

CHAPTER 11

French structuralism and after

De Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes,
Lacan, Foucault

Hugh J. Silverman



FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE

The history of structuralism cannot be thought without Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). The Swiss linguist lecturing in Geneva in the early twentieth century set the scene for what in the two and a half decades following the Second World War came to be known as structuralism. The figures who dominated the development of the movement in the 1940s and 1950s were Claude Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908), Jacques Lacan (1901–82), and Roland Barthes (1915–80). By the 1960s Michel Foucault's (1926–84) reformulations and even rejections of structuralism indicated the new directions for what became poststructuralism.

Curiously, the parallel development of existential phenomenology in France ran a different course. With the possible exception of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1908–61) interests in the structuralist alternative, structuralism had little or no effect upon the development of phenomenology as a philosophical movement. With poststructuralism, however, the confluence of these two different philosophical methods marked the appearance of an entirely new mode of thinking – one which is exemplified in Foucault's archaeology of knowledge on the one hand and Jacques Derrida's (b. 1930) deconstruction on the other. For the purposes of the present chapter however, I shall take Foucault as exemplary of this new development.¹

Structuralism – and especially French structuralism – cannot be understood apart from de Saussure's semiology. According to de Saussure – as articulated clearly in the posthumously published *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), a compilation of several years of the Swiss

linguist's Geneva lectures [11.1] – semiology is 'the general science of signs'. De Saussure proposed a new understanding of the notion 'sign'. He argued that the sign is not just a word but rather that a sign is both a word and concept. He named these two components of the sign the 'signifier' [*signifiant*] and the 'signified' [*signifié*]. The signified is the word, that which does the signifying. The signified is the concept that which is signified. Together these two components constitute a binary pair called the sign. The standard example which de Saussure offers for this binary relation is the word *tree* and the concept 'tree'. A sign, however, is not yet a sign until it is distinguished from other signs in the same system, or language [*langue*]. A sign cannot on its own – apart from all other elements of the language. Indeed, Saussure defines a sign as determined by its difference from all other signs in the sign system. Hence the sign *tree* is the sign *tree* by difference from other signs such as *house*, *bird* and *sky*. Now the sign *tree* is also different from the sign *arbre* or the sign *Baum*, *arbor* or *arbol*. Each of these other signs is part of a different sign system: *arbol* the French language, *Baum*, the German language, *arbol*, the Spanish language. Because they are not part of the same sign system, they are signs only in their respective sign systems.

De Saussure also remarks that the relation between a signifier and a signified is entirely 'arbitrary'. That the concept or signified 'tree' designated by the word *tree* in English is simply arbitrary. It could have been called *arbre*, *Baum* or *arbol* – and indeed in different languages does acquire such signifiers. Only in the limited instances of onomatopoeia in which a signifier corresponds in a motivated way to a particular signified is the arbitrary nature compromised. Hence *bow-wow* for dog's bark, or *smooth*, for something soft and gentle, or *Being-in-the-world* for the extensiveness of our existence are connected in a manner related way than most words with their corresponding concepts.

A sign – a signifier [*un signifiant*] and a signified [*un signifié*] – one among many signs in a language [*langue*]. A language can be English, French, German, Japanese, Russian, etc. In the account of a language, nothing need be spoken as such. Hence, de Saussure offers a correlative concept called the speaking of the language or *parole*. While *langue* constituted by elements that make up a particular language, *parole* the speaking of that language in a determinate context and at a determinate time. Hence when I say: 'Tall evergreen trees inspire a sense of grandeur', I am saying [*parole*] these words (with their corresponding concepts) in English. Were I to say: 'Ces grands arbres vertes inspirent la magnificence', I am saying something else in French but I am enacting the French language in a particular context and at a specific time – saying is *parole*.

Another binary pair (or binary opposition), as Saussure sometimes calls them, is the relation between 'syntagm' and 'system' (or 'paradigm'). The sentence 'Tall evergreen trees inspire a sense of grandeur' is a sequence of signs; one follows the other. As a sequence, the signs follow a syntagmatic line. Each sign is contiguous with the next, and there is a meaning produced by the sequence. By contrast, were one to substitute alternate signs such as 'short', 'broad', or 'imposing' for 'tall', for instance, the sentence would read: 'Short (or broad, or imposing) evergreen trees inspire a sense of grandeur.' The new sentence with the substituted term still makes sense, but the sense is of course different – and even in the first two instances a bit curious. What does not quite fit with 'tall', 'short', and 'broad' is 'imposing'. The first three are all signs of size. 'Imposing' is of another order, yet it is also substitutable for 'tall'. All of these substitutable terms are part of the same system (or paradigm) if broadly interpreted. If more narrowly interpreted, the system could be restricted to signs of size and not just signs that are substitutable. Each of the elements of the sentence could be examined in terms of substitutable signs, and each would be part of a different system.

A fourth binary opposition is that between diachrony and synchrony. A diachronic study of the Greek sign of excellence *arete* would follow it through its Latin version in *virtus*, its Italian reformulation as *virtù*, its French usage as *vertu*, a term which is also repeated in English (virtue). To study the same work over time, chronologically, allows for the consideration of a development over time, historically, as it were. However, such a study isolates what is studied from its context and framework. It takes the element and reviews the whole development independently of related concerns. A synchronic study, by contrast, is ultimately concerned with the set of relations among a whole complex of signs and elements that arise at the same time and in the same context. The sign *arete* is studied in relation to other signs at the time: *paideia* (education and the ideals of the culture), *sophrosyne* (moderation or temperance), and so forth. In this respect a given notion is understood in a broad context – in this case, a cultural context. Once the synchronic study has been accomplished for a given time-slice, it will be possible to compare that time-slice with other periods of time – in order to show similarities and/or differences across a number of different time-slices.

As a linguist, de Saussure was ultimately concerned with language. Indeed, the whole project of structuralism is framed according to a linguistic model. This model presumes that what is outside language is not relevant to the linguist's task. Hence the earliest forms of structuralism were restricted to the formulations of a semiology based on language study. Roland Barthes, by contrast, in his *Elements of Semiology*

(1964 [11.7]), remarks that while de Saussure believed that linguistics is a part of semiology – that there are domains of semiology that are not relevant for the linguist – in his view, semiology is a part of linguistics. Barthes's formulation presumes that all sign systems are already language systems of one sort or another – I shall return to Barthes later.

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS

What is significant here is that when Lévi-Strauss in the late 1940s began to apply structuralist principles to anthropological concerns, he was already extending the linguistic model far beyond language study. This meant that although Lévi-Strauss as an anthropologist was concerned with structures of thought, he had already made the shift that Barthes articulates: ethnology is already a language which can be studied by the structuralist.

Although de Saussure was lecturing on structural linguistics in the first decades of the century, it took until the 1930s for his work to become noticed and accessible to a broader context. This was the fact of his *Course in General Linguistics*. When Lévi-Strauss travelled to the United States during the Second World War, it was out of political and personal necessity as he narrates in considerable detail in *Tristes Tropiques* [11.3]. When he arrived in New York, he began teaching at the University in Exile (which has subsequently come to be called the New School for Social Research). During that time, he met and collaborated often with Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) (whose own itinerary had taken him from Russia to Prague to Paris to New York). Jakobson was a linguist whose development of Russian formalism was an important contribution to the concept of structure. Indeed both Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson worked together on a groundbreaking reading of a Bauhaus poem, 'Les Chats'. The idea was to offer a structural study of a poem. Their reading was careful and meticulous. They were interested in how the poem exhibits structural, stylistic and syntactic features in order to constitute the work as a whole. Jakobson's further interest in metaphor and metonymy was worked out in his *Fundamentals of Language* [11.50] in terms of two types of aphasia: metaphor replacement by substitution, metonymy as replacement by contiguity. After the war, Lévi-Strauss served as cultural adviser to the French ambassador to the United States (1946–7). Then he returned to France where he took up his position at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes Sociales (the 'Pratique' has subsequently been dropped) and continued his research in structural anthropology. In 1949, he produced a major contribution, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* [11.51].

Here the concept of kinship was developed in connection with Lévi-Strauss's understanding of structuralism and his collation of many different ethnographic accounts of kinship throughout the world. His view was that despite many significant differences in kinship practice in different cultures, common structures are repeated underneath these multiple instances of kinship practices. These structures have a basic form according to a determinate set of relations. The actual character of the relation might change from one context to another, but what does not change is the relation itself. Each relation is part of a whole structure of relations, where no element is strictly independent of any of the others. Thus a one-to-one correspondence of one part of a structure with one part of another cannot be made. The whole structure must be compared with another whole structure in order to provide an appropriate analysis. For instance, Lévi-Strauss is particularly interested in the 'avunculate' or uncle-relation. He finds from his extensive research of many different cultures, societies and social groups that the role of the uncle is critical. Hence there is the mother-father relation, the mother-father and son relations, the son-maternal uncle relation, and the mother-brother relation.

Understood independently, each of these relations has a particular content: positive and socially supported in one case, negative and out-cast in another. Lévi-Strauss determined that by assigning a positive or negative value to each of these relations in a particular context, he could determine the nature of the whole structure. For three hypothetical societies, it might look like Fig. 11.1.

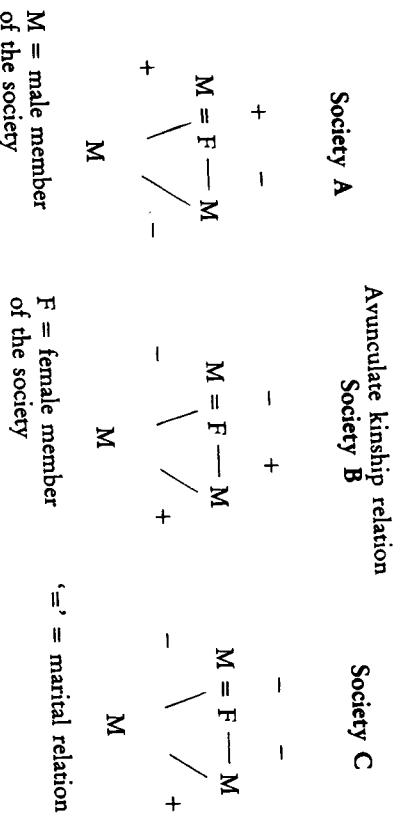


Figure 11.1

In each of these societies, the mother and father, the mother's brother and the brother's sister's son constitute the key kinship relations. While the structure recurs, the nature of the relations change

from one society to the next. The repetition of the same structure is matched with the differences in the nature of the relations among the social roles in each society.

This concept of structure indicates a latent set of relations that underlie the actual, particular and real relations of specific individuals in a determinate context. Lévi-Strauss broadens his reading of kinship relations to the account of totems and taboos in different societies as well as to the detailed study of myths. These further explorations of the application of structural method resurface in a variety of essays written between 1944 and 1957 and are collected together in the first volume of *Structural Anthropology* (1958 [11.4]). The appearance of *Structural Anthropology* marked a significant phase in the development of structuralism. *Elementary Structures* (1949, [11.2]) was highly detailed and technical. The new book solidified the role of structuralism in France. It indicated that there was now an alternative research programme that would ultimately match that of existentialism and the existential phenomenology that had reigned unopposed since the early 1940s. While it would take another decade for structuralism to establish its foothold firmly, Lévi-Strauss's new book was an important link between the growing interest in de Saussure's semiology and the full-fledged structural studies that Barthes, Lacan and Foucault would carry on into the 1960s. This is not to say that Lévi-Strauss has not been a continuing and dominant force in the development of structuralism even today. At the beginning of the 1970s, when I attended his lectures at the Collège de France where he occupies the Chair of Social Anthropology, he was still defending his position against the comments and criticisms of the British anthropologist Rodney Needham. And many books have followed the appearance of *Structural Anthropology*. His four-volume study of world mythologies, his second volume of *Structural Anthropology*, his autobiographical *Tristes tropiques*, his many essays on masks and race all add up to a major contribution to late twentieth-century French thought.

Louis Marin (1931–92) used to comment that when he was a young man in the early 1950s, he and his wife Françoise were invited to the apartment of M. and Mme Maurice Merleau-Ponty for what was then described as a 'dîner intime'. When he and his wife arrived, he discovered that it was indeed a small dinner party: M. and Mme Merleau-Ponty, M. and Mme Lévi-Strauss, and M. and Mme Lacan. That these three were all friends indicates a certain collaboration and dialogue that was highly charged in the early period in which structuralism was gaining hold. Although Merleau-Ponty is known for his groundbreaking work as a phenomenologist of perception (1945), only a year later he was lecturing on de Saussure at the Ecole Normale Supérieure

in Paris. Merleau-Ponty's turn to semiology as a topic of interest began to blend with his commitment to the achievements of Gestalt psychology, but even more with those of phenomenology which he saw as superior even to the Gestalt theories of Köhler and Koffka, Gelb and Goldstein. Yet with his growing interest in language, Merleau-Ponty found real value in the Saussurian theory of the sign.³ His courses on 'Language and Communication' (1946-7) stressed his new commitment to language – a topic which he had only broached in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), notably in the chapter on 'The Body as Speech and Expression'. Hence concurrently with Lévi-Strauss's return to France and his intense work on kinship relations, his friend Merleau-Ponty, who was by then Professor of Child Psychology and Pedagogy at the Institut de Psychologie in Paris, was also developing a serious interest in the implications of Saussure's structural linguistics.

When Merleau-Ponty set himself the task of writing a kind of literary theory which was to have seen the light of day in the early 1950s, he was setting the stage for an important debate that would take shape throughout the 1950s and 1960s – even long after his death in 1961. What became *The Prose of the World* (published posthumously in 1969) [11.64], was to have been completed in 1952. However, Merleau-Ponty was elected to the Collège de France that year and his research took him in other directions, most notably in his critique of 'dialectic' and towards his theory of visibility in *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964). There were two companion pieces that have been included in *Signs* (1960 [11.62]) which addressed the question of language: 'The Phenomenology of Language' and 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence'. These two essays, written in 1951-2, indicate the convergence between phenomenology and structuralism as it was under development in the French context. While Sartre continued to reject structuralism vigorously,⁴ Merleau-Ponty continued to be intrigued. While Sartre published his own theory of literature in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* in 1947, he oriented this theory toward the act of communicating the freedom of a writer to the freedom of a reader. Writing, for Sartre, was both an act of commitment and an expression of freedom. Merleau-Ponty's response came in 1952 with *The Prose of the World*: there are many aspects of language and expression that are simply not direct, that do not give an algorithmic reading of experience – literature and painting are prime examples. Here there is language but indirectly expressed – even silence for Merleau-Ponty speaks.

ROLAND BARTHES

Like Merleau-Ponty, the second major figure of French structuralism, Roland Barthes, was also preparing in 1952 a response to Sartre's literary theory: *Writing Degree Zero* [11.5] was of mould-breaking merit. It offered an entirely different way of understanding the role and status of writing. Writing was no longer an act of communication, but rather an articulation that links up both style and language. The writer's style (whether romantic, or surrealist or existentialist) is matched with the writer's *langue* or language. This language is not simply idiosyncratic. For Barthes, language partakes of a social context and experience. Language and style at the intersection of the two marks the locus of writing (*écriture*). Hence revolutionary writing or bourgeois writing or romantic writing occur in terms of a particular language and a determinate style. And such revolutionary writing can be found equally in the times of Thomas Jefferson, Robespierre and Brecht. Though the times are radically different, even the language and style are different, the writing can be called 'the same'. Although Barthes found that different texts could be characterized in terms of these repeatable forms of writing, he was also fascinated with the new writing of Alain Robbe-Grillet. Barthes is credited with having 'discovered' Robbe-Grillet, whose style of writing is officially a radical break with the nineteenth-century novel, but whose writing itself marks the beginning of an impassionate language where the subject is decentred and the discursive proliferations are structurally identifiable. *Le Voyageur* and *La Jalousie* are excellent examples of a language stripped of emotion – or at least emotion as described by the typical nineteenth-century omniscient author. There is still emotion, but it is described through the surfaces and the ways in which surfaces are affected.

With the 1964 publication of *Elements of Semiology* [11.7], Barthes at last linked up his critical practice with the theoretical writings of de Saussure. In this short piece, which was originally published in *Communications*, the official journal of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Barthes outlines the theory of the sign: the signifier/signified relation, the *langue/parole* link, the connection between diachrony and synchrony, and the opposition between denotation and connotation. But the critical year was 1966, which saw the publication of his own *Criticism and Truth* [11.8], Lacan's *Écrits*, [11.15] and Foucault's *The Order of Things* [11.17]. Hence over a decade after Barthes produced *Writing Degree Zero*, structuralism finally came of age. *Elements of Semiology* set the stage for that crowning moment. In his seminar at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes which I attended for the whole year in 1971-2, Barthes focused on what he called 'The Last Decade of Semiology'. He considered 1966

as the watershed year. In the following year, Jean-Luc Godard produced his revolutionary film *La Chinoise* (which prefigured the student-worker revolts of 1968) and Derrida published *Speech and Phenomena* [11.30], *Of Grammatology* [11.29], and *Writing and Difference* [11.31]. Hence by 1967, a whole new phase had begun – for lack of a more precise term it was called poststructuralism. Of course, there were still many who were committed to structuralism for another decade and many of the so-called poststructuralist theories continued to build upon the languages and lessons of structuralism.

Once the scene was set and the terminology clarified in *The Elements of Semiology* [11.7], Barthes himself began to develop his own position further. He rejected those critical theories that gave special place to the author and authorial presence. And in his famous essay 'From Work to Text' (1971 [11.10]), he outlined very clearly the distinction between the traditional notion of the 'work' and his notion of 'text'. The 'work' (*oeuvre*, *opera*, *Werk*) results from an act of filiation: an author produces or creates a work which is then a 'fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example)'.⁵ The author requires authority over the meaning of the work. And the critic seeks to understand the author's meaning. This hermeneutic concern pervades work-centred studies. And it was also a dominant feature of the Sartrean theory as well. Barthes proposes to place the emphasis on the text, which he describes as a 'methodological field'. He elaborates: 'The Text can be approached, experienced, in reaction to the sign. The work closes on a signified' (p. 158). This means that the text can be read in terms of the sign system which participates in it, while the work focuses on what is meant by it. The plurality of the text permits a full and elaborate network of intertextuality which is closed off by the work. 'The Text', he says, 'is bound to *jouissance*, that is to a pleasure without separation' (p. 164).

Two years later, Barthes published *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973, [11.11]). For Barthes, the Text is not an object of desire or even a result of a creative act. Rather the Text is a site – a locus for a reading, a place in which *jouissance* occurs. Something happens in the critical reading of a Text. The Text's network of signifying dynamic is brought out. In the Introduction to *S/Z* (1970), Barthes had already shown how the distinction between the 'readerly' (*lisible*) and 'writerly' (*scriptible*) text marks the difference between a text which is simply read through for the pleasure of it and the text which is read as a methodological field – one in which the codes and sign systems are elaborated in detail and available for careful decoding. The 'writerly text is not a thing,' Barthes writes, 'we would have a hard time finding it in a bookstore.'⁶ The 'writerly' is the novelistic without the novel, poetry without the poem, the essay without the dissertation, writing without style, pro-

duction without product, structuration without structure' (p. 5). The writerly occupies only a methodological and theoretical space, it is not a product like the readerly text.

In this frame, Barthes outlined five different codes which constitute what he calls 'the plural text', and the plural text is the writerly text critically disclosed. The five codes include: the semic code (the elaboration of the signifier), the hermeneutic code (disclosure of the enigma), the symbolic code (one element stands for another), the actantial code (the action code), and the reference code (the cultural indicators marked in the text). These codes are only possible codes for the reading of a text. Although Barthes does not dwell upon the alternatives, it is only plausible that alternative sets of codes function as well as those Barthes invokes.

Barthes was at his most daring when he took up an age-old topic, namely autobiography, but in a radically new way. *Roland Barthes* (1975, [11.12]) by Roland Barthes is certainly a break with the traditional diachronic mode of writing one's own life. He organizes his life not according to the succession of years, but according to the alphabetical arrangement of topics, themes and oppositions that played an important role in his life. And as to the typical chronology, that can be found in two pages at the back of the essay. Barthes should not have died so early. He was run over by a milk truck outside the Collège de France where he had been elected to the Chair of Semiology in 1977. He was only sixty-five when he died in 1980.

❧ JACQUES LACAN ❧

Jacques Lacan, by contrast, born in 1901 only one year after Hans-Georg Gadamer, lived to a ripe old age of eighty-one. There is a wonderful cartoon which Barthes includes in his *Roland Barthes of Lévi-Strauss*, Lacan, Barthes, Foucault and Michel Leiris all sitting together in Tahitian skirts. Although reflecting different ages, they all came together around the structuralist enterprise. Lacan provided the basis for a structural psychoanalysis. His early 1936 study of the mirror stage was first presented in Marienbad (later made famous by Robbe-Grillet in the film *Last Year at Marienbad*). Lacan's theory is rather simple: the child at first does not detect any difference between it and its mother. The sensory world around it is all integrated. It begins to notice a difference between it and the mother. This becomes clear when it looks into the mirror and sees no longer just motion or another person, but recognizes an identity between what it sees and itself. It waves an arm and the image waves its arm, etc. It notices then that the mirror image is itself. But then the father intercedes: the *nom du père*

non du père/non-dûpe erre are all forms of interdiction. The father with his name and his prohibition – after all, he is somewhat jealous of the close relationship that his child has with his wife – attempts to break the harmony, introduces a negation, his paternal law, his 'No'. The father is no fool. He knows what he wants and he knows what he does not want. By interceding between the child and the mother, he imposes his authority, his will, his name. Now the child cannot but recognize difference. The *Vernéining* is effective. The father imposes his will and the child learns to affirm its own identity. Thus the mirror stage is the critical moment at which the child takes on an identity of its own.

The inclusion of the revised version of the 'Mirror Stage' in *Écrits* (1966 [11.15]) correlates with a number of other essays of major importance. In 1966 there was a conference held at Johns Hopkins University subsequently entitled *The Structuralist Controversy*. While Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato edited the volume, the leadership of René Girard was crucial. At Stanford, for instance, in the late 1960s one heard of the Johns Hopkins experiment and those professors of literature committed to an earlier model of literary study were deeply opposed to the Johns Hopkins scene. Curiously, René Girard is now Professor of Humanities at that very same Stanford University after trying out the State University of New York at Buffalo for a brief period.

Lacan was one of the speakers at the 1966 Hopkins conference. Also presenting papers were Jean Hyppolite and Jacques Derrida. It was an important moment. And Lacan's essay was no less important. His paper was entitled 'The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious', an essay which also appears in *Écrits*. The question is, how does the chain of signifiers mark off and bar the range of the signified? The signified especially in the metonymic line is barred from access by the signifier. This exclusion of the signified leads to a veering off of the signifier from one sign to the next. The signified however remains inaccessible. The line between the signifier and the signified is strong and resistant. In such cases in which the signifier has no access to the signified, it must act in terms of that repression.

In the case of metaphor, there is an overdetermination of signifieds for a particular signifier. In such a case, the bar is weak and a multiplicity of meanings intrude. Throughout Lacan's account, 'the unconscious is structured like a language'. Where there is resistance in language, there would be resistance in the unconscious. But for Lacan whatever there is of an unconscious is read in terms of the play of the signifiers. Repression results when the letter is unable to insist in the signified. Meaning is kept at bay. A stream of words and utterances follows but the relation to the signified is repressed. With Lacan, as

later with Derrida, the self is decentred, the subject is dispersed throughout language. The language of the self is the language of the chain of signifiers. The subject *per se* remains absent.

MICHEL FOUCAULT

The theme of the absent subject is especially notable in the philosophy of Michel Foucault, who met an untimely AIDS-related death at the early age of fifty-eight. In his *magnum opus*, *The Order of Things* (*Les Mots et les choses*) [11.17] also published in 1966 – the theme of the absent subject pervades not only his reading of Velázquez but also his account of the contemporary human sciences. For contemporary (poststructuralist, or what would now be called 'postmodern') thought, there is no centred origin, no unique place of focus, no present subject as there once was for the modern age.

Foucault's reading of origins is marked off by his reading of discursive practices. As he demonstrates in *The Order of Things*, history does not begin at a certain moment and then continue – in linear fashion – from then on. Rather, moments of dominance of certain discursive practices prevail for a time and are then succeeded by a new set of discursive practices. Where a discursive practice ends, a new one is about to begin. Origin then will occur where a new discursive practice starts to take place. But where and when do such new practices begin to take place? They clearly do not occur at a determined moment in time such as a date or year. Certain discursive practices pertinent to a particular epistemological space, as Foucault calls it, continue into a new epistemological space, while others die out.

But what is a discursive practice? For Foucault, a discursive practice is a whole set of documents produced within a broadly general period of time in which common themes or ideas occur across that period in a wide variety of disciplines and areas of human knowledge production. For instance, in the nineteenth century the relations between biology, economics and philology would seem to be entirely unrelated. However Foucault has shown that they all consolidate in terms of a relatively singular conceptual unity, or what Foucault calls an *épistémé*. For the broad space of the nineteenth century, Foucault identifies the theme in question with what he calls an 'anthropology', that is, the theory of 'man' as defined by the 'empirico-transcendental doublet', the particular Kantian idea that empirical (objective) considerations must always be understood in connection with a transcendental (subjective) set of conditions that permeates the discursive practices of the nineteenth century. The theme of subjectivity in relation to objectivity pervades the nineteenth-century understanding of life, labour and

language. Thus the discursive practices of the nineteenth century repeat themselves in a variety of contexts – all explicitly unrelated to each other. These differences then form an *epistémè*.

The *epistémè* of the nineteenth century succeeds the *epistémè* of the 'classical age'. This prior epistemological space is marked by another set of discursive practices. These include the classification of species, the analysis of wealth and natural grammar. What one would take to be entirely unrelated concerns are here brought into relation to one another in that they each exhibit features of the 'classical age' *epistémè*, namely 'representation'. As Foucault reads the general period of the seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth century, the idea of 'representation' – the projection or postulate of ideas before the mind – formed the frame for a distinctly 'classical' way of thinking. The relation between this classical *epistémè* and the nineteenth-century *epistémè* is much less significant than the relation between the various practices at each of these respective time-slices.

The origin of the *epistémè* is not the beginning of the *epistémè*. A particular *epistémè* is marked by a certain dominance. The place where the *epistémè* dominates is the place of its origin. The place of dominance for the empirico-transcendental doublet is the place of origin within that epistemological framework. Similarly the place of dominance of *representation* in the classical age is the place of origin within that epistemological framework. However, where is this place of origin in each case? Dispersed throughout the epistemological space, the place of origin occurs wherever there is a discursive practice that exhibits it. Hence the origin is in many places: reappearing in many locations throughout the epistemological space itself. In the nineteenth century, one can find the empirico-transcendental doublet not only in Hegel and Hölderlin but also in biologists such as Cuvier (whose 'fixism' is set off against the backdrop of human historicity), economists such as Ricardo (for whom history is a vast compensating mechanism) and philologists such as Schlegel (with his 1808 essay on the language and philosophy of the Indians), and philologists such as Grimm (most notably in the 1818 *Deutsche Grammatik*) and Bopp (whose 1816 study of the Sanskrit conjugation system became an object of study).

Each of these places constitutes itself as an origin, as a locus in which the concept of 'man' as a subject-object is brought into discourse production itself. No longer does language, for instance, operate between words and things resulting in an operation of representation. And in the nineteenth century, words are objects themselves, objects for scrutiny and study by a scientific practice that hopes to judge them and their interrelationships. Origin, then, for Foucault is not a source from which all historical events follow. Origin is not the beginning from which history begins to unfold. Origin is not the inception from

which development ensues. Origin does not establish the moment before which nothing else will have occurred. Rather origin springs up in many places within a broad, general, historical time-frame. Origins occur in various discourses, scarring them with marks of a common practice that is unaware of its own commonality.

Foucault's enterprise disperses origin throughout a kind of methodological field (as Barthes would have called it). And his appeal to the English reader to ignore those 'tiny little minds that persist in calling him a structuralist', indicates that he is already beyond the mere repetition of structuralist methods. Although his own archaeology of knowledge could be characterized as largely synchronic, it also relies upon the assessment of periods or time-slices in order to compare one time-slice with another. What Foucault rejects is the necessity of a concept of continuity in favour of discontinuity. Structuralists were already concerned with a discourse of the past. Nietzsche and Mallarmé are invoked as threshold figures marking the break with the older empirico-transcendental doublet of the modern age. They mark the beginning of a new mode of thought in which dissemination, dispersal, metonymy and decentring of the subject are the dominant frames of knowledge production.

Where Sartre had announced in his 1936 *Transcendence of the Ego* that the self or ego could not be located in consciousness but is at best an object of consciousness, Foucault in 1966 places that claim in a historical context. He situates the end of the age of modernism with the end of the centred subject, the dominant self, the focal 'I'. Like Nietzsche's madman who ran through the streets proclaiming the 'death of god', Sartre had already proclaimed 'the end of man', but in a sense that would not be fully understood for another thirty years. The linguistic turn in continental philosophy took on a different shape from that in the analytic tradition. It did not fully take place until the Saussurian epistemology became the principle according to which language, culture and knowledge production would be understood. The structural analysis of kinship, totems and myths in Lévi-Strauss, the speaking subject's chain of signifiers in Lacan, the semiological analysis of text and culture in Barthes were themselves placed in context by Foucault. In this respect, Foucault is indeed already after structuralism, for he is able to situate it as a movement in a period of time. The subsequent development of Foucault's own genealogy, Derrida's deconstruction, Deleuze's nomadologies, Kristeva's semanalysis and Lyotard's postmodernist sublimities are all themes for another story in the history of continental thought. Suffice it to say that structuralism played a critical role in offering an alternative to **existential phenomenology** and at the same time a complement to it. **What comes after structuralism** (and after the

age of the modern subject) is identified by those such as Foucault who were themselves marked by both phenomenology and structuralism and who were in a position to succeed them as well.

NOTES

- ¹ Derrida's deconstruction is left aside here for the simple reason that it is taken up in another contribution to this same volume. A portion of the discussion of Foucault is taken from H. J. Silverman, *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).
- ² The role of metaphor and metonymy have been subsequently linked with what Freud calls 'condensation' and 'displacement' in dream interpretation. Hence metaphor as substitution and condensation implies the replacement of a father by a big bear (for instance) in a young boy's dream, while metonymy as contiguity and displacement results in a dream about a neighbour's garden hose (for instance) instead of her passion for him. In structural political theory, and developed most notably by Louis Althusser – in an essay called 'Freud and Lacan' from *Lenin and Philosophy* [11.23] metaphor is associated with overdetermination in a reading of a political text or context, while metonymy is represented as underdetermination. In making this point, Althusser is building on the account of metaphor and metonymy offered by Lacan in his famous essay 'The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious' (included in *Écrits* [11.15]) and H. J. Silverman [11.72], especially the chapter on 'Merleau-Ponty on Language and Communication (1946–47)'.
- ³ See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language* [11.65].
- ⁴ See H. J. Silverman [11.72], esp. chapters on 'Sartre and the Structuralists' and 'Sartre versus Structuralism'.
- ⁵ R. Barthes, 'From Work to Text' [11.10], 155–64.
- ⁶ R. Barthes, *S/Z* [11.9], 5.
- ⁷ See Silverman [11.72], esp. chapter 18 on 'Foucault and the Anthropological Sleep'.

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