Overture

The aim of this book is to show how empirical categories—such as the categories of the raw and the cooked, the fresh and the decayed, the moistened and the burned, etc., which can only be accurately defined by ethnographic observation and, in each instance, by adopting the standpoint of a particular culture—can nonetheless be used as conceptual tools with which to elaborate abstract ideas and combine them in the form of propositions.

The initial hypothesis demands therefore that from the outset we place ourselves at the most concrete level—that is, in the heart of a community or of a group of communities sufficiently alike in regard to their habitat, history, and culture. However, while this is undoubtedly an essential methodological precaution, it cannot mask or restrict my intention. Using a small number of myths taken from native communities which will serve as a laboratory, I intend to carry out an experiment which, should it prove successful, will be of universal significance, since I expect it to prove that there is a kind of logic in tangible qualities, and to demonstrate the operation of that logic and reveal its laws.

I shall take as my starting point one myth, originating from one community, and shall analyze it, referring first of all to the ethnographic context and then to other myths belonging to the same community. Gradually broadening the field of inquiry, I shall then move on to myths from neighboring societies, after previously placing them, too, in their particular ethnographic context. Step by step, I shall proceed to more remote communities but only after authentic links of a historical or a geographic nature have been established with them or can reasonably be assumed to exist. The present work will describe only the initial stages of a long journey through the native mythologies of the New World, starting in the heart of tropical America and leading, as I can already foresee, to the furthest regions of North America. The connecting thread throughout will be a myth of the Bororo Indians of central Brazil; this is not because this particular myth is more archaic than others that will be examined later, or because I consider it to be simpler or more complete. It attracted my attention in the
Even though I have thus far stated my aims clearly, there is some danger that my project may meet with preliminary objections on the part of many who have not been introduced to the analytical machinery with which I am working. For the sake of being as explicit as possible, I should like to describe briefly my method of analysis and its philosophical implications, in order to eliminate any misunderstanding. My project is not to analyze the entire myth, but rather to analyze the myth with respect to its constituent elements, with the purpose of revealing the underlying structure of the myth and its relationship to the principles of its origin. The method of analysis is based on the principle of systematic comparison, and it involves the following steps:

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2. Determination of its constituent elements.
3. Analysis of the relationships between the elements.
4. Identification of the underlying structure.
5. Interpretation of the myth in terms of its underlying structure.

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ever see the light of day, they will not be so much a continuation as a different handling of the same material, a new attack on the same problems, in the hope that they will bring out hitherto blurred or unnoticed features, by means of different lighting or by a different coloring of histological cross sections. Therefore, if my inquiry proceeds in the way I hope, it will develop not along a linear axis but in a spiral; it will go back over previous findings and incorporate new objects only in so far as their examination can deepen knowledge that had previously existed only in rudimentary form.

Moreover, it must not be considered surprising if this work, which is avowedly devoted to mythology, draws hesitatingly on material provided by folk tales, legends, and pseudo-historical traditions and frequently refers to ceremonies and rites. I cannot accept overhasty pronouncements about what is mythology and what is not; but rather I claim the right to make use of any manifestation of the mental or social activities of the communities under consideration which seems likely to allow me, as the analysis proceeds, to complete or explain the myth, even though it may not constitute an obligate accompaniment of the myth in a musician’s sense of the term (on this point cf. L. S. 5, chap. 12). On another level—and in spite of the fact that my inquiry is centered on the myths of tropical America, which supply most of the examples—the analysis itself, as it progresses, demands that use be made of myths originating in more remote regions, just as primitive organisms, although enclosed within a membrane, still retain the ability to move their protoplasm within this covering and to achieve such extraordinary distention that they put forth pseudopodia; their behavior appears less strange, once we have ascertained that its object is the capture and assimilation of foreign bodies. Finally, I have been careful to avoid grouping the myths into preconceived classifications, under such headings as cosmological, seasonal, divine, heroic, technological, etc. Here again the myth itself, on being put to the test of analysis, is left to reveal its nature and to show the type to which it belongs; such an aim is beyond the scope of the mythographer if he relies on external and arbitrarily isolated characteristics.

In short, the peculiarity of this book is that it has no subject: it is restricted in the first place to the study of one myth; yet to achieve even partial success, it must assimilate the subject matter of two hundred others. Anxious though I am to keep within a clearly defined geographic and cultural area, I cannot prevent the book from taking on, from time to time, the appearance of a general treatise on mythology. It has no beginning, since it would have developed along similar lines if it had had a different starting point; and it has no end, since many problems are dealt with in summary fashion, and others are simply mentioned in the hope that they may be treated more fully at some later date. In order to draw my map, I have been obliged to work outward from the center; first I establish the semantic field surrounding a given myth, with the help of ethnography and by means of other myths; and then I repeat the operation in the case of each of these myths. In this way the arbitrarily chosen central zone can be crisscrossed by various intersecting lines, although fewer overlappings occur as we move further out. In order to make the grid or mesh even, one would have to repeat the process several times, by drawing more circles around points situated along the periphery. But at the same time this would increase the size of the original area. And so we see that the analysis of myths is an endless task. Each step forward creates a new hope, realization of which is dependent on the solution of some new difficulty. The evidence is never complete.

I must, however, admit that the curious conception underlying this book, far from alarming me, seems rather to be a sign that I have perhaps succeeded in grasping certain fundamental properties of my subject, thanks to a plan and a method that were not so much chosen by me as forced upon me by the nature of the material.

Durkheim has said (p. 142) of the study of myths: “It is a difficult problem which should be dealt with in itself, for itself, and according to its own particular method.” He also suggested an explanation of this state of affairs when later (p. 195) he referred to the etic myths, “which no doubt explain nothing and merely shift the difficulty elsewhere, but at least, in so doing, appear to attenuate its crying illogicality.” This is a profound definition, which in my opinion can be extended to the entire field of mythological thought, if we give it a fuller meaning than the author himself would have agreed to.

The study of myths raises a methodological problem, in that it cannot be carried out according to the Cartesian principle of breaking down the difficulty into as many parts as may be necessary for finding the solution. There is no real end to mythological analysis, no hidden unity to be grasped once the breaking down process has been completed. Themes can be split up ad infinitum. Just when you think you have disentangled and separated them, you realize that they are knitting together again in response to the operation of unexpected affinities. Consequently the unity of the myth is never more than tendential and projective and cannot reflect a state or a particular moment of the myth. It is a phenomenon of the imagination, resulting from the attempt at interpretation; and its function is to endow the myth with synthetic form and to prevent its disintegration into a confusion of opposites. The science of myths might therefore be termed “anastic,” if we take this old term in the broader etymological sense which includes the study of both reflected rays and broken rays. But unlike philosophical reflection, which claims to go back to its own source, the reflections we are dealing with here concern rays whose only source is hypothetical. Divergence of sequences and themes is a fundamental characteristic of mythological thought, which manifests itself as an irradiation; by measuring the directions and angles of the rays, we are led to postulate their common origin, as an ideal point on which those deflected by the structure of the myth would have converged had they not started, precisely, from some other point and
remained parallel throughout their entire course. As I shall show in my conclusion, this multiplicity is an essential characteristic, since it is connected with the dual nature of mythological thought, which coincides with its object by forming a homologous image of it but never succeeds in blending with it, since thought and object operate on different levels. The constant recurrence of the same themes expresses this mixture of powerlessness and persistence. Since it has no interest in definite beginnings or endings, mythological thought never develops any theme to completion; there is always something left unfinished. Myths, like rites, are "in-terminable." And in seeking to imitate the spontaneous movement of mythological thought, this essay, which is also both too brief and too long, has had to conform to the requirements of that thought and to respect its rhythm. It follows that this book on-myths is itself a kind of myth. If it has any unity, that unity will appear only behind or beyond the text and, in the best hypothesis, will become a reality in the mind of the reader.

But I shall probably incur the severest criticism on the ethnographic level. Although the book is carefully documented, I have disregarded certain sources of information, and some others have proved inaccessible. Those I have made use of do not always appear in the final draft. To avoid making the demonstration too unwieldy, I had to decide which myths to use, to opt for certain versions, and in some measure to simplify the variants. Some people will accuse me of having adapted the subject matter of my inquiry to suit my own purposes. If I had selected, from the vast quantity of available myths, only those that were most likely to support my thesis, my argument would have lost much of its force. It might therefore be said that I ought to have gone through all the known myths of tropical America before venturing to embark on a comparison between them.

The objection may seem particularly telling in the light of the circumstances that delayed the appearance of this book. It was almost completed when the publication of the first volume of the Enciclopédia Bororo was announced; and I waited until the work had reached France and I had studied it before putting the finishing touches to my text. But, following the same line of reasoning, I ought perhaps to have waited another two or three years for the second volume, which will deal with myths and will include a section on

1 Certain works, such as Die Tarana by Hinsink and Hahn (Stuttgart, 1961) have been only sketched through, because of their relatively recent publication; while others, which did not reach France until after the completion of this book, have not been consulted at all: cf. J. Libert, Indios de la región Orinoco-Venturi (Caracas, 1963); and Warao Oral Literature (Caracas, 1964); and N. Foch, Wateri, Religion and Society of an Amazonian Tribe (Copenhagen, 1962). However, in this last book I have already noted a myth about the opossum which confirms my analyses in the third and fourth parts. This new material will be utilized in a later volume.

proper names. Actually the study of the volume already to hand suggested a different conclusion, in spite of the wealth of detail it provides. The Salesians, who record their own changes of opinion with great serenity, when they do not simply fail to mention them, can be hardly critical if a piece of information published by some author does not coincide with their own most recent findings. In both cases they are committing the same methodological error. The fact that one item of information contradicts another poses a problem but does not solve it. I have more respect for the informants, whether they are our own or those who were employed in the old days by the missionaries, and whose evidence is consequently of particular value. The merits of the Salesians are so indisputable that, without failing in the debt of gratitude that is owed them, we can voice one slight criticism: they have an unfortunate tendency to believe that the most recent piece of information cancels out everything else.

I do not doubt for a moment that further information already available or as yet unpublished will affect my interpretations. Some that are no more than tentative will perhaps be confirmed; others will be abandoned or modified. No matter; in a subject such as this, scientific knowledge advances haltingly and is stimulated by contention and doubt. Unlike metaphysics, it does not insist on all or nothing. For this book to be worthwhile, it is not necessary in my view that it should be assumed to embody the truth for years to come and with regard to the tiniest details. I shall be satisfied if it is credited with the modest achievement of having left a difficult problem in a rather less unsatisfactory state than it was before. Nor must we forget that in science there are no final truths. The scientific mind does not so much provide the right answers as ask the right questions.

I can go further. If critics reproach me with not having carried out an exhaustive inventory of South American myths before analyzing them, they are making a grave mistake about the nature and function of these documents. The total body of myth belonging to a given community is comparable to its speech. Unless the population dies out physically or morally, this totality is never complete. You might as well criticize a linguist for compiling the grammar of a language without having complete records of the words pronounced since the language came into being, and without knowing what will be said in it during the future part of its existence. Experience proves that a linguist can work out the grammar of a given language from a remarkably small number of sentences, compared to all those he might in theory have collected (not to mention those he cannot be acquainted with because they were uttered before he started on his task, or outside his presence, or will be uttered at some later date). And even a partial grammar or an outline grammar is a precious acquisition when we are dealing with unknown languages. Syntax does not become evident only after a (theoretically limitless) series of events has been recorded and examined, because it is itself the body of rules governing their production. What I have tried to
give is an outline of the syntax of South American mythology. Should fresh data come to hand, they will be used to check or modify the formulation of certain grammatical laws, so that some are abandoned and replaced by new ones. But in no instance would I feel constrained to accept the arbitrary demand for a total mythological pattern, since, as has just been shown, such a requirement has no meaning.

Another more serious objection is possible. Someone may question my right to choose myths from various sources, to explain a myth from the Gran Chaco by means of a variant from Guiana, or a Gc myth by a similar one from Colombia. But structural analysis—however respectful it may be of history and however anxious to take advantage of all its teachings—refuses to be confined within the frontiers already established by historical investigation. On the contrary, by demonstrating that myths from widely divergent sources can be seen objectively as a set, it presents history with a problem and invites it to set about finding a solution. I have defined such a set, and I hope I have supplied proof of its being a set. It is the business of ethnographers, historians, and archeologists to explain how and why it exists.

They can rest assured that, as regards the explanation of the group nature of the myths assembled here (and which have been brought together solely for the purposes of my investigation), I do not expect that historical criticism will ever be able to reduce a system of logical affinities to an enormous list of borrowings, either successive or simultaneous, made by contemporaneous or ancient communities from each other, over distances and intervals of time often so vast as to render any interpretation of this kind implausible, and in any case impossible to verify. From the start then, I ask the historian to look upon Indian America as a kind of Middle Ages which lacked a Rome: a confused mass that emerged from a long-established, doubtfully very loosely textured syncretism, which for many centuries had contained at one and the same time centers of advanced civilization and savage peoples, centralizing tendencies and disruptive forces. Although the latter finally prevailed through the working of internal causes and as a result of the arrival of the European conquerors, it is nonetheless certain that a set, such as the one studied here, owes its character to the fact that in a sense it became crystallized in an already established semantic environment, whose elements had been used in all kinds of combinations—not so much, I suppose, in a spirit of imitation but rather to allow small but numerous communities to express their different originalities by manipulating the resources of a dialectical system of contrasts and correlations within the framework of a common conception of the world.

Such an interpretation, which I shall leave in this tentative form, is obviously based on historical conjecture; it supposes that tropical America was inhabited in very early times; that numerous tribes were frequently in movement in various directions; that demographic fluidity and the fusion of populations created the appropriate conditions for a very old-established syncretism, which preceded the differences observable between the groups; and that these differences reflect nothing or almost nothing of the archaic conditions but are in most cases secondary or derivative. Therefore, in spite of its formal approach, structural analysis establishes the validity of ethnographic and historical interpretations that I put forward more than twenty years ago; at the time they were thought to be somewhat rash (cf. L.-S. 5, p. 115 ff. and all of chap. 6), but they have continued to gain ground. If any ethnographic conclusion is to be deduced from the present work, it is that the Gc far from being the "marginal" people they were supposed to be in 1942, when Volume I of The Handbook of South American Indians came out (I protested at the time against this assumption), represent a pivotal element in South America, whose function is comparable to the part played in North America by the old settlements along the Fraser and Columbia rivers, and their survivors. When I extend my inquiry to the northern areas of North America, the basis for the comparison will appear more clearly.

It was necessary to mention at least the concrete results achieved by structural analysis (certain others, relating only to the peoples of tropical America, will be explained in the course of this book) to put the reader on his guard against the charge of formalism, and even of idealism, that has sometimes been leveled against me. It may be said that the present book, even more than my previous works, takes ethnographic research in the direction of psychology, logic, and philosophy, where it has no right to venture. Am I not helping to deflect ethnography from its real task, which should be the study of native communities and the examination, from the social, political, and economic points of view, of problems posed by the relations among individuals and groups within a given community? Such misgivings, which have often been expressed, seem to me to arise from a total misunderstanding of what I am trying to do. And what is more serious, I think, is that they cast doubt on the logical continuity of the program I have been pursuing since I wrote Les Structures Elémentaires de la parenté, a work about which the same objection cannot reasonably be made.

The fact is, however, that La Pensée sauvage represented a kind of pause in the development of my theories: I felt the need for a break between two bursts of effort. It is true that I took advantage of the situation to scan the scene before me, to estimate the ground covered, to map out my future itinerary, and to get a rough idea of the foreign territories I would have to cross, even though I was determined never to deviate for any length of time from my allotted path and—apart from some minor poaching—never to encroach on the only too closely guarded preserves of philosophy. . . . Nevertheless, the pause that some people misinterpreted as marking a conclusion
was meant to be a merely temporary halt between the first stage that had been covered by Les Structures and the second, which the present work is intended to open.

Throughout, my intention remains unchanged. Starting from ethnographic experiences, I have always aimed at drawing up an inventory of mental patterns, to reduce apparently arbitrary data to some kind of order, and to attain a level at which a kind of necessity becomes apparent, underlying the illusions of liberty. In Les Structures, behind what seemed to be the superficial contingency and incoherent diversity of the laws governing marriage, I discerned a small number of simple principles, thanks to which a very complex mass of customs and practices, at first sight absurd (and generally held to be so), could be reduced to a meaningful system. However, there was nothing to guarantee that the obligations came from within. Perhaps they were merely the reflection in men’s minds of certain social demands that had been objectified in institutions. If so, their effect on the psychological level would be the result of mechanisms about which all that remains to be determined is their mode of operation.

The experiment I am now embarking on with mythology will consequently be more decisive. Mythology has no obvious practical function: unlike the phenomenon previously studied, it is not directly linked with a different kind of reality, which is endowed with a higher degree of objectivity than its own and whose injunctions might therefore transmit to minds that seem perfectly free to indulge their creative spontaneity. And so, if it were possible to prove in this instance, too, that the apparent arbitrariness of the mind, its supposedly spontaneous flow of inspiration, and its seemingly uncontrolled inventiveness imply the existence of laws operating at a deeper level, we would inevitably be forced to conclude that when the mind is left to commune with itself and no longer has to come to terms with objects, it is in a sense reduced to inventing itself as object; and that since the laws governing its operations are not fundamentally different from those it exhibits in its other functions, it shows itself to be of the nature of a thing among things. The argument need not be carried to this point, since it is enough to establish the conviction that if the human mind appears determined even in the realm of mythology, a fortiori it must also be determined in all its spheres of activity.

In allowing myself to be guided by the search for the constraining structures of the mind, I am proceeding in the manner of Kantian philosophy, although along different lines leading to different conclusions. The ethnologist, unlike the philosopher, does not feel obliged to take the conditions in which his own thought operates, or the science peculiar to his society and his

period, as a fundamental subject of reflection in order to extend these local findings into a form of understanding, the universality of which can never be more than hypothetical and potential. Although concerned with the same problems, he adopts an opposite approach in two respects. Instead of assuming a universal form of human understanding, he prefers to study empirically collective forms of understanding, whose properties have been solidified, as it were, and are revealed to him in countless concrete representational systems. And since for him, belonging as he does to a given social milieu, culture, region, and period of history, these systems represent the whole range of possible variations within a particular type, he chooses those that seem to him to be the most markedly divergent, in the hope that the methodological rules he will have to evolve in order to translate these systems in terms of his own system and vice versa, will reveal a pattern of basic and universal laws; this is a supreme form of mental gymnastics, in which the exercise of thought, carried to its objective limits (since the latter have been previously explored and recorded by ethnographic research), emphasizes every muscle and every joint of the skeleton, thus revealing a general pattern of anatomical structure.

I am perfectly aware that it is this aspect of my work that Ricoeur is referring to when he rightly describes it as “Kantism without a transcendental subject.” But far from regarding this reservation as indicating some deficiency, I see it as the inevitable consequence, on the philosophical level, of the ethnographic approach I have chosen; since, my ambition being to discover the conditions in which systems of truth become mutually convertible and therefore simultaneously acceptable to several different subjects, the pattern of those conditions takes on the character of an autonomous object, independent of any subject.

I believe that mythology, more than anything else, makes it possible to illustrate such objectified thought and to provide empirical proof of its reality. Although the possibility cannot be excluded that the speakers who create and transmit myths may become aware of their structure and mode of operation, this cannot occur as a normal thing, but only partially and intermittently. It is the same with myths as with language: the individual who conscientiously applied phonological and grammatical laws in his speech, supposing he possessed the necessary knowledge and virtuosity to do so, would nevertheless lose the thread of his ideas almost immediately. In the same way the

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2 "Il law it anywhere, it is everywhere." Such was the conclusion reached by Tylor in the passage that I used seventeen years ago as an epigraph for Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté.


With his customary subtlety and insight Roger Bastide (pp. 65-79) anticipated the whole of the preceding argument. The coincidence of our views is a most eloquent indication of his clearheadedness, since I did not see his work (which he himself kindly sent me) until I was busy correcting the proofs of this book.
practice and the use of mythological thought demand that its properties remain hidden; otherwise the subject would find himself in the position of the mythologist, who cannot believe in myths because it is his task to take them to pieces. Mythological analysis has not, and cannot have, as its aim to show how men think. In the particular example we are dealing with here, it is doubtful, to say the least, whether the natives of central Brazil, over and above the fact that they are fascinated by mythological stories, have any understanding of the systems of interrelations to which we reduce them. And when by appealing to such myths we justify the existence of certain archaic or colorful expressions in our own popular speech, the same comment can be made, since our awareness is retrospective and is engineered from without and under the pressure of a foreign mythology. I therefore claim to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men’s minds without their being aware of the fact.

And, as I have already suggested, it would perhaps be better to go still further and, disregarding the thinking subject completely, proceed as if the thinking process were taking place in the myths, in their reflection upon themselves and their interrelation. For what I am concerned to clarify is not so much what there is in myths (without, incidentally, being in man’s consciousness) as the system of axioms and postulates defining the best possible code, capable of conferring a common significance on unconscious formulations which are the work of minds, societies, and civilizations chosen from among those most remote from each other. As the myths themselves are based on secondary codes (the primary codes being those that provide the substance of language), the present work is put forward as a tentative draft of a tertiary code, which is intended to ensure the reciprocal translatability of several myths. This is why it would not be wrong to consider this book itself as a myth; it is, as it were, the myth of mythology.

However, this code, like the others, has neither been invented nor brought into existence without it. It is inherent in mythology itself, where we simply discover its presence. One ethnographer working in South America expresses surprise at the way in which the myths were conveyed to him: “The stories are told differently by almost every teller. The amount of variation in important details is enormous.” Yet the natives do not seem to worry about this state of affairs: “A Caraja, who traveled with me from village to village, heard all sorts of variants of one kind and accepted them all in almost equal confidence. It was not that he did not see the discrepancies, but they did not matter to him . . .” (Lipkind 1, p. 251). A native observer from some other planet might more justifiably (since he would be dealing with history, not myths) be amazed that in the mass of works devoted to the French Revolu-

And should this light happen to reveal a treasure, there will be no need of an arbitrator to parcel it out, since, as I declared at the outset (L.S. 9), the heritage is untransferable and cannot be split up.

II

At the beginning of this introduction I explained that I had tried to transcend the contrast between the tangible and the intelligible by operating from the outset at the sign level. The function of signs is, precisely, to express the one by means of the other. Even when very restricted in number, they lend themselves to rigorously organized combinations which can translate even the finer shades of the whole range of sense experience. We can thus hope to reach a plane where logical properties, as attributes of things, will be manifested as directly as flavors or perfumes; perfumes are unmistakably identifiable, yet we know that they result from combinations of elements which, if subjected to a different selection and organization, would have created awareness of a different perfume. Our task, then, is to use the concept of the sign in such a way as to introduce these secondary qualities into the operations of truth.

It was natural that the search for a middle way between aesthetic perception and the exercise of logical thought should find inspiration in music, which has always practiced it. Nor did the parallel suggest itself only from a general point of view. At a very early stage, almost from the moment of beginning to write, I realized that it was impossible to organize the subject matter of this book according to a plan based on traditional principles. The division into chapters not only did violence to the movement of thought; it weakened and mutilated the thought itself and blunted the force of the demonstration. The latter, to be convincing, needed, paradoxically enough, to require greater suppleness and freedom. I also came to see that the documentary data could not be presented in unilinear fashion, and that the different stages of the commentary were not interlinked merely in order of sequence. Certain devices of composition were indispensable to provide the reader from time to time with a feeling of simultaneity; the impression would no doubt remain illusory, since an expository order had to be respected, but a near equivalent to it might be achieved by an alternation in style between the discursive and the diffuse, by varying the rhythm between fast and slow, and by sometimes piling examples one on top of another and sometimes giving them separate presentation. I saw that the process of analysis would take place along different axes: there would be the sequential axis, of course, but also the axis of relatively greater densities which would involve recourse to forms comparable to solos and tutti in music; there would be the axis of expressive tensions and the axis of modulation codes, and during the process of composition these would bring about contrasts similar to the alternation between melody and recitative or between instrumental ensembles and arias.

It followed, from the liberty I was thus taking in developing my themes in several dimensions, that the division into isometric chapters must give way to a pattern involving parts of unequal length, fewer in number but also more voluminous and complex, and each one of which would constitute a whole by virtue of its internal organization according to a certain unity of inspiration. For the same reasons the various parts could not all be cast in the same mold; rather, in respect to tone, genre, and style, each would have to obey the rules dictated by the nature of the material being used and of the technical devices employed in each particular case. Consequently here, too, musical form offered the possibility of diversity already standardized by experience, since comparison with models such as the sonata, the symphony, the cantata, the prelude, the fugue, etc., allowed easy verification of the fact that constructional problems, analogous to those posed by the analysis of myths, had already arisen in music, where solutions had been found for them.

But at the same time I could not avoid another problem—that of the fundamental causes of the initially surprising affinity between music and myths (structural analysis of the latter does no more than emphasize their properties, while taking them over and transposing them onto another plane). And undoubtedly a great step forward had been made in the direction of finding a reply when I realized a constant of my own personal history which had remained unaffected through all vicissitudes, even withstanding during adolescence those two shattering revelations Pelléas et Mélisande and Stravinsky's Les Noces ("The Wedding"): I mean my reverence, from childhood on, for "that God, Richard Wagner." If Wagner is accepted as the undeniable originator of the structural analysis of myths (and even of folk tales, as in Die Meistersinger), it is a profoundly significant fact that the analysis was made, in the first instance, in music. Therefore, when I suggested that the analysis of myths was comparable with that of a major musical score (L-S. 5, p. 234), I was only drawing the logical conclusion from Wagner's discovery that the structure of myths can be revealed through a musical score.

However, this preliminary tribute confirms the existence of the problem more than it solves it. The true answer is to be found, I think, in the characteristic that myth and music share of both being languages which, in their different ways, transcend articulate expression, while at the same time—like articulate speech, but unlike painting—requiring a temporal dimension in which to unfold. But this relation to time is of a rather special nature: it is

5In recognizing this influence, I should be guilty of ingratitude if I did not at the same time admit other debts: in the first place, to the work of Marcel Granet, so rich in insights of genius and then, last but not least, to M. Georges Dumézil; and to M. Henri Grégoire's Aikane, Appolon Samaiths et Ruda (Mémoures de l'Académie Royal de Belgique, classe des Lettres... tome XLV, fasc. 1, 1949).