

- Counter relativism

## Robin Horton (1932- )

Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

### Key Works

1962. The Kalabari world-view: An outline and interpretation. Africa IAI 32(3).

1970. African traditional thought and Western science. In Rationality, Bryan Wilson, ed. London: Billing and Sons Limited.

with Ruth Finnegan, eds. 1973. Modes of thought. London: Faber & Faber.

### Anthropological School of Thought

Universal rationality/Common core of rationality

Argues for a common core of rational thought shared by all world cultures.

### On Rationality and Relativism

Basic question: Does the rich and extensive evidence of apparently irrational beliefs adduced among others by social anthropologists and historians of science require us to accept relativism in any strong form?

Answer: No. Not really irrational, given the (technical or social or cultural or psychological) context (Hollis and Lukes 1982, 17).

### Basic Ideas

#### African Theoretical Models Analogous with Western Models.

The concern of African religions with puzzling observations in the natural and social realms are seen as analogous with the construction of models or theories in Western science.

Horton submits that the language of religion and science--often viewed as antithetical spheres of Western discourse--both are necessary in rendering African religious systems intelligible (Lessa and Vogt 1972, 348).

#### Two Modes of Thought and Discourse

Purpose: To explain, control, and predict events in the push-pull and chaos of the environment.

(1) Cognitive Traditionalism

(2) Cognitive Modernism

#### Continuity Premise

Continuity between African traditionalism and Western modernity is the presence of two distinct yet intimately complementary levels of thought and discourse.

(1) Primary theory--everyday discourse

(2) Secondary theory--theoretical discourse

Eulerian      logical - seems  
                      paralogical - vague  
                      illogical - unargued

Notes

1. Unity / Plurality - not measurable
2. Takes down seriously - & quality of Truth. etc
3. Intentionality of the system
4. Euler's Theory in WV.

Builders of secondary theory are concerned to show order, regularity, and predictability.

**Concepts of order**

African theory-builders--associated with human action and interaction (certainty in social expectations). Drawn largely to personalized theoretical schemes.

Western theory-builders--associated with non-living phenomena, both artificial and natural. More impersonal and mechanistic schemes.

**Ritual as Theory Building**

"Scientific" activity to build schemes of underlying processes or events that account for observed phenomena. Most theoretical models are drawn from phenomena already observed in the visible and tangible world.

**General Propositions on the Nature and Functions of <sup>Secondary</sup> Theoretical Thinking (Wilson 1970)**

- (1) The quest for explanatory theory is basically the quest for unity underlying apparent diversity. *in natural, social & cosmic worlds*
- (2) Theory places things in a causal context wider than that provided by common sense.
- (3) Common sense and theory have complementary roles in everyday life. *Expensive*
- (4) The level of theory varies with context. *↳ less costly & efficient. Complex objects → complex theories*
- (5) All theory breaks up the unitary objects of common sense into aspects--subtracts, then analyses, then re-integrates.
- (6) In evolving a theoretical scheme, the human minds draws from analogy between the puzzling observations to be explained and certain already familiar phenomena.
- (7) A theoretical model, once built, is developed in ways which sometimes obscure the analogy on which it was founded.

**Contrasting of Cultures**

*African Traditional      Western Modernist*

Concept of Knowledge:

*Traditionalistic      Progressivistic*

Mode of Theorizing:

*Consensual      Competitive*

Variables which impact traditionalistic concepts of knowledge:

*Unchanging (not fixed)      (checked down from ancient)      (constant testing)      constant change*  
*Theory done by community (shared framework)      (not shared frameworks)      done by competing theoreticians*

Retrieved { Sets Fys Set  
 Relat R/S

- (1) Mode of transmission of ideas.
- (2) Pace of societal change.
- (3) Degree of homogeneity in cultural background and in range of everyday experience.

**Missiological Considerations**

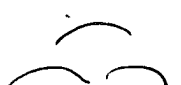

- (1) Explanation, prediction, control. Horton understands the pull out of nationals from missionary churches in terms of decrease of these aims in religious life.
- (2) There is now a very general agreement that the phenomena of conversion can only be understood if we put the initial emphasis, not on the incoming religious messages, but rather on the indigenous religious frameworks and on the challenges they face from massive flows of novel experience (Hollis and Lukes 1982, 221).
- (3) Traditionalistic/Consensual and Progressivistic/Competitive societies and their responses to the gospel.
- (4) What impact the idea of universal rationality--a common core of rationality--has upon cross-cultural understandings and faith dialogue.


LURIA

INSTRUMENTALIZING: Kuku  
 1. Incommensibility: Luria  
 1. Nihilistic - Meaninglessness - ~~incommensurable~~  
 2. Relativism -  
 3. No Solution.  
 4.

Kuku  
 Nihilistic  
 Relativism

C/Realism MAP

1. 1:~1: Approx.
2. Complementarity
3. 
4.  $R=T \cong +$
5. S/T 

6. Correspondence Check
7.  Symbols

# Religion & Science

Religion {
 

- symbolist = mirror social functions
- fideists = autonomous construct to beliefs
- interpretive = system of theory guided by explanation, mediation, control. vs Science
- commonsense → traditional sacred, closed.

1970 {
 

- Present → modern science, open
- Common to all human abstract
- Primary Thinking: everyday discourse. Concrete

1980 {
 

- Secondary Thinking
  - views
  - looks for hidden realities
  - models, theoretical.
- Specialization
  - Up down Front-Back
  - Left-Right etc.
- personal
- temporal.

↑  
 context  
 of culture  
 provides  
 sense of  
 order  
 → analysis for  
 implications  
 else

A T Rel.  
 - relational world is ordered  
 is ordered i.e. relational order.

Materialist Mode  
 - particular  
 - material world is ordered

Van Gennep, Arnold . 1906. The Rites of Passage

translated by Solon T. Kimball in 1960.

\* His interests:

- the studies and theories of religious belief and ceremonialism.
- systematic ethnographic studies of peoples of the globe.
- utilizes taxonomic principles
- emphasis on the interpretation of the ceremonies in the context.
- "not in the particular rites, but in their essential significance and their relative positions within ceremonial wholes, that is, their order."

\* His sources:

- positivism: "general laws of social process should be derived from empirical observation rather than metaphysical speculation."

\* His understanding of the law of life and of the universe:

- Regeneration: the energy which is found in any system gradually becomes spent and must be renewed at intervals.

"[Man's] life resembles nature, from which neither the individual nor the society stands independent. The universe itself is governed by a periodicity which has repercussions on human life, with stages and transitions, movements forwards and periods of relative inactivity." (3)

- Dichotomy of the sacred and the profane

The sacred is not an absolute value but one relative to the situation. These changes from the sacred to the profane, from the profane to the sacred calls for rites of passage.

\* His understanding of religion and magic:

- Magic: techniques, ceremonies, rites, services

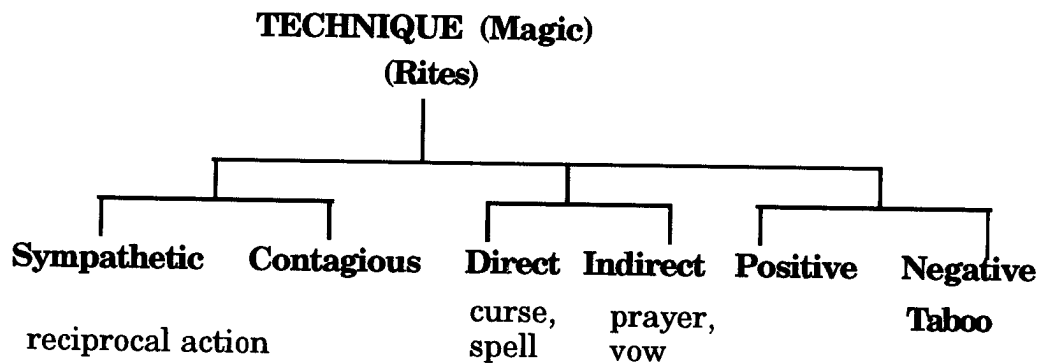
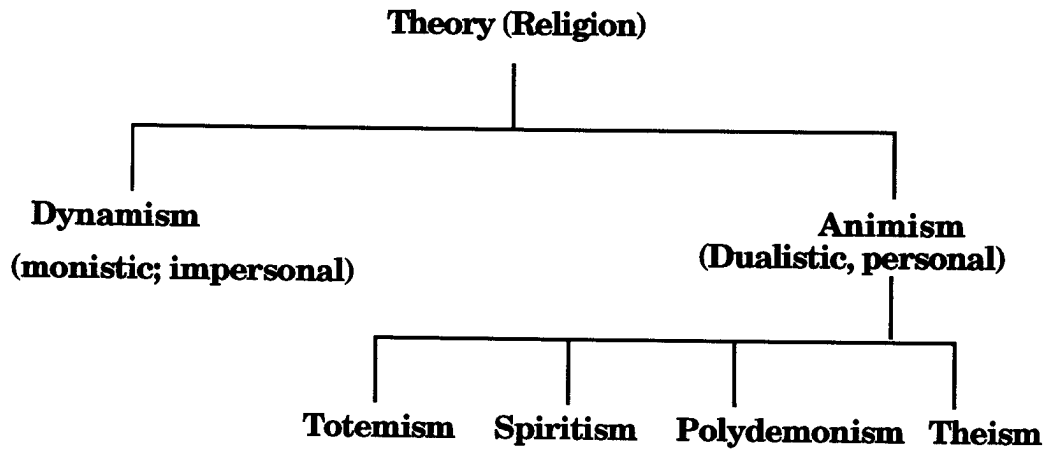
- Religion: magic + metaphysical theory

WHAT'S GOING ON AT GRADUATION? — why ceremonialize  
— why dress up, gods sym,

1. RITES OF PASSAGE : — STRUCTURE NOT CONTENT  
. why marriage, death, birth, graduation; ceremonialized

## The Classification of Rites

"The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to the another and from one occupation to another." (3)



### **van Gennep's classification**

**Dynamistic rites:** based on a concept of a power, such as mana, that is not personalized.

**Animism:** the personalistic theory, the power personified by a single or a multiple being, animal or plant (totem), anthropomorphic or amorphous (God)

## The Territorial Passage

The prohibition against entering a given territory is intrinsically magico-religious.

Rites of passing through the door have three phases:

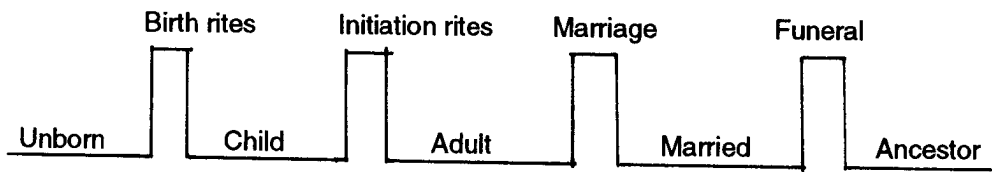
Rites of separation from a previous world. (purifications: washing, cleansing, etc.)

Rites of transition carried out on the threshold.

Rites of incorporation into the new world. (presentation of salt, a shared meal, etc.)

"A society is similar to a house divided into rooms and corridors. The more the society resembles ours in its form of civilization, the thinner are its internal partitions and the wider and more open are its doors of communication. In a semicivilized society ... sections are carefully isolated, and passage from one to another must be made through formalities and ceremonies ... " (26)

## **Rites of Passage**



### **Birth Rites**

Rituals associated with birth are one of the ways a society admits and incorporates new members into its ranks and recognizes the changes that take place in the roles of other when this occurs. (Hiebert 1976, 160)

#### **Three Phases**

##### **Rites of Separation**

Those who are involved in birth are removed from the past statuses. (i.e. Taboos on sexual relationship, diet)

##### **Rites of Transition**

Rituals to guard them from the dangers that confront those in transition, to assure their success in their new status, and to educate them in their new roles. (i.e. Baby showers)

##### **Rites of Incorporation**

Involved into new statuses. Both mother and child assume new roles and statuses.

Identity - name is given.

Social status



## Initiation Rites

- Initiation rites are performed to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood in many societies.
- "physiological puberty and social puberty are essentially different and only rarely converge." (65)

Difference between the ages of the first menstruation and the legal age of marriage. In Rome social puberty (12 yrs old) precedes physiological puberty, and in Paris (16 yrs old) it follows physiological puberty. -- don't call puberty rites  
Associated with biological processes of maturation, symbolize the social status.

## Marriage Rites

In many societies, marriage is the most elaborate transition rite. (Hiebert 1976, 166)

Several social functions: Provide entertainment and excitement. Public announcement, informing everyone about the changes, help the couple to adjust to their new roles. (Hiebert 1976, 167)

## Funeral Rites

### Functions of death rites

Disposal of the body

Preparation of the spirit for its new role

**To channel the expression of grief and provide comfort and support to the living relatives and friends**

**To restore balance in the social relations of the living that the death has disrupted.**

**To provide an explanation for the major events and crises of life.**

*Like a lock*

### His contributions:

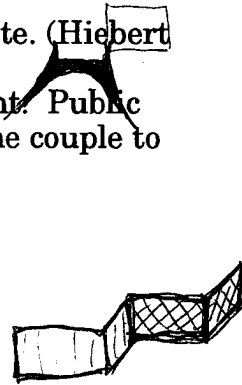
1. the pattern of the rites of passage
2. the existence of transitional period
3. the relationship between actual spatial passage and the change in social position.

*Many rites in societies we serve: what's going on.*

*Why do we celebrate graduation?*

- .. marriage
- .. birth
- .. retirement
- ..

*Life Cycle rites*  
*= main system*  
*= vorleben fassen*  
*worldview*



**DCE946: Sociological and Anthropological Presuppositions**  
**Spring 1998**

**Wayne R. Wachsmuth**

**David Emile Durkheim**

**Biography:**

- Born April 15, 1858 at Epinal,
- 1872-75: Baccalaureats in Letters and Sciences
- 1882: Graduated from the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris  
Begins teaching philosophy
- 1885: Publishes reviews of the works of Schaeffle, Fouillee and Gumplowicz in the *Revue philosophique* - a year of study at Marburg, Berlin and Leipzig
- 1887: Appointed professor of pedagogy and Social science  
Teaches 1<sup>st</sup> course in sociology at the University of Bordeaux
- 1892: Presents his doctoral thesis to Paris' Faculty of Letters  
Division of Labor in Society
- 1894: Obtains permanent appointment as associate professor at Bordeaux
- 1895: Publishes The Rules of Sociological Method
- 1896: Nominated Professeur de Science Sociale
- 1897: Publishes Suicide: A Study in Sociology
- 1898: Professional Ethics and Civic Morals
- 1899: Collective and Individual Representations
- 1900: Two Laws of Penal Evolution
- 1902: Moral Education  
Assistant Professor of Pedagogy, Sorbonne
- 1906: Professor of Pedagogy by unanimous vote
- 1912: Elementary Forms of Religious Life
- 1913: Chair of "Science and Education" is renamed  
"Science of Education and Sociology"
- 1915: Loses his only son, Andre, in the war (Declared missing, Jan. 1916)
- 1916: Suffers a stroke, briefly recovers, then dies on Nov. 15 at the age of 59

**Select Bibliography:**

- HD51 D9.8 The Division of Labor in Society. Translated by George Simpson. New York: The Free Press, 1964.
- HM24.D962 The Rules of Sociological Method. Edited with an Introduction by Steven Lukes. Translated by H.D. Halls. New York: Macmillan, 1982.
- HV6545.D812 Suicide: A Study in Sociology. Edited with an Introduction by George Simpson. Translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. New York: Macmillan, 1951.
- HM216.D854 Durkheim: Essays on Morals and Education. Edited and with Introductions by W.S.F.Pickering. Translated by H.L. Sutcliffe. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.
- GN470 D8 Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. London: George Allen and Unwin, LTD, 1915.
- GN480 .D843 Incest: The Nature and Origin of the Taboo. Translated, with an introduction, by Edward Sagarin together with Albert Ellis, The Origins and the Development of the Incest Taboo. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1963.

### The Division of Labor in Society

Spencer's account of the division of labor and his theory of man in society.

Causes of an expanding division of labor.

Population growth and concentration.

Heightened competition.

The problem of specialization.

Key Question: Does exchange presuppose or create norms?

To what extent does divided labor produce cohesion?

To what extent is the division of labor a moral or economic phenomenon?

Mechanical Solidarity

Organic Solidarity

"it can even be said that the more specialized the functions of the organism, the greater its development. . . Briefly, is the division of labor, at the same time that it is a law of nature, also a moral rule of human conduct; and, if it has this latter character, why and in what degree?" (41)

### Elementary Forms of Religious Life.

**Religion serves a social purpose.**

Key Question: What are the bounds that unite man one with another?

Answer: We must consider social facts as things.

The problem of knowledge: Kant and Locke.

Definition of Religion:

All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic; they presuppose a classification of all the things, real or ideal, of which men think into two classes . . . generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words profane and sacred. . . a unified set of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, - beliefs and practices which unite one single moral community - all those who adhere to them. (115)

Fundamental Assumption, "Since all religions can be compared to each other, and since all are species of the same class, there are necessarily many elements which are common to all." (4)

### The Rules of Sociological Method.

An attempt to remove the ambiguity in the previous work, The Division of Labor.

Causes and effects are both necessary and sufficient conditions of each other.

Key Concepts:

Anomie: A state of "normalness." Typically, the condition exists in times of rapid social change, when existing rules, habits, and beliefs no longer hold and alternatives have yet to arise. Durkheim coined the term to describe a type of suicide that he associated with the loss of a particular way of life.

Sacred: The sacred was residual to, and other than, this workaday sphere of the profane.

Profane: The profane referred to the experience of everyday life, of which work and the workday world was its most central and significant type case.

Totemism

Moral Education

## Mary Douglas

### Biography

b. 1921 in Italy  
studied at Oxford – mentored by Evans-Pritchard – doctorate in 1951.  
Many honorary doctorates  
Field work among Lele in the Congo in early 1950's  
Professor of Anthropology at University College, London - 1951-78  
Director of research for the Russell Sage Foundation – 1977-81  
Prof. Of Humanities at Northwestern – 1981-'85  
Visiting prof. in anthropology and religion at Princeton – 1985-'88  
Retired to England and began a new career as biblical scholar  
British structuralist in tradition of Durkheim and Evans-Pritchard.  
Practicing Roman Catholic – what affect does that have on her anthropology?  
Seems to be a gracious and open person.

### Influence on other disciplines

Anthropology  
Biblical studies – bringing social science insights into Bible  
Theology  
Medieval English literature – Gawain poet  
Arabic poetry  
Sanskrit literature  
Contemporary American social analysis  
Catholic church hierarchy and women's concerns  
Feminism and women's studies (19<sup>th</sup> c. America)  
Missions

### Key ideas

#### *Purity and Danger*

Main concern? Looking for universal system of understanding pollution and defilement.  
Dirt is “matter out of place” or disorder. “Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment”  
(2). Defining dirt is a way to give order to reality. Mud on table is dirt, in garden it is not. The culture defines what is dirt and what is not.  
Task of symbol systems is to impose order on reality, to divide the world into categories.  
Applied it to Leviticus, and tried to make sense out of the Hebrew ceremonial laws.

#### *Natural Symbols*

Main concern? What is the relationship between a groups social structure and their cosmological beliefs? How to chart people's social experience in such a way that the connection with cosmologies becomes plain?  
Definitions and explanation

Grid and group technique of relating cosmologies to particular social structures. Social role of religious beliefs.

#### Group and grid

Group – loyalty to group identity, individual or group centeredness

Grid<sup>1</sup> – social obligations, role and status differentiation, degree of social structure, role insulation, degree of social hierarchy, closed or open social life.

Grid<sup>2</sup> – worldview and culture

Illustrations

Issues and applications

Critiques

Provides no consistent way to tell which social experiences are most important in determining people's beliefs.

Problem of criteria for placing society on the grid.

Many applications ignored the full empirical picture of a society's social situation

*How Institutions Think*

Main concern? Nature of institutions and how they enforce social control. Isolates three types of institutions

Sectarian

Entrepreneurial

Hierarchical

### Implications for missiology

How do we define sin (pollution) in evangelism?

How do we develop appropriate rituals?

How does an understanding of group/grid help us plant effective churches?

Ritual is more effective (powerful) in high group / high grid (collective) societies. If you eliminate ritual, will this lead to a lessening of the social cohesion of the group? Question of excommunication. Does it have any affect on a low group society? Excommunication from communion means little when ritual is unimportant.

Shift from fundamentalism to evangelicalism. Quad D → where? What is the relationship between a lowering of boundaries lowering of standards of purity?

Institutional change

Church polity

Church discipline

Conflict management

Liturgics

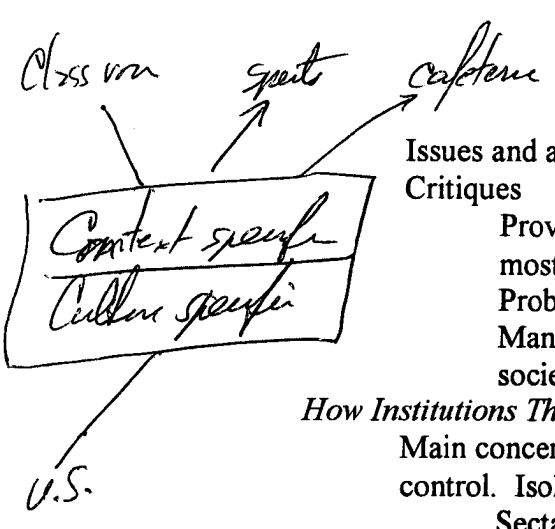
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1966. *Purity and danger: An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

1970a. *Natural symbols: Explorations in cosmology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

1978. *Cultural Bias*. London: Royal Anthropological Institute. Reprinted as pp. 183-254 of *In the active voice*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

1986. *How institutions think*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.



## Theoreticians: Bronislaw Malinowski

1. Born in Cracow, Poland in 1884. Died of a heart attack on May 16, 1942.

Plagued throughout life with poor health

- strongly influenced by his mother, Jozefa, and father, Lucjan (a celebrated scholar in the field of slavonic philology. Learned several modern languages.

2. Theory:

- At the end of his life stressed the unity of humankind. "I am a world citizen by now. . . we stress so much cultural differences, . . . that we forget the unity of mankind (Gross 1986, 564)."
- Early influenced by Westermarck's evolutionary convictions. Mentored by C. G. Seligman. Went to Australia to do field work. Caught by World War I and spent his time in the Trobriand Islands. Met Elise Rosaline Masson, Dr. of Sir Masson and married her. Had a daughter. His second widow, Valletta, published his diaries posthumously which tarnished his reputation somewhat.
- No one more than Malinowski brought together in single comprehension the warm reality of human living and the cool abstractions of science. Pioneered participant-observer methods and seeking emic understandings. Kluckhohn called the method: "The well-documented anecdote set firmly in a ramified context."
- stressed that every belief gave rise to social expressions which are complex and intersecting
- rooted functionalism in individual human impulses and needs:

IMPULSE	ACT	SATISFACTION (Voget 1975,517)
Metabolism		Commissariat
Reproduction		Kinship
Bodily comforts		Shelter
Safety		Protection
Movement		Activities
Growth		Training
Health		Hygiene

## Theoreticians: Levi-Strauss

### 1. Levi-Strauss used modern descriptive analysis as the analogy for analysing culture.

He saw in it rules for sounds (phonemes), rules for words (morphemes) and rules for meaning (sentences). Phonemes take meaning in words, and words take meaning only in sentences. These rules enable humans to generate speech (parole).

- we need to see kinship systems and economic systems as such a set of rules with levels of rules (no analogy to phonemes, but there are to morphemes and sentences).
- we need to see music as a system of sounds (with analogies to phonemes and sentences but not to words).
- we must look below behavior and customs to the generative rules below them.

### 2. Systems

- systems are based on unconscious infrastructures that generate conscious phenomena.
- systems are based more on relationships than on things. Look at the knots in the net not the strings.
- systems have general laws based on induction or logical deduction that give them an absolute character and enable people to generate behavior.
- systems have generative rules that order transformations resulting in a group of models of the same type. The model should be constituted so as to make immediately intelligible all of the observed facts.
- we need to see the similarities between the systems of language, economics, and social structure to discover human universal thought patterns.

### 3. Myths

- myths does not offer a determined meaning to those who listen to it. It provides a grid definable only by its rules of construction which confer meaning not on the myth itself but on everything else (1992, 145-146) It is dialectical in that it attempts to make cognitive sense out of the chaotic data provided by nature, and this attempt inevitably traps the human imagination in a web of dualisms . . . It is a form of language and like language imposes dichotomies, dualistic grids, and dialectics on our understanding of ourselves and our world (viii, ix).
- Our thinking is based on binary in nature, "the simplest and most efficient way to process experience seems to be by dividing it in half, and then to divide the halves in half, reformulating every question so that there are only two possible answers to it, yes or no (viii, ix).
- myths are culturally-coded story-telling that provide us with a sense of order in an apparently disorderly universe.

### 4. Meaning

- meaning is tied to order. It is impossible to conceive of meaning without order. 'To mean' means the ability of any kind of data to be translated in a different language. (Myth and Meaning. p. 12).

- "To speak of rules and to speak of meaning is to speak the same thing; and if we look at all the intellectual undertakings of mankind, as far as they have been recorded all over the world, the common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order. If this represents a basic need for order in the human mind and since, after all, the human mind is only part of the universe, the need probably exists because there is some order in the universe and the universe is not chaos (Myth p. 13).

Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1978. Myth and Meaning. Toronto: Univ. Toronto Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1963. Structural Anthropology. Basic Books.