying and de-objectifying themselves. The generic forms and contents of these processes consist of functional activities (i.e., hunting, foraging, eating, drinking, finding shelter, mating and reproducing) which are essentially identical for all embodied spirit-beings regardless of the particular differences in their forms and contents. Beings of different species can thus identify their concretely different activities on the basis of their functional equivalence from the perspective of their common engagement in sustaining their bodies and spirit-forms. Plants also engage in analogous processes, but in many Amazonian cases

they are not conceived to do so as individual organisms but rather as instances of collective entities, which embody the spirit of their species.

An anteater lurching on an ant hill and a human lurching on a sandwich can thus regard themselves as engaged in the same functional activity, lurching. The human might express this sense of equivalence metaphorically by saying that the anteater is eating his sandwich, and the anteater might express the same perception by thinking of the human as licking up his ants. In terms of their shared perspective as form-guided, content-sustaining entities, there is no basis for privileging the human's over the anteater's way of expressing the functional identity of their activities.

In a similar vein, the Kayapo think of other species as having their own forms of such human artifacts or activities as houses, songs and ceremonies, and even for some purposes (such as shamanic communication) language, although they clearly recognize that the actual forms taken by these activities are very different from their human equivalents. The belief in a generic identity of spirit, and the consequent equivalence of functionally identical activities, does not imply that either humans or animals make no distinctions between the specific differences between the forms of animal and human spirits or activities, or that they imagine that animals identify themselves as humans "under the skin". It does mean, however, that all living beings, and some non-living ones, are engaged in processes of forming, sustaining and eventually losing their synthetic unities of form and content. The intentional orientation, forms of consciousness and energetic force that drives these processes constitute what we, and the indigenous peoples of Amazonia, call their spirits.

CONCLUSIONS

Structuralism as a theoretical and ethnographic quest has passed through successive stages of construction, expansion and dissolution. Like its subject matter, the myths, kinship systems, bodies and persons of the indigenous societies of the Amazon and more broadly the Americas, it can be seen to have developed through a series of transformations, each affording distinct perspectives, but all constrained to remain within the invariant limitations of its own theoretical shortcomings. Chief among these was its failure to grasp the proper application of its eponymous concept, structure, to its own research data, and thus to realize its potential as an anthropological project. Its failures, however, have been instructive. Like a giant star that has burned up its internal sources of energy, in

its terminal implosion it has been sending out dazzling flares rich with material for new planetary systems. These new systems, the dissident successor movements it has inspired, above all perspectivism and the new work on animism, have raised new issues of importance to the field and stimulated fresh discussion, of which the present paper is but one of many examples.

At the beginning of the paper, I suggested that the basic problem of structuralism was that it started with the right idea but applied it to the wrong level of the data. My critiques of perspectivism and to a lesser extent animism have in several cases taken the form of suggestions of how the original structuralist notion of structure (the group of transformations constrained by invariant principles of conservation) could be applied to the data in question in a way that would strengthen the theoretical formulations of perspectivism and/or animism. In the case of the body and its avatar, the subject, for example, I argued that the perspectivist notion of the body as the origin of perspectives, where both the body and its associated perspective are conceived as singular, unchanging entities, should be substituted by a conception of both bodies and perspectives understood as sequences of multiple transformations (thus potentially constituting groups of transformations bounded by one or more principles of conservation as called for in the structuralist model). I further suggested, as a qualification of different aspects of both perspectivist and animist ideas, that the perspectives and bodily conditions in question transform themselves from “natural” (the condition of embryos and infants) to “cultural” and ultimately back to “natural” with the onset of the dissolution of human form in aging, death and post-mortem ghostly existence. Extending my dialogue with animism, I urged that conceiving the body in appropriate structuralist terms as such a series of transformations opens a perspective on bodiliness as a process of interaction of the physical body, social body and person, stimulated and guided by relations with other embodied actors filtered and regulated by formal treatments of their bodily surfaces (“social skins”). This process of producing subjective perspective and objectified bodily form, drawing upon the natural bodily content of senses and powers, goes through a series of stages but it ultimately enters a terminal stage of deobjectification as the natural content of bodily powers weakens to the point where it cannot sustain its integration within the frame of personal identity and social form. The dissolution of form and content continues through the physical dissolution of death and the separate disintegration of spirit and body.

For the Kayapo and other indigenous Amazonian peoples with whom I am somewhat familiar, this dialectical process of production and

dissolution, objectification and deobjectification, the embodiment and ultimate disembodiment of subjective intention and identity, manifested and articulated through the integration and disintegration of form and content, is the essence of the material and spiritual existence of the animate and inanimate beings that constitute their life world. It is in no way unique to cultural humans but is, rather, common to all natural entities. It can be understood as a broadly “animist” perspective, but gives no justification for the anthropocentric bias of some animist discussions of “spirit” as an essentially human attribute. This is also an important point for perspectivism: the mere possession of a spirit or subjectivity does not in and of itself indicate that an animal or plant therefore identifies itself as human (as it would if spirit and subjectivity were intrinsically human qualities). It is true that some, though certainly not all Amazonian cultures consider at least some animals to identify themselves subjectively as humans in some respects, but this should not be understood as following necessarily from their possession of their own spirits. There are many cases of beliefs that animals and plants (or their collective species-spirits, the “masters” of the game or plant species, etc.) possess spirits that owe nothing to human contacts or culture.

I have argued that closer attention to the detailed structure of indigenous conceptions, both of natural beings and human embodied persons, is essential to avoid the distortions inherent in attempts to treat all Amazonian (or even all Amerindian) cultures as a single, homogeneous philosophical system. Dismissing the importance of divergent or even contradictory formulations of the same points on the part of societies of different types precludes the most useful anthropological method for understanding the social and cultural basis for such agreements as do exist.

The critique of structuralist, animist and perspectivist theories I have offered in this paper has served as the context for reformulating the concept of structure as a series or group of transformations internal to the developmental process of entities, ranging from individual symbols or tropes to bodies and spiritual identities. I have attempted to show that this way of conceiving structure can serve to integrate Marxian concepts of productive praxis as well as interpretationist and semiotic approaches with the valuable contributions of Lévi-Straussian structuralism and its more recent epigones. Most importantly, I have sought to suggest how the hybrid, post-post-structuralist theoretical amalgam I have outlined may contribute to understanding some of the features of Amazonian cultures that have been brought to light through the ethnographic and theoretical work so powerfully stimulated by the debates of Late Structuralism.

NOTES

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1. For a fuller discussion of the limitations of structuralism, including its failure to produce viable structural analyses consistent with Lévi-Strauss’s own definition of structure, becoming in effect itself a form of post-structuralism *avant l’heure*, see Turner 1990 “Structure and Entropy: Theoretical pastiche and the contradictions of ‘structuralism’.” *Current Anthropology* 31(5):563-568.

2. See, for example, the following myths reproduced in J. Wilbert, Ed., *Folk literature of the Gê Indians* (1978), listed by number and page: 57(160), 58(164), 59(166), 62(177), 63(181), 64(184), 65(190), 66(191), 90(242), 93(247), 94(248), 96(251), 99(257), 104(263), 105(265), 106(266), 107(266), 108(268) 109(269), 111(274), 112(276), 113(279), 114(285).

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