presents in abridged form the two roles open to the narrator; next he is humiliated by Zverkov, then he in turn humiliates Lisa; he is humiliated again by his servant Apollo and again humiliates Lisa with still more severity. The narrative pattern is broken by the enunciation of a different ideology, represented by Lisa, which consists in refusing the master-slave principle and in loving others for themselves.

Once again, then, we see that individual narratives exemplify more than one type of narrative organization (in fact, any one of them could have served to illustrate all of the organizing principles); but the analysis of one of these types is more illuminating for the understanding of a particular text than the analysis of another. We might make an analogous observation on a very different level: a narrative analysis will be illuminating for the study of certain types of texts, and not for others. For what we were studying here is not the *text*, with its own varieties, but *narrative*, which can play either an important or a negligible role in the structure of a text, and which, on the other hand, appears both in literary texts and in other symbolic systems. Today it is a fact that it is no longer literature which provides the narratives which every society seems to need in order to live, but film-makers tell us stories whereas writers deal with the play of words. The typological remarks which I have just offered relate then, in principle, not specifically to literary narratives, from which I drew all of my examples, but to all kinds of narrative; they pertain less to *poetics* than to a discipline which seems to me to have a solid claim to the right of existence, and which could be called *narratology*.[1]

(Translated by Philip E. Lewis)

[1] *Key critical references for the preceding discussion include: V. Propp,* Morphology of the Folktale *(Bloomington: Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, 1958); Claude Lévi-Strauss, "La Structure et la forme,"* Cahiers de l'Institut de Science Economique Appliquée *(series M, no. 7, 1960), pp. 3-36; Claude Lévi-Strauss,* Mythologiques *(Paris: Plon, 1964 sq.) 4 vols.; A. J. Griemas,* Sémantique structurale *(Paris: Larousse, 1966); Claude Bremond, "La Logique des possibles narratifs,"* Communications *(Fall, 1966), pp. 60-76; Claude Bremond, "The Morphology of the French Folktale,"* Semiotica *(Fall, 1970), pp. 247-276.*

interview/Claude Lévi-Strauss

The following interview is a translation of the integral transcript, a shortened version of which was published earlier this year in L'Express.

Q.— You are one of the greatest living ethnologists as well as the founder of structural anthropology. Do you consider the human sciences to be sciences?

L.-S.— I don't know if we must totally despair, but in any event, they are far from it. The physical and natural sciences have achieved this stage by succeeding in isolating for each type of problem a small number of significant variables at the heart of quite complex phenomena. We of the human sciences, or those claiming such status, remain overwhelmed and submerged by the number of variables and all the more so since, for us at the outset, this number is incomparably higher.

Besides, science studies objects, and it is particularly difficult for man to agree to become an object for himself by making an abstraction of his subjective existence, since he is at the same time both subject and object. One can foresee that, as they progress, the human sciences, much more than their sister fields, will be constantly running into this irreducible antinomy.

Q.— What significance do you attribute to your research?

L.-S.— What one calls, correctly or not, structuralism constitutes precisely an attempt, in a few fixed and limited areas, to circumvent this twofold obstacle. Structuralism tends towards objectivity by considering preferably those phenomena which develop outside the disturbances and illusions of conscious thought processes, and for which it is possible to restrict oneself to a relatively limited number of variables which may explain the diverse forms that the same phenomena take on in different societies.

But, proceeding in this manner, one can only hope for a little improvement in our understanding of things which until then remained incomprehensible, still knowing well that neither we nor anyone else will ever fully understand them. After all, the only way to reduce life's boredom lies in our pursuit of knowledge. That's our best, perhaps our only justification.

Q.— What do you think of the vogue of structuralism?

L.-S.— One always feels a little bit amused and flattered by all of the attention one gets, even if it's annoying to be sought after for all sorts of things which have no justification whatsoever: such as formulating a message, setting forth a philosophy, while I feel I am devoting myself to specific craft-like tasks.

Further, structuralism's momentary vogue has

certainly perverted its intention. Instead of searching methodically for the real meaning behind consciously elaborated metaphors, people believed they could use it as a pretext for indefinitely substituting one set of metaphors for another. That gave birth to what I would call a "structuralism-fiction."

There is no need to be surprised. To some degree the world over, though mainly in Paris, the salons are extremely voracious; they need a new feeding ground every five years. Since 1968, structuralism has become outmoded and things are much better that way.

Q.— Did the events of May 1968 change anything for you?

L.-S.— Very little on the practical level, since for several years now my research facility has been functioning as a participatory democracy, with meetings where all decisions, even budgetary ones, are made jointly by the entire membership from the receptionist right on up to the research directors and the professor from the Collège de France. On a more theoretical level, the May events appear to me to be a further indication of the disintegration of western civilization; it no longer even knows how to secure that which non-literate societies know so well how to obtain—even to the point where their proclaimed ideal is often to remain perpetually identical with what they are—I refer to the integration of new generations.

Q.— And for structuralism?

L.-S.— There, yes. In the following months, I clearly sensed that the press and the so-called cultivated public which had hailed structuralism—wrongly moreover—as the birth of a philosophy of modern times turned abruptly away from it, with even a kind of spite at having bet on the wrong horse. It's true, the May youth proved to be far removed from structuralism and much closer to positions, even though old ones, which Sartre defined right after World War II.

Q.— Are there deep differences between structuralism and existentialism?

L.-S.— There is a fundamental difference in the manner of apprehending human phenomena. Structuralism seeks to grasp them prior to a person's consciousness of them, by selecting as privileged fields for study very small orders of facts lacking any practical implications, at least in appearance. Existentialism, on the contrary, places itself initially at the level where individual consciousness apprehends the world, where individuals exist as a function of their personal history and their insertion into a given family, environment, class, society, and moment in history.

But all sorts of misunderstandings lurk behind this opposition. People wanted to see in structuralism a radical shift in moral and even metaphysical perspectives, although it boils down to what I'd call in philosophical jargon an epistemological attitude towards phenomena, not even necessarily human ones. This is a very old attitude: it probably goes back to Goethe.

Q.— Why?

L.-S.— Because of his botanical works. They gave him the idea of treating plant species, less as entities irreducible from one to another, than as transformations, each expressing in its own way and its own language, by means of the particular form of its leaves or its flowers, a fundamental truth common to the entire plant world. In other words, instead of treating things as isolated realities, attention shifts to the relations uniting them, because these relations are often simpler and clearer to understand than the things one would want to describe and explain.

Q.— Do you feel you are a scientist or a philosopher?

L.-S.— I am probably neither. If the human sciences should one day merit the name of Science, which will probably never happen, they would come to be indistinguishable from the physical and natural sciences. While we wait for this improbable stage, let's say that I consider myself as a man of study devoted to a fleeting and uncertain body of knowledge.

Q.— You have an advanced degree in philosophy. When a person has been trained as a philosopher, why does he become an anthropologist?

L.-S.— I am not the only one who has done this; it was once fairly normal, since anthropology was not taught as a full-fledged discipline in universities. I soon found it unbearable to have to repeat the same course year after year, and, moreover, I wanted to see the world . . .

I went to Brazil as a professor of sociology (at the time this too was a branch of philosophy) at the University of São Paulo. Aside from brief stays in Belgium, I had previously never left France. It was the beginning of 1934; I was 25 then. After the enchantment of the ports of call—the mixed cargo vessels that my colleagues and I took spent entire days loading up in small Spanish and African ports —my contact with São Paulo aroused my intellectual curiosity over phenomena which had the incarnate dimension of human beings.

Q.— Did you like São Paulo?

L.-S.— It was an extraordinary city, still middle-size, but in complete upheaval, where you crossed over within a few feet of each other from the Iberian world of the eighteenth century to the Chicago of the 1880's. The native Brazilians were mixed in with all sorts of foreign elements, mainly Italians but also central Europeans. I put my students to work on their own city. We did monographs on districts, sometimes on single streets. And then too, there were the market places.

Q.— In a sense, you were already on home ground then.

L.-S.— Not completely, but the markets straddled the city and the countryside. Among the handcrafted products, you could enjoy spotting the various European, African and Indian contributions. Indeed, it was a real bath of ethnological culture. It was only a short step from there to the thinly populated regions of the interior where some indigenous groups, highly acculturated in fact, were still living; I occasionally took that step on horseback with some colleagues when we came to the end of one of the few roads available at the time.

Q.— Was this being a tourist or an anthropologist?

L.-S.— At first it was just tourism, but it soon led me into anthropological work which in itself has nothing touristic since in certain ways it is very

demanding, laborious and bureaucratic work. However, during these first excursions I was struck by a nature still unhampered and unspoiled by man.

Q.— What about your love for São Paulo?

L.-S.— That may appear to contradict what I have just said, but cities have long fascinated me as both human and irrational creations, or rather, since it always comes back to the same point, their apparent irrationality composed of a multitude of individual, independent decisions, conceals an order which no one consciously desired, but whose mainsprings, however, can be determined. Once past childhood, I used to take great pleasure in long strolls about the city, whose secret layout determined the route I followed, like Jallez and Jerphanion in Jules Romains' novels. While still attending the lycée back when all the buses had an open platform in the rear, I stuck to an outer corner on the right or the left side so that I could glimpse simultaneously one side of the street and its reflection in the shop windows. When the bus approached the sidewalk, a normal street turned into a narrow alley whose two sides threatened alarmingly to merge together; and when the bus moved away, the same street opened up into an unexpectedly wide avenue. But this urban magic, which I called forth in this way, only served to enrich and transform another magic which was real.

Q.— Why did you break ties with the city later on?

L.-S.— For two reasons. If, in order to study so-called primitive societies, we have recourse of necessity to only 10 per cent history and 90 per cent anthropology, we must invert this proportion for contemporary societies or for phenomena stemming from these societies. In spite of what is often said, I have a deep respect for history, which should be left to the historians. In such matters anthropologists have a minor role to play.

Secondly, cities grow and multiply. Once a form of harmony between man and his natural milieu, they have become hideous monsters, preying upon and destroying nature, often for incalculable distances around them, when once they only sought to strike a balance with nature. A city seems to me like an intolerable monstrosity if you can no longer set out on foot and within two hours reach the open countryside. Rousseau used to go hunting for wild flowers every afternoon, starting out from his home in the heart of Paris. At present, I would rather get away from a city than study it.

Q.— Your first works in anthropology had to do with the structure of kinship ties. How were you introduced to this?

L.-S.— It was through reading, at Montpellier, right after the armistice, Marcel Granet's work on *Matrimonial Categories and Blood Relations in Ancient China.* It uncovered an area of social life where rigidly formulated rules (if not always carried out in practice) called for rigorous interpretation, and at the same time, it seemed to me that the solution to these problems should be simpler than the unnecessary complications Granet got entangled in as he tried to explain them.

There seems to be nothing more arbitrary than those rules that prescribe or forbid marriage between this or that mating type from one society to another; yet such rules exist everywhere. So they must possess some secret and common function that we have to clarify. Later, I realized that this was anthropology's primary concern, and this realization caused me to remain an anthropologist: on the one hand, you have an almost inexhaustible store of problems, coded messages to be deciphered; and on the other hand, (though very difficult to arrive at), certain conceptual principles which will account for what is apparently odd and meaningless. Kinship and marriage rules are fine examples of this. They serve to explain customs which first seem capricious and unreasonable, but behind which simple and readable models are concealed.

Q.— Are these customs the same in all societies?

L.-S.— No, of course not. In small societies where all the members are united through real or imagined, close or distant, kinship ties, only certain relatives can intermarry, others not. But the possibilities are not the same for any two societies. Arab societies prefer men to marry their father's brother's daughter; many non-literate societies would find this practice abominable since they permit cousins to intermarry only if their respective parents are brother and sister, never two brothers or two sisters. They refine this even further: one society will permit marriage only to the cousin who is a father's sister's daughter, while another proscribes such a marriage as incestuous and will allow the man to marry if his cousin is his mother's brother's daughter. There are other much more complicated rules for more distant relations.

Q.— Can you explain why this is so?

L.-S.— In those societies where everyone is considered interrelated, kinship constitutes a language expressing the whole network of man's rights and obligations. Kinship, in a word, is the common denominator of politics, law and economy.

Marx and Engels had admirably understood this, despite the scarcity of available ethnological data in their time. They make a distinction between our so-called historical societies, governed in their view by class relationships, and those which anthropologists study where what they call old consanguineous ties are prevalent.

Q.— You have just mentioned Marx. Marxists sometimes call upon your work as reference. What do you think of this?

L.-S.— I don't believe marxists claim me as a reference. It is rather I who in certain cases have referred to Marx.

Q.— There was a period however when marxism influenced your life.

L.-S.— It still does. The notion that social consciousness is always deceiving itself and that, behind the lie, the truth is revealed in the very same way in which the lie asserts itself, this notion is a precept of Marx. It is also his teaching that the ideology of any society becomes comprehensible only in light of the concrete relations which the men of this society maintain among themselves and with the world in which they live and work. Marx, to whom we owe the distinction between infrastructures and superstructures, concerned himself mainly with the former and at best only outlined the manner in which the relations between them might be formulated. It is to this theory of superstructures, which Marx indi-

cated rather than elaborated, that I am trying to make a contribution.

Q.— What role did you play in the clarification of kinship phenomena?

L.-S.— Certainly not discovering their importance, since that was done by the American anthropologist Lewis Morgan, whose *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* appeared in 1871. Since then, instructional material published for anthropologists and anthropological manuals have always stressed marriage rules and kinship systems.

Q.— Still, you further codified and systematized what had remained very descriptive.

L.-S.— Instead of proposing a particular explanation for each type of rule, I looked for an interpretative principle to integrate all of them. Each one would appear as the enactment of the principle in terms of each group's organization. Exchange appears to be the principle I was looking for: if I refuse to marry my daughter or my sister because of the incest taboo, which is observed everywhere though in differing degrees, this means that I relinquish them to other groups. In exchange for this renunciation, some groups (and not necessarily the same ones) will reserve their daughters or sisters as possible mates for me. This exchange, which involves families, or even larger groups—what we call clans or lineages—can occur between groups of two or more. It can be reciprocal if you give to and receive from the same group, or indirect if each group gives to another and receives from a third. Finally, it can take place during long or short cycles, since there are societies with immediate, medium and long term exchange patterns. The analysis of these various logical possibilities enables us to account through deduction for all the bizarre rules I spoke about before which then turn out to be rational.

Q.— How so?

L.-S.— If group A constantly gives to group B, which gives to group C, which gives to D, etc., which gives to group *n* which in turn gives to A, a very simple simulation of such a system shows that the ideal mate for a man will always be his mother's brother's daughter. But if the direction of these exchanges is reversed for each successive generation, then the father's sister's daughter will represent the preferable ideal mate, since in this case each group will receive from the one owing it a wife a woman in compensation for the one it will have given up in the preceding generation. You could clear up other cases through these reconstruction techniques, but I would add that this method has not been unanimously accepted.

Q.— You also used linguistics in constructing your method?

L.-S.— I took my inspiration from linguistics, but since it concerns a very different field of inquiry, I was constantly adapting and modifying its ideas in an extremely free manner. My encounter with Roman Jakobson, in 1941, showed me that what I was trying to do in the field of kinship had been done successfully by linguists in their own field. I learned much from that and especially gained encouragement along similar lines of my own.

Once, it was rumored in *L'Express* that, as a result of having attended by chance a meeting of one of Jakobson's seminars, I had become a somewhat naïve convert to his method. That's not exactly true. During our years of exile in the United States, Jakobson and I lived in close contact with one another. We each attended the other's courses, we saw each other frequently, and we explored quite a few Chinese, Greek and Armenian restaurants together.

Q.— How does Marcel Mauss fit in here? You yourself have stressed his great importance as a precursor.

L.-S.— It's Mauss who pointed out the general role of exchange in the life of societies, a theme which I have sought to use on the more technical level of marriage and kinship rules. But, as a latecomer to anthropology, I knew very little about him and never attended his courses. Only through reading his work did I come to realize how much anthropology, and I personally, were indebted to him.

Then too, perhaps on a practical level and through my own error, I gained less from his indirect influence. While I was preparing my principal expeditions in Brazil, the Museum of Man in Paris was in its formative stage, and Mauss had instilled it with a truly mystical reverence for the cultural object. Not without reason, for he thought that if one knew how to read it properly, the smallest object might reflect in a microcosm the entire material and moral economy of a society. In the field, intimidated by the rules that had been laid down for me, I spent much time collecting, studying and describing objects and their production techniques, time which I now regret having taken away from studying beliefs and institutions.

Q.— Have you drawn from your research any implications concerning kinship ties in our society?

L.-S.— In the majority of non-literate societies, we are dealing with sufficiently or well-determined systems. It isn't the same in our society where, subject to the restrictions against marriage between close relations, all unions are proper. In other words, our society falls back on a statistical game in order to insure the intermixing of biological families without which the social body would risk dismemberment. But this isn't to say that the preliminary forms of systems don't tend to take shape without our knowledge, at least in those rural or urban sectors where demographers uncover a certain coefficient of endogamy. After the publication of *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* I hoped to encourage research in this direction. I soon gave up those plans.

Q.— For what reasons?

L.-S.— Because the problems quickly become so very complicated that the anthropologist gives up any hope of resolving them with his small craft-like techniques. One would have to draw on the help of computers, attacking the intermediate systems first, which do exist by the way in non-literate societies, between the well-determined systems and the probabilistic systems in force in our enormous modern societies which will always defy analysis. You can the more easily accept this fact since it is quite unlikely that these latter systems have any operative value for insuring social cohesion. This cohesion is obtained by other means.

Then again, I was appointed in 1950 to a

Chair, at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, for the comparative study of religions of non-literate peoples. So it was normal that my interests would take a new direction and that I would try to extend to religious matters the same procedures which had proved to be fruitful in the study of kinship.

Q.— How did you go about it?

L.-S.— The initial situation in both cases isn't very different. Primitive religions present themselves as an enormous reservoir of representations, which fit together in various combinations, under the guise of rituals and myths that at first seem totally arbitrary. We are confronted with what seems like an immense confusion of customs and beliefs. The question is how to know whether within it all there exists anything resembling an order or a coherence. Starting with the myths of central Brazil where I had lived and which I had studied, I thought I perceived that although each myth taken by itself looked like a bizarre account devoid of all logic, the relations between these myths were simpler and more intelligible than the stories each one told. But, while philosophic or scientific thought reasons by combining and opposing concepts, mythical thought proceeds by means of images drawn from the tangible world. Instead of formulating relationships in the abstract, it sets one element against another, sky and earth, earth and water, man and woman, light and darkness, raw and cooked, fresh and rotten . . . In this way mythical thought elaborates a logic of perceptible qualities which it chooses and combines in order to transmit a different message through each myth.

Q.— What particularly striking myths have you studied?

L.-S.— When the fourth and final volume of my work on American mythology appears in a few months, close to a thousand myths will have been enumerated, forming together what I think is a unique and coherent treatise. There's no reason to go over the same ground again, but here's an example: that two incestuous lovers can succeed in uniting only in death where their two bodies will be dissolved into a single being is a story we are quite prepared to accept because our own tradition, the Tristan and Iseult story and Wagner's opera, has made us familiar with it. It would not be the same for another story, just as familiar in North America, where at the instant of their birth, a grandmother sticks a brother and sister together, thus molding a single child. When this child reaches maturity, he shoots an arrow straight overhead, which, falling back upon him, splits him in two and reconstitutes the duality of brother and sister who then promptly become incestuous lovers. As you might say, there's neither head nor tail to this second story.

Still, you only need compare the two accounts to ascertain that this latter one simply turns the Tristan story on its head. Are we not dealing with the same myth in both instances, which different populations present in symmetrical readings? You can rest assured of it if you take a further step to observe that the first account explains the origin of a constellation (into which the incestuous lovers are *transformed*), and the second accounts for sunspots: in one case you have bright spots on a dark background, and in the other, dark spots on a bright background. To account for inverted celestial configurations then, you tell the same story, but presented with either the "inside" or the "outside" showing.

Thus, where once there appeared to be two totally distinct myths, there is now only one as a result of such an analysis. In this way you continue a gradual approach and instead of finding a host of insignificant and disordered details scattered before the inquiring mind, you end up with fewer, but denser, more voluminous objects, each consistent within itself.

Q.— Could you give us other examples of myths?

L.-S.— The Salish-speaking peoples who inhabited North America between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean near the fiftieth parallel often speak in their myths of a deceitful genie who, whenever a problem puzzles him, excretes his two sisters imprisoned in his bowels, whereupon he demands their advice by threatening them with a torrential downpour: they, being excrement, would disintegrate. The tale seems like a clownish farce without any basis, defying all interpretation except, some would argue, through psychoanalysis. But this wouldn't get you very far for the simple reason that the storytellers' individual psychic constitutions are not a causal factor. Rather, an anonymous tradition has thrust these stories upon them.

As in the previous instance, one may well ask himself if the apparent absurdity of the motif is not a result of our having arbitrarily isolated it from a much larger ensemble in which it would represent one possible combination among others produced as well, so that there would be no meaning to each one taken alone, but only in its relation to the others. Now, in Salish myths, the same genie creates for himself two adoptive daughters, out of raw salmon roe. When they're fully grown, he desires them. Testing his position, he pretends to call them by mistake "my wives" instead of "my daughters." They promptly take offense and leave.

Finally, the Salish tell of a third pair of supernatural women. These women are married and are incapable of expressing themselves in articulate speech. They live at the bottom of natural wells and, upon request, send up dishes of hot, well-cooked food to the surface.

These three motifs cannot be understood apart from one another. On the other hand, once you compare them, you notice their common origin. All the women are related to water: either, as in the case of the well women, to stagnant water, or to running water for the two other pairs.

The latter are distinct from one another in that the salmon-roe daughters come from a positive, earthly source of water—salmon streams—and the excrement-sisters are threatened with destruction by a negative, heavenly source of water—the disintegrating rain. That's not all: the salmon-roe daughters and excrement-sisters are the products of either raw (in the first case) or cooked (in the other) food, while the well-women are themselves producers of cooked food. Further, the well-women, if you permit me, are "marrying-types" as wives and good cooks. The other two pairs are "non-marrying types,"

whether because they are labeled as sisters or because they avoid incestuous marriage with their foster father. Finally two pairs of women are endowed linguistically: one for their wise counsel, the other because they catch on to a half-spoken, improper hint. In this way they contrast with the third pair, the well-women, who cannot speak.

Thus from three meaningless anecdotes you extract a system of pertinent oppositions: water, stagnant or moving, from the earth or sky; women created from food or producing it themselves, raw or cooked food: women accessible or opposed to marriage depending upon linguistic or non-linguistic behavior. You arrive at what I'd call a "semantic field" which can be applied like a grill to all the myths of these populations, enabling us to disclose their meaning.

Q.— Namely?

L.-S.— You realize that the Salish myths compose a vast sociological, economical and cosmological system establishing numerous correspondences between the distribution of fish in the water network, the various markets where goods are exchanged, their periodicity in time and during the fishing season, and finally exogamy: for, between groups, women are exchanged like foodstuffs.

The enjoyment of a diversified diet functions in myths as a sign of how open each small society is to the outside world, an indication of the degree to which these various societies are willing to engage in marital exchanges, and thus to communicate with one another.

Q.— Can one say then that myths shift with the technical and economic level of societies? In what way?

L.-S.— The myths I just referred to are the same ones which in South America serve to account for the passage from nature to culture, symbolized by the acquisition of cooking fires, to man's benefit. But in these North American populations, which engaged widely in intertribal exchanges, mythic imagery accentuates that aspect which, to them, constitutes the distinctive trait of civilized life. Accession to culture is no longer indicated by the simple art of cooking meat, but by the founding of commerce, giving this term a social and economic sense. The rich and varied design of what we would call the housekeeper's breadbasket takes the place, as it did for us scarcely a century ago, of a simple call to prayer in thanks for our daily bread.

Q.— You once made a study of the Santa Claus myth.

L.-S.— You're very generous to call it that. It was a very superficial text on a recent mythology in our society. But, to be precise, I endeavored to show that Christmas is a tender, almost nostalgic example of an unrealistic mode of social life. The constraints on exchange are lifted and the children become symbolic of a humanity permitted to receive without giving anything in return.

Q.— All your work involves extinct societies or those on the road to extinction. Listening to you now, we would like to ask what practical use they can be for us today.

L.-S.— Your question suggests several possible answers. First, the thousands of societies that exist today, or once existed on the surface of the earth, constitute so many complete experiments, the only ones we can make use of to formulate and test our hypotheses, since we can't very well construct or repeat them in the laboratory as physical and natural scientists do. These experiments, represented by societies unlike our own, described and analysed by anthropologists, provide one of the surest ways to understand what happens in the human mind and how it operates. That's what anthropology is good for in the most general way and what we can expect from it in the long run.

Q.— And more immediately?

L.-S.— Even in our historical societies there exist small pockets of phenomena where things more or less function as they do in non-literate societies; consequently the same methods can be applied to them. Such is the case for certain aspects of local life. For four years now, one of my laboratory's research teams has been conducting a field study of a village in Northern Burgundy. I would extend this research to include certain areas, such as art, fashion, eating habits, where factors of conservation, creation and evolution are not completely geared to the conscious demands of collective life. Due to their relative independence, these narrowly defined areas can bring into view, like an enlarging mirror, some significant and profound aspects of our culture.

Finally, and this alone would suffice to justify its role, anthropology may well inspire us with a certain humility and instill in us some wisdom. Anthropologists are trying to point out that ours is not the only possible way to live, and that other ways have allowed and still allow groups of men to find happiness. Anthropology invites us to temper our pride, to respect other life styles and do as Rousseau did when faced with surprising, shocking or repulsive practices: he preferred to believe from recent descriptions that gorillas were men rather than risk refusing the attribute of humanity to what might have been only one more aspect of humanity previously unknown.

I would add that the societies studied by anthropologists provide instructions which are that much more worth heeding if you consider that these societies have succeeded in striking a balance between man and his natural environment, a balance whose purpose and secret are lost to us.

Q.— But how can this balance be recaptured if our world is moving towards something completely different from what you are studying?

L.-S.— Our world may be headed for a cataclysm or an atomic war that will exterminate three fourths of the human race. If this happens, the remaining fourth probably won't find living conditions much different from those of the societies we're studying. But even barring this hypothesis, one may wonder whether societies that continue to expand enormously and look more and more alike do not re-create within themselves differences along axes other than those of their similarities. The various hippie movements, our generation gap, the sexual revolution might indicate that this is the way things are evolving. After all, at the same time that India was piecing together a sub-continental civilization it broke up into a caste system.

Q.— In your opinion, what role would or could the mass media play in this diversification?
L.-S.— It seems to me there is too much attention given to their leveling effect without considering their part in enabling social groups or entire generations to create very quickly their own sub-culture. Whereas a traditional culture filters slowly from one generation to the next within the family unit, each new generation has instantly at its disposal through the news media, records and television, a wide array of elements to choose from and arrange in original combinations, thus distinguishing itself from the older generation.
Q.— Is it possible to foresee the day when anthropology will succeed in renewing our knowledge of man, making it more open, more "human"?
L.-S.—I'd be extremely gratified if it were so, but I dare not hope!
Q.— But what if you could?
L.-S.— Auguste Comte had formulated a law of three states. According to the law, humanity had passed through successive stages: religious, philosophical, and positive or scientific. Anthropology may teach us something similar, despite the fact that the content and meaning of each conceivable state may differ from what Comte himself imagined.

We now know that people considered very primitive, having no knowledge of agriculture or animal husbandry, weaving or pottery, people who live by food-gathering and foraging are not gripped all day long by the fear of starvation, nor by the problem of survival in a hostile environment. Their small complement of men and their prodigious knowledge of natural resources provide them with something less than an abundant food supply from our point of view. But, be that as it may, three or four hours of work per day are enough to provide each family with its subsistance. So it would be wrong to believe that the physical world and the natural environment have a direct hold on them. Much to the contrary, their freedom and independence allow them to devote a large part of their lives to imagination, putting between themselves and the outside world all sorts of small buffers made of beliefs and dreams.

Let's suppose that the human race lived in a comparable way for hundreds of millenia. We might then say that it only slowly emerged from such a state by steadily linking itself up with reality. Moreover this link-up was still occurring indirectly, in the period that Marx describes, through "relays" in which ideology still played an important role. The means of production and exchange, already determinant factors, were still man's creation, the expression of his history midpoint between necessity and freedom. The world we step into today is something else entirely—a world where humanity runs up against progressively more abrupt and harsh determinants, the results of enormous populations and limited quantities of open space, fresh air, and unpolluted water available to satisfy its biological and psychic needs.
Q.—Is achieving this third phase linked to scientific progress?
L.-S.— Materially, it is of course; but spiritually as well. With the appearance of science and the unchallenged supremacy of scientific knowledge, human feelings—which no longer have any significant value apart from the rudimentary facts they provide us about our organic integrity—become divorced from abstract thought, wherein lies all our hopes for intelligibility. This schism is light years away from the world of our so-called "primitives" for whom each color, each texture, each fragrance, each flavor is meaningful.
Q.— But what about art?
L.-S.— I have nothing against art, but all the same, it's a pretty dull and narrow affair compared with a world-view in which all of nature spoke to man.
Q.— Should we take it that you oppose scientific knowledge?
L.-S.— By no means! Clearly, science represents a type of knowledge with absolute priority over all others, and I myself take great pains to work scientifically. But at the same time I can't help thinking that science would be more appealing if it had no practical use. In what we call progress, 90 per cent of our efforts go into finding a cure for the harms linked to the advantages brought about by the remaining 10 per cent.
Q.— You maintain that history is purposeless.
L.-S.— If it does have a purpose it is not a sound one; the way in which mankind shapes its history is not the one best suited to insuring its own happiness.
Q.— What might mankind do to find happiness?
L.-S.— Once I was speaking to an eminent colleague in geography of a period in France's not so distant past when her population was 25 million. He stopped me and said, "That's a luxury we can't permit ourselves anymore." The finality of his remark struck me. Indeed, it was an extraordinary luxury, for the only real problem facing civilization today is the population explosion which theoreticians of the past 50 years neither forecast nor even envisaged. It's the source of all the rest of our troubles. Michel Debré was surely correct when he told *L'Express* recently that it would be absurd to want less Frenchmen because there are already too many Chinese and Indians. Still, it is no less true that, if the world's population continues at its present rate of growth, none of us will want to be in our great-grandchildren's shoes. But it is wishful thinking to imagine that the nations of the world, inspired by supreme wisdom, will one day know how to work together to limit their respective populations, and use the technical advances they've already achieved to do no more than provide an average but adequate standard of living for everyone. Gobineau had already toyed with the idea of such a utopia, only to realize at once that it was impracticable.
Q.— What you're saying sounds quite "reactionary."
L.-S.— The words "reactionary" and "revolutionary" have meaning only in terms of conflicts which pit one group of men against another. Today, however, the great peril to mankind does not stem from the actions of any one regime, party, group or class. Rather, it is the family of man itself which poses that threat, exposed as its own worst enemy and at the same time, alas, as the worst enemy of the rest of creation. If there is to be hope of saving mankind, mankind must first be convinced of this.

(Translated by Peter B. Kussell)