# The Structures of Experience

Whoever truly wishes to become a philosopher will, "for once in his life," have to fall back on himself and, within himself, try to overturn all the sciences so far accepted and attempt to reconstruct them.

EDMUND HUSSERL, *Cartesian Meditations*

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## The Schemas of Practice

Even if we recognize the contingency of the dualism of nature and culture and the difficulties that this introduces into any apprehension of nonmodern cosmologies, we should nevertheless not be led to neglect to seek for structural frameworks that can account for the coherence and regularity of the diverse ways in which humans live and perceive their involvement in the world. However useful a physiology of interactions may be, it amounts to nothing without a morphology of practices, a praxeological analysis of forms of experience. To paraphrase a famous saying of Kant's, structures without content are empty and experiences without forms are meaningless.[1] It so happens that, in one of those swings that are customary in anthropology, the study of structural factors has for some time found itself particularly discredited. It is likened to an icy objectivism that irremediably dissolves all that goes to make up the richness and dynamism of social exchanges. Associated with it is the cliché of an interplay of timeless structures, hypostasized as essences that function in the manner of a series of actions executed by automata lacking any initiative or affects. Against this position (that no one ever held), the emphasis is now laid upon the creativity of the agency of social actors, upon the role played by historical contingency and resistance to hegemonies in the invention and cross-fertilization of cultural forms, upon the self-evident power and spontaneity of practice and the innocence now forever lost of all interpretative strategies.

Yet how can we be blind to the fact that practices and behavior observable within a collectivity display a regularity, a permanence, and a degree of automatism that the individuals concerned are usually at pains to attribute to systems of instituted rules? And how can we ignore the fact that, in societies without writing at least, only a few exceptional figures, so rare that all ethnol-

ogists know their names, have been able to propose even partial syntheses of the bases of their culture? In truth, such syntheses are, anyway, in many cases produced just to satisfy the expectations of some inquirer, and their generally esoteric character rules out regarding them as a charter that everybody recognizes. Such lines of conduct, such routine reactions and choices, and such shared attitudes toward the world and others are distinctive enough to serve as an intuitive indication for gauging the differences between neighboring peoples. However, they are so deeply internalized that they seldom surface in reflexive deliberations. So how could those tacit dispositions become the object of public debate, be consciously submitted to reforms, and, by dint of deliberate adjustments, be made to fit in with the prevailing circumstances? To claim that this is possible, provided one responds to the bewitching spontaneity of praxis finally released from its alienation, is to perpetuate the old confusion between, on the one hand, the series of norms instilled by education and, on the other, the cognitive and corporeal templates that govern the expression of an ethos. It is also to amalgamate models of action objectivized in the form of prohibitions or prescriptions that can be revoked at any moment with practical schemas that, if they are to be effective, must remain undetectable, shrouded in the obscurity of habits and customs.

### Structures and Relations

There is one major finding for which we should be grateful both to anthropological structuralism and to the pioneering work of Gregory Bateson. It is a finding that is perceptible even to those who pretend to be unaware of its source: namely the agenda to envisage social life from the point of view of the relations that hold it together. This is a choice that presupposes ascribing to the links that relationships establish a structural stability and regularity greater than that of the contingent actions of the elements that they link. Whatever the domain organized by those relations—be it kinship, economic exchanges, ritual activities, or attempts to understand the ordering of the cosmos—their range is, logically, far more limited than the infinitely diverse elements that they link together; and that limitation opens up the possibility of a reasoned and systematic analysis of the diversity of relations between existing things. The aim of this would, in the first instance, be to set up a typology of possible relationships to the world and others, be they human or nonhuman, and to examine their compatibilities and incompatibilities.

However, such a study of structural factors runs into a number of difficulties, many of them interdependent. In the first place there is the problem of scale: either (1) the structures that are identified are so general that they

cannot explain the specificity of particular cultural configurations, or else (2) they are so particularized by their historical contexts that they turn out to be unsuited to any comparative endeavor. The notion of cultural "patterns" suggested by Ruth Benedict is no longer fashionable, but it does provide a good illustration of the former situation (i.e., 1).[2] Those "patterns," detected by an inductive analysis of no more than three societies, can basically be reduced to the classic Nietzschean opposition between Apollonian peoples and Dionysiac ones. These represent two forms of collective experience that in no sense constitute structures—that is to say, combinations of relational features organized into models that can be connected by transformational laws—since they result from heterogeneous value systems, ethical principles, and normalized types of behavior that are, furthermore, hypostasized in autonomous and transcendent cultures to which each individual would react on a smaller, personal scale.

As for the notion of habitus, this encounters the second difficulty (2). Although this notion may make it possible to avoid the usual hazards presented by a structural approach, in particular the reification of structure conceived in the manner of an autonomous subject endowed with social effectiveness, it makes generalization very difficult. A habitus, as defined by Bourdieu, is certainly a structure identified by analysis, but it is a structure of a particular kind: a system of durable arrangements immanent in local practices, which results from people learning to imitate and internalize the behavior and bodily techniques of those who surround them. These structuring structures, which are predisposed to engender and perpetuate structured structures, therefore constitute the distinctive style of actions within a given social environment without, however, being present in the consciousness of the actors in the form of general rules or series of prescriptions. Because a habitus is a system of cognitive and motivational structures so familiar that we feel no need to examine them, it is, moreover, far more stable than the local theories by means of which it is rationalized and converted into norms of individual and collective behavior.[3] A habitus is nevertheless particularized by history, for "habitus, the product of a historical acquisition, is what enables the legacy of history to be appropriated." It is somehow naturalized by the contexts within which it operates, both those peculiar to the field within which it is deployed and also those at the heart of the context into which the analyst studying it is himself inserted.[4] In this sense, then, and contrary to universalizing forms of experience of the "patterns of culture" type, a habitus may be extremely diverse, for each of its expressions reflects one modality of the multitude of cultural skills that humans have to deploy at one point or another in their history in order to exist together in very varied physical and social environments. However

reasonable it may be, this particularization of a habitus nevertheless makes it difficult to compare the modalities of its concrete manifestation and also to grasp, as a structured whole, the diverse combinations in which it operates.

It seems to me both possible and necessary to explore farther upstream, around a kernel of elementary schemas of practice whose different configurations might make it possible to take account of the whole gamut of relations to existing beings—a kind of original matrix from which every habitus stems and a perceptible trace of which they all retain in each of their occurrences. In principle, such a hypothesis is not so very distant from the idea that Lévi-Strauss presents when he writes: "Every newborn child comes equipped, in the form of adumbrated mental structures, with all the means ever available to mankind to define its relations to the world in general and its relations to others. But these structures are exclusive. Each of them can integrate only certain elements out of all those that are offered. Consequently, each type of social organization represents a choice, which the group imposes and perpetuates."[5] It is, however, necessary to point out that those "means ever available to mankind" consist not solely of innate mental structures but above all of a limited number of internalized practical schemas that synthesize the objective properties of all the relations that are possible between humans and nonhumans.

This brings us back to the second difficulty that any study of structural factors encounters: how to assign them their ontological status. Are the structural configurations detected by analyzing any social-reality expressions purged of the concrete relations that constitute the web of that reality, or should they, rather, be considered as operational models constructed by an observer relatively independently of the explicit models formulated by those whom he is observing? And if the latter is the case, how should one evaluate the relevance of those structures and also take into account the fact that they may explain the systematic character of the norms, practices, and ways of behaving without, however, being consciously apprehended? The former, so-called realist' position was illustrated most clearly by Alfred Radcliffe-Brown: "I use the term 'social structure' to denote this network of actually existing social relations that hold human beings together in a particular natural environment."[6] This is also the model of a social structure that many contemporary ethnographers and sociologists spontaneously adopt when they describe the structural characteristics of the societies or groups that they are studying: they do not present these as underlying properties likely to feature in vaster combinations (e.g., throughout a whole cultural area or as a particular type of phenomenon); rather, they present this model as an inductive formalization of observable relations between individuals (one frequently inspired by the models

by means of which the observed community apprehends and translates the regularity of the behavior patterns within it). At the descriptive level at which it is operational, acceptance of the realist postulate is not unjustified, so long as one is aware of the fact that the results to which it leads, namely an ad hoc interpretation of a particular society, should not be employed as raw material in the elaboration of a structural morphology.[7]

It is, of course, to Lévi-Strauss that we owe the alternative definition of the notion of structure. Blinded by his empiricism, Radcliffe-Brown—we are told—confused social relations with social structure. The former present the material for observation that the ethnologist or sociologist uses so as to elaborate abstract models that render the latter (the social structure) manifest. In short, "the term 'a social structure' has nothing to do with empirical reality but with models which are built up after it."[8] For those models to be truly structural, they need, moreover, to satisfy further conditions. They must be systematic, in the sense that any modification of one of their elements will lead to a predictable modification in all the others. At the level of a family of models, they are furthermore organized in accordance with an ordered variation that defines the limits of a transformational group. Such a structural model presents some of the characteristics of the deductive model of causal explanation that Newton used to account for physical reality and from which Kant drew the philosophical consequences in his theory of synthetic causality. Lévi-Strauss himself invited that analogy when he distinguished mechanical models, the preferred instruments of structural analysis, from the statistical models more generally favored by sociologists and historians. A mechanical model characteristically formulates the relations between the essential elements at the same scale as the phenomena in the real system. In statistical models, in contrast, the behavior of individual elements is not predictable from knowledge of their mode of combination. In the social sciences, these two types of models are equivalent to the difference in physics between mechanics and thermodynamics.[9]

Yet the Lévi-Straussian structural models possess one characteristic that definitely distances them from the deductive model of causal explanation: they are unconscious, or at least, the unconscious models are the most rewarding for structural analysis.[10] As such, they exist as structures buried just beneath the surface in the psyche, where they are often undetected by the collective consciousness of social actors, concealed as they are by vernacular models whose normative functions reduce them to an impoverishing simplification. When an observer constructs a structural model corresponding to phenomena whose systematic character has not been perceived by the society that he is studying, he is therefore not content to assume that the morphol-

ogy of his formal device represents underlying properties of the society that he is trying to understand; for he furthermore suspects that those properties do have an empirical existence, one that is certainly unseen by those who make daily use of them but that a skillful analysis will be able to bring to the surface. But what is the nature of this structural subconscious? Is it present in each mind in the form of cognitive imperatives that remain tacit despite being culturally determined, or is it distributed among the properties of the institutions that reveal it to the observer? How is it internalized by each individual and by what means does it act in such a way that it may determine recurrent behavior patterns that can be translated into vernacular models?

Lévi-Strauss does not provide very precise answers to these questions. The structural unconscious has no content but it does have a directive or "symbolic" function: to impose very general laws upon forms taken by social phenomena and objectivized systems of ideas such as myths or popular classifications. Thus, the three elementary structures of matrimonial exchange—bilateral, matrilateral, and patrilateral—may unconsciously be constantly present in a human mind, so it is possible for thought to actualize one of them only if it sets up a contrastive opposition to the other two.[11] It is therefore a matter of generative synthetic categories that, through a study of social institutions, may be detected far upstream in the functioning of the mind. This would justify considering the sociological analysis to be simply a stage in an investigation of a primarily psychological nature.

Fruitful though it may be, the hypothesis of the existence of unconscious structural invariants founded on contrastive oppositions does not help to elucidate what happens at the intermediary stage. How could very general structures linked to characteristics of the functioning of the mind possibly engender models of conscious norms or, more importantly, provide an organizing framework for practices that, for the most part, do not appear to be governed by any explicit rules? This last point is particularly crucial since Lévi-Strauss himself was mostly concerned to explain highly formalized domains in social life, such as kinship, totemic classifications, and spatial organization. These domains are codified without too much ambiguity by many societies and described in more or less standard terms by ethnographers; and it is not impossible to conjecture that they are governed by a small kernel of principles directly traceable to certain properties of thought. It is quite a different matter when one is faced by peoples little inclined to reflexive thinking, who present no more than very summary models of their social life, or when one tackles the more shapeless field of daily customs and habits, technical activities, and stereotyped patterns of behavior—in short, all the distinctive automatisms

peculiar to a cultural environment, for which it is much harder to find under-lying mental determinants.

The fact is that Lévi-Strauss took little interest in cognitive and practical mediations that might make it possible to move on from a highly abstract psychic combination of factors to the remarkable diversity of instituted cus-toms, for that was not the level of analysis that he considered the most pro-ductive.[12] The point of view that he recommends is that of an astronomer who is forced, by the great distance separating him from the objects that he stud-ies, to identify only their most essential characteristics. This is quite different from the point of view of a physiologist trying to understand the mechanisms by which the structural regularities that he detects take on a concrete form for the individual of this or that society. Yet, far from being contradictory, those two points of view are, in fact, complementary, in that the latter is indispens-able for validating the hypotheses of the former and for guaranteeing that the models that result may indeed be found at a tacit level in the way in which people organize their experience. Lévi-Strauss would no doubt not disagree, but in his case the necessity for that second phase is expressed not so much by circumstantial analyses but rather by a very general conviction that there does exist a dimension of human activity in which such an investigation is justifi-able. That, at any rate, is what one famous passage in *The Savage Mind* sug-gests: "Marxism, if not Marx himself, has too commonly reasoned as though practices followed directly from *praxis*. Without questioning the undoubted primacy of infrastructures, I believe that there is always a mediator between *praxis* and practices, namely the conceptual scheme by the operation of which matter and form, neither with any independent existence, are realized as structures, that is as entities which are both empirical and intelligible."[13]

If we set aside an overly substantive distinction between infrastructure and superstructure, what Lévi-Strauss is here suggesting in general terms is an anthropological project that is radically new. However, it is one that he himself never completed, for he was possessed by the urgency of establishing the methodological validity of gaining an understanding of human realities by means of intelligible structures and therefore neglected the pursuit of a better understanding of the conditions of their concrete existence.

This "conceptual scheme" is supposed to be the key to interaction between what is intelligible and what is empirical. But what does it consist of? Lévi-Strauss is here using this notion in a quite loose philosophical sense that is clearly derived from the Kantian theory of a transcendental schematism un-derstood as a method of thinking through the relation between a concept and the concrete object to which it applies. Presumably, by using the expres-

sion "conceptual scheme" Lévi-Strauss has in mind the mediatory synthetic and dynamic properties of a transcendental schematism without, however, recognizing the restrictive definition that Kant applies to it. His idea is probably closer to that of Piaget, himself inspired by Kant, for whom a schema constitutes an internal representation of a category of situations that allows an organism to act in a coherent and coordinated fashion every time that it is faced by analogous situations. However, although Lévi-Strauss did examine the supposed institutional translations of some of those structuring schemas, he was never completely explicit about their identity or their way of functioning. He went only so far as to say that they could not coincide with the general system of our ideas, which, he claimed, only a madman could dream of listing in an exhaustive fashion.[14] Such a warning is not to be taken lightly, so my ambition is more measured. The present book is founded upon a hunch that it *is* possible to reveal elementary schemas of practices and to sketch a summary cartography of their distribution and their ways of operating. But such an undertaking is only justifiable provided one specifies the mechanisms by which structures are reputed to organize systems and mores without, however, rejecting the hypothesis that it may be possible to analyze human relations with the world and with others in terms of finite combinations.

### Understanding the Familiar

Understanding how models of relations and behavior can influence practices without rising to the level of consciousness has now become a less formidable task, thanks to progress made in understanding the processes of inference and analogical derivation that govern the construction of mental schemas. That progress itself results from a change of perspective in the study of human cognition, which led to interest in the nonlinguistic dimensions of the acquisition, implementation, and transmission of knowledge. Previously, knowledge had, essentially, been treated as a system of explicit propositions organized in accordance with the sequential logic characteristic of natural languages and computer programming. That type of model offered an unsatisfactory representation of the mental process that makes it possible to recognize certain objects and immediately include them in a particular taxonomic class. But then a shift took place in the study of classificatory concepts, which moved toward a position inspired by the Gestalt psychology, according to which such concepts should be apprehended as global configurations of characteristic features rather than as decomposable lists of attributes whose necessary and sufficient definitions would have already been learned. Following the work of Eleanor Rosch, it is now recognized that many classificatory

concepts are formed by reference to "prototypes" that condense groups of particular cases that display "a family resemblance" into a network of associated representations.[15] For example, the concept of a house is not constructed on the basis of a list of specific features—roof, walls, doors and windows, and so forth—the presence of which would have to be verified in order for us to be sure that the object in question truly was a house. In such circumstances, we should be hard put to it to identify as a house an edifice lacking walls or a ruin whose roof had disappeared.[16] If we have no hesitation in describing as houses an ice igloo, a troglodyte dwelling, or a yurt, that is because we recognize in a flash that they conform to a vague and unformulated collection of attributes not one of which is essential to a classificatory judgment but all of which are linked in a schematic representation to which a typical house should conform. Far from being decomposable into a series of definitions of the kind provided by a dictionary, classificatory concepts are based on fragments of tacit knowledge relating to the properties that our theoretical and practical knowledge of the world leads us to ascribe to the objects to which those concepts refer. In this we are guided by our experience of certain concrete expressions of those objects, expressions that seem to us best to exemplify the class to which they belong.

The importance of the nonlinguistic aspects of cognition has also been revealed by increasingly numerous studies devoted to learning how to perform practical activities, whether these depend on a specialized know-how or a mechanical completion of daily tasks.[17] Operations as humdrum as driving a car or preparing a meal mobilize not so much explicit knowledge that can be organized into propositions but rather a combination of acquired motor aptitudes and various experiences synthesized into a skill. They depend on "knowing how" rather than on "knowing that."[18] True, learning to drive involves words, and one can learn to cook from recipe books or by following the instructions printed on the packaging of foods. But in these domains, as in others that involve some practical knowledge, it is possible to execute a task quickly and well only when the knowledge transmitted through the medium of language either oral or written has been absorbed as a reflex rather than in a reflective form, as a series of automatic actions rather than as a list of the operations that need to be performed. Whatever the role that linguistic mediation plays in creating it, in order to become effective this kind of competence requires that language now be bypassed. The person who possesses this skill must be able to work rapidly and with confidence in order to complete a task certain aspects of which may differ from those previously encountered in comparable situations. Such flexibility appears to suggest that, in a practical activity, one becomes dexterous not by memorizing particular cases already

encountered or lists of instructions that may be relevant but by developing a specialized cognitive schema that can be adapted to a whole family of similar tasks. The unintentional activation of such a schema is derived from a certain type of situation.

Some of these practical schemas take longer to establish than others because of the great quantity of disparate items of knowledge that they have to organize. Hunting provides a good illustration. The Achuar say that one becomes a good hunter only when one reaches maturity—that is to say, in one's midthirties. It is an assertion that is confirmed by systematic statistics: the hunters who bring home the most game are certainly men of forty or more.[19] Nevertheless, every adolescent already possesses a fund of knowledge of the natural environment and a technical dexterity worthy of admiration. For example, he is able to identify by sight several hundred kinds of birds, to imitate their song, and to describe their habits and habitat. He knows how to recognize a trail from the slightest of signs, such as a butterfly hovering at the foot of a tree, attracted by the still fresh urine of a monkey that has recently passed; as I repeatedly saw for myself, he can fire a dart from a blowpipe into a papaya standing one hundred paces away. But it will be another twenty years before he can be sure of bringing home game from every hunt. What exactly does he learn in the course of that interval that makes the difference? He no doubt completes his ethological knowledge and improves his understanding of interdependencies within the ecosystem. But the most essential aptitude that he acquires is probably an increasingly well-controlled ability to interconnect a mass of heterogeneous information structured in such a way as to allow him to respond effectively and immediately to whatever situation he encounters. Such automatic physical reflexes are indispensable for hunting, in which rapid reactions are the key to success. These are also transposable to warfare, which demands from an Achuar warrior the same accuracy in interpreting tracks and trails and the same ability to make swift judgments. Faced with such expertise, only the effects of which are measurable, a nonhunter is reduced to guesswork, for practically none of all this can be expressed adequately by language.

Yet, since the time when Kant wrote of the schematism of understanding, saying that it was "an art hidden in the depths of the human soul whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty,"[20] some progress has been made in understanding the material conditions required for the exercise of nonpropositional cognition. First, the neurosciences told us that the brain does not function in as compartmentalized a fashion as used to be thought according to the old theory of the faculties. They told us that all perceptive and cognitive processes presuppose a

parallel activation of neuronal networks distributed throughout the nervous system, networks that become stabilized and differentiated gradually during the first years of a child's development in close correlation to stimuli received from the environment.[21] Furthermore, over the last few years, the connectionist models developed in the field of artificial intelligence have begun to prove their usefulness, particularly when applied experimentally to robotics. In contrast to the classic models that govern the elaboration of standard computer languages, connectionist models do not function on the basis of lists of instructions that allow them, through predictive calculations, to carry out a series of operations specified by initial data stored in the memory bank. Instead, they consist of a collection of electronic networks that interconnect selectively, depending on the nature and intensity of the stimuli received. This means that they can recognize regularities in their environment and accordingly remodel their internal organization, not by creating explicit rules adapted to a recognized regularity, but by modifying the thresholds in the connections of the processors in such a way that the structure of the knowledge mechanism reflects the structure present in the input.[22] For this reason, they (unlike sequential models) are compatible with the prototypical effect at work in the formation of classificatory concepts and even allow for plausible inferences regarding the reconstitution of structures and forms that appear in an incomplete fashion in the input, in the same way as configurations are recognized in Gestalt psychology.[23] Finally, even if the connectionist models come close to the ideal of a tabula rasa—a criticism leveled at them by partisans of modularity, who believe that much knowledge is innate—they do not in principle exclude the possibility that at the start of ontogeny a small core of specialized mechanisms is supplied in the course of phylogenetic evolution.[24] In short, connectionist models mirror the functioning of neuronal networks; they are capable of learning, react rapidly to certain complex situations, seem to obey formal rules without such a stipulation being introduced into the model, and even create the illusion of a minimum degree of intentionality. These are all properties that make them similar to human cognition when it is faced, not with resolving propositional problems, but with the kinds of situations so familiar to ethnologists, in which people appear to regulate their actions as if these were dictated by cultural imperatives that they are nevertheless not able to express.

## Schematisms

The heuristic stimulus provided by connectionist models and the increasing number of studies devoted to the formation of classificatory concepts and

the acquisition of know-how have led psychologists and anthropologists to take a more systematic interest in the role played by abstract structures that organize understanding and practical action without mobilizing mental images or any knowledge conveyed in declarative statements. Such structures are now regrouped under the generic heading of "schemas."[25] However, this term now covers such a diversity of mechanisms for processing information, for expressing experience, and for representing routine tasks that a few words of clarification are necessary.

The first thing to do is to distinguish cognitive schemas reputed to be universal from those that stem from a particular acquired cultural experience or the vagaries of an individual's history. The existence of the former is still disputed, either because the link that they assume between biological data and their conceptual or symbolical interpretation remains rather speculative or because such schemas have been inferred on the basis of experiments conducted almost exclusively in Western industrialized societies. For example, such is the case with what developmental psychologists have, in an approximate fashion, called "naive theories" but that it might be better to call "attributive schemas." These are cores of assumptions concerning the behavior of objects in the world that are recognized very early on in the process of ontogeny and that guide children in the inferences that they make concerning the properties of those objects. These schemas affect three domains: expectations concerning human action (the imputation of internal states, in particular intentionality and affects), expectations concerning the mode of being of physical objects (the effects of gravity and conservation of forms and the continuity of trajectories), and, at a later age, expectations concerning the intrinsic nature of nonhuman organisms (animation, growth, and the ability to reproduce). Nearly all contemporary psychologists agree that these attributive schemas are universal, but they disagree as to the question of the stages and modalities of their appearance and therefore as to the degree of their innateness.[26] If the existence of these so-called naive theories were to be confirmed, they would constitute knowledge of an intuitive, nonpropositional nature, which would make it possible to interpret the behavior of salient objects so as to act upon and with them in an effective way.

Without underestimating the role played by possible universal schemas in the formation of ontological judgments, it does seem necessary to agree that it is above all acquired schemas that are at the center of attention of those interested in the diversity of customs across the world, since it is partly through the effect of those mechanisms that human ways of behaving differ. They differ from one individual to another as a result of the influence of idiosyncratic schemas, such as those that make it possible to perform an action as a matter

of routine (e.g., to follow a regular itinerary) or those that structure the many protocols that each of us devise in the course of time so as to organize our sequences of daily tasks. It is even possible that, doubtless at a deeper level, a Freudian subconscious prompts such a procedure, given that, in a nonintentional fashion, as the product of a particular individual history, it gives rise to, channels, and organizes structures of feelings and relations to others. These, as is well known, can be verbally objectivized only with the utmost difficulty and always in an unsatisfactory manner. All the same, collective schemas are the ones that are of most interest to ethnologists, for they constitute one of the principal means of constructing shared cultural meanings. They may be defined as psychic, sensorimotor and emotional dispositions that are internalized thanks to experience acquired in a given social environment. These make it possible to exercise at least three types of skills: first, to structure the flow of perception in a selective fashion, granting a preeminence in signification to particular traits and processes that can be observed in the environment; second, to organize both practical activity and the expression of thoughts and emotions in accordance with relatively standardized scenarios; and third, to provide a framework for typical interpretations of patterns of behavior and events—interpretations that are acceptable and can be communicated within a community in which the habits of life that they convey are regarded as normal.

These collective schemas may be either nonreflective or explainable; that is to say, they can be formulated in a more or less synthetic fashion as vernacular models by those who put them into practice. A cultural model is not always reducible to strings of simple propositional rules such as "If X belongs to one class of relatives and Y to another, then they may (or may not) marry." Many cultural models are not transmitted as bodies of precepts but are internalized little by little, without any particular teaching, although this does not prevent them from being objectivized quite schematically when circumstances demand it. This is particularly true of the ways of using space, a domain of collective life that every society codifies to a certain extent, without it being the case that this code is apprehended by individuals as a collection of rules to be consciously applied. A good illustration of this kind of nonpropositional schema is provided, in many regions of the world, by the way that a house is organized: its orientation, structure, the stages of its construction, and, above all, the way it is used constitute an established model that one learns to recognize as procedures become progressively familiar rather than as a result of a series of propositions explicitly passed on. All the same, it is always possible for an observer to obtain precise information about the way in which a dwelling is built and inhabited, a fact that shows that his informants are

perfectly capable of clearly explaining the broad lines of the schematic model that guides their practical behavior.[27]

In contrast, nonreflective schemas do not rise to the surface of consciousness, and one has to infer their existence and the way that they organize knowledge and experience solely on the basis of their effects. Mauss's famous essay on bodily techniques and the studies on types of habitus undertaken by Bourdieu and his disciples have by now made this kind of schema so familiar that examples are no longer necessary.[28] We should, however, note that nonreflective schemas are more or less resistant to objectivization. Their degree of coherence and their presence at a conscious level depend both on the domains that they structure—in particular the possibility of delegating to objects, places, and sequences of actions some of the automatisms that they set in motion—and also on the motivations, emotional states, and capacities for introspection and analysis of the individuals using them. The distinction between an objectifiable model and a nonreflective schema needs to be qualified, as it depends so much on the situation. Thus, artistic perspective is both a scholarly cultural model and a "symbolic form" that governs our perception. Treatises are written about it, it is taught in schools, and its history is known. Yet we hardly ever mobilize this type of explicit knowledge when we are looking at a painting, for so deeply have we internalized it as a visual schema that representations that do not conform to it seem intuitively to us either bizarre or clumsy or are identified with figurative styles that are ignorant of the rules of perspective or that deliberately flout them. Furthermore, nonreflective schemas manifest themselves at different levels. Some are highly thematic and can be adapted to a wide variety of situations, while others are activated only in very particular circumstances. Let us call the former "integrating schemas" and the latter "specialized schemas."

There is a wide consensus as to the existence of specialized schemas (perspective composition and different kinds of habitus constitute two examples). They form the fabric of our daily life in that they organize most of our actions, ranging from bodily techniques and scenarios for the expression of emotions to the use of cultural stereotypes and the formation of classificatory judgments. Integrating schemas, on the other hand, are more complex mechanisms, but an understanding of them is crucial for anthropology, given that all the indications suggest that it is their mediating function that to a large extent contributes to giving each of us the sense that we share with other individuals the same culture and the same cosmology. They may be defined as cognitive structures that generate inferences that are endowed with a high degree of abstraction, that are distributed in a regular fashion within collectivities of variable dimensions, and that ensure compatibility between different specialized

schemas, at the same time making it possible to generate new ones by induction. Such schemas are not internalized by means of a systematic inculcation; nor do they exist in a realm of ideas all ready to be captured by consciousness. They are constructed little by little, all with identical characteristics, given that the individuals of a group all pass through comparable experiences. This is a process facilitated by a common language and the relative uniformity of the ways in which children are socialized within any given group.[29] The attraction that many ethnologists feel to the study of distant and relatively isolated peoples in no way testifies to a nostalgia for authenticity or an obsession with an impossible cultural purity. It stems more simply from the fact that schemas that integrate collective practices or at the very least their surface effects are more easily detectable in cases where, since contacts with the outside world are less intense and members of the community are less numerous, the register of interpretations open to each individual is limited by the homogeneity of their learning experiences and their living conditions.

How, unless through vague intuitions, can one identify these integrating schemas that imprint themselves on the attitudes and practices of a collectivity in such a way that it appears immediately distinctive to an observer? Without overanticipating subsequent chapters, which will be tackling this question in depth, it is possible, even at this point, to suggest an answer: the schemas that should be held to be dominant are those activated in the greatest number of situations in the treatment of both humans and nonhumans and that subordinate other schemas to their own logic by stripping them of much of their original orientation. Perhaps this is the kind of mechanism that André-Georges Haudricourt had in mind when he drew a distinction between the two ways of "treating nature and others," constituted by negative indirect action and positive direct action.[30] Illustrated by the cultivation of yams in Melanesia and by the irrigated cultivation of rice in Asia, negative indirect action aims to favor the conditions of growth of the domesticated item by improving its environment as much as possible, not by establishing any direct control over it: each seedling is individually cared for so that it can develop as well as its own nature allows. Sheep raising in the Mediterranean region, on the contrary, implies positive direct action, for it necessitates permanent contact with the animals, which depend for their food and protection upon the intervention of humans: a shepherd accompanies his flock everywhere, guiding it with his crook and his dogs, choosing where it should pasture and find water; and it is also he who, when necessary, carries the young lambs and defends the sheep against predators. This difference in attitudes is not due solely to the opposition between domesticated plants and domesticated animals, for the treatment of cereals in Europe requires the same type of positive action as

sheep raising does. It involves submitting the plants collectively to a series of coercive operations, in contrast to the "respectful friendship" that every yam elicits. In the earliest days of agriculture, at least, scattered seeds were trampled into the ground by the herds, which also served to thresh the grain after it had been roughly harvested by being pulled up or by scything. In contrast, not all forms of stock raising are characterized by positive direct action: in the countryside of Indochina, water buffaloes are in principle guarded by children, who are certainly not capable of protecting them against the attacks of tigers, so the herd of animals surrounds its little "guardian" so as to prevent the tiger from seizing him.

According to Haudricourt, the opposition between negative indirect action and positive direct action is likewise noticeable in behavior toward humans. The Near East and Europe are dominated by an interventionist attitude, well illustrated by a very ancient, unvarying political philosophy that regards the good shepherd as the ideal of a sovereign. In the Bible, as in Aristotle, the leader commands his subjects, who are seen as a collective body. He guides them and intervenes directly in their destiny, as does the unique God of his faithful people. In contrast, in Oceania and the Far East, a noninterventionist attitude prevails in the way that human beings are treated. In the precepts for good government conveyed by the Confucian Chinese Classics (in which plant metaphors are frequently used to represent human beings), this inclination toward conciliation and a search for consensus is very noticeable. It is likewise present in the modus operandi of Melanesian chiefdoms: the chief does not issue orders but strives to make his actions reflect the general will of the community, having discovered what this is by consulting each of its members.

This opposition is no doubt not convincing on every point, in particular where the treatment of humans is concerned, so wide are the spheres that it covers and so numerous the counterexamples that spring to mind, especially for Asia and Oceania. But that is not the problem. Haudricourt's brief, pithy article has aroused so much interest since its appearance because it draws attention to the possibility that identical very general schemas may activate the ways that humans behave in their relations with entities long considered to belong to quite different ontological spheres. If so, it becomes possible to envisage action on organisms that is structured by similar principles within major unified spheres of technical and social practices, without having first to raise the question of whether or not there is any discrimination between organisms that are human and those that are not. Haudricourt is certainly at pains to speak of "correspondences between the treatment of nature and the treatment of others," and this in no way prejudges the source from which

these schemas of action spring. So it is neither a matter of projecting relations between humans upon relations to nonhumans nor one of extending to humans the attitude adopted toward nonhumans. Rather, homologous guiding principles apply in relations with two groups of beings that are hard to dissociate from the point of view of the types of behavior that they provoke.

### Differentiation, Stabilization, Analogies

However, it is by no means easy to substantiate schemas of practices peculiar to a group of humans. To help us to do so, there are no bodies of evidence of the kind that structural anthropology used in its analyses: nomenclatures of kinship, marriage, and residence rules, myths and totemic classifications formulated in consensual declarations that observers have collected and more or less standardized so as to form a useful yardstick for comparison. The way in which a human group schematizes its experiences does not lend itself to such simple descriptions. It is certainly discernible in ethnological accounts but one has to be able to reveal it on the basis of disparate signs and to identify its operational principles without allowing oneself to be blinded by ostensible codifications. Such schematization is discernible in customs rather than in the precepts that justify them — in attitudes toward relatives, for example, as much as in the rules of kinship, in ritual mechanisms and the types of interactive situations that they establish as much as in the literal language of myths and ritual formulae, in bodily techniques, forms of learning, and the use of space as much as in theories of ontogeny, taboos, and the geography of sacred sites.

Schemas of practices, consolidated over the course of years of formation, make it possible to adapt to novel situations that are perceived as particular cases of situations already encountered. Like all habits acquired early in life, schemas are not so much modified by experience as reinforced by it. Such persistence in individuals could be explained partly by the role played by affects in the process of schematization: the study of neurochemical mechanisms of memory appears to indicate that an intense emotion that an event triggers helps to reinforce the neural connections that its apprehension activates, thereby fixing the associations of concepts and perceptions that it induces.[31] So it is understandable that the integration of experience into durable schemas comes about above all in circumstances that capture the attention because they break with daily routine by leaving their mark not only on feelings but even on bodies. This will come as no surprise to anthropologists, who know how effectively rites, in particular those of initiation, make it possible to transmit and reproduce norms of behavior and models of relation-

ships by playing upon the unexpected, the paradoxical, and the mobilization of passions. Rites thus constitute valuable indications of the way in which a collectivity conceives and organizes its relations to the world and others, not only because they reveal, in a condensed form, schemas of interaction and principles of the structuring of praxis that are more diffuse in ordinary life but also because they provide the beginnings of a guarantee that the analyst's interpretations will match the lived experience of those who find in those rites a framework suitable for the internalization of models of action. Besides, as psychoanalysis and novels have taught us, the part played by affects in the stabilization of schemas is not manifest solely in ritual contexts: any event that is remarkable for the emotions that it arouses contributes powerfully to the process of learning and to the reinforcement of models of relations and interaction.

An important question remains, one that was often raised in connection with structuralism. It is supposed that "positive direct action" and "negative indirect action," like reciprocity, hierarchy, or any other schema, integrate practices. But how can we be sure that these are anything other than categories constructed "ad hoc" by the observer, for the needs of description and analysis? It might well be the case that types of behavior or interaction that bear a family resemblance at the level of an individual or a collectivity are produced by imitating one another, in a chain of analogies, as Gabriel Tarde would have it, rather than stemming from a preexisting schema whose ontological reality remains hard to establish. Although the question may in the end be insoluble, a naive conviction that favors the second alternative is not totally lacking in experimental corroboration. In fact, studies in cognitive psychology devoted to analogical reasoning show that the recognition of similarities between singular objects or events becomes much easier when it proceeds by induction from a schema already present—or else constructed on the spur of the moment by eliminating differences—than when it develops from a series of analytical comparisons made term by term. Schematic induction is rapid and economical, for it functions as a way of assessing particular cases that constitute so many different examples of a prototype, in contrast to a search for analogies listed one by one, which demands more attention and draws more heavily on memory.[32] Between analogical reasoning in an experimental situation and induction from shared schemas there is a wide gap that separates individual cognition from "collective representations." But how could it be denied that the latter cannot come into existence, be transmitted and invested in practice, without emerging and spreading in individual bodies, experiences, and brains? Without seeking to deny that a collectivity is more than the sum of its components, we are bound to recognize that those compo-

nents, with all their sensitive faculties and mental properties, are the source of the dynamic substance of the collectivity's creativity and permanence.

Besides, much of the work of bringing into existence norms and meanings that are shared by all the members of a collectivity involves procedures of analogical derivation from the particular to the general and from the general to the particular. If one is willing to concede that there is a difference between (1) publicly instituted models of behavior and interaction, (2) implicit schemas orientating the practices that those models codify, and (3) the infinite vagaries of idiosyncrasies and particular events, then the minimum of coherence that each of us perceives in our conduct and that of our acquaintances must result from our ability freely to transpose rules, tendencies, and situations from one of those domains to the other. The transposition may take place in either direction, depending on whether our experience of the world is organized in accordance with existing paradigms or whether those paradigms are affected by unforeseen events that call for their modification.[33] For example, in the first type of induction one can transpose a concrete event into the ideal model that makes its interpretation possible: such is the classic case of a judgment that something conforms to an accepted norm. One may also transpose a schema into an explicit model or make the schema manifest by means of that model, an operation that, par excellence, defines the institutional creativity of humans. This is what anthropologists have traditionally assumed to be their mission to describe and elucidate. Finally, one can transpose a schema directly into an unprecedented situation in order to render it meaningful or tolerable. But that happens less frequently, for the function of assimilating something new generally devolves upon intermediary models: people resort to it in times of great collective upheavals such as the traumas provoked by colonial conquest or emigration to distant places, when the ordinary parameters of reference cannot deal with circumstances or experiences that are too exceptional, and deeper schemas have to be mobilized in order to cope.

The second type of induction, namely the production of a schema designed to accommodate unusual circumstances, is something that directly contributes to an unfolding of history. It takes place either when an established model is elaborated or altered so as to take account of an unprecedented event (commonly best illustrated by the creation of new laws) or when an unusual situation engenders a new schematization by means of which specialized models, that is to say "bits of culture," are integrated or recombined in a new configuration. This makeshift operation is well known to anthropologists as "syncretism" or "acculturation," which prophetic or millenarian movements, for example, tend to exploit. On the other hand, only very rarely are new schemas produced through a direct transposition of exceptional

experiences, since these are generally filtered through models that, because they cannot be matched to unusual circumstances, will be restructured in accordance with the procedure outlined above rather than by an immediate subsuming of the event into a schema.

If one accepts the above analysis, the nature of the relation between a vernacular model and a structural one becomes less enigmatic. It seems that what a structural analysis reveals, when well conducted, is a way of assessing an understanding of the schematization of experience carried out by the members of a collectivity and the manner in which this serves as a framework for the explicit codification systems to which its members adhere. What guarantees that the formal mechanism constructed by the analyst does indeed reveal certain underlying characteristics of the social system that he is trying to understand is the fact that those characteristics express not so much universal properties of the human mind—or only do so at a very abstract level—but rather the tacit frameworks and procedures of objectivization by means of which the actors in the system themselves organize their relations to the world and to Others. In between the model, or action, and the structure, the schema constitutes an interface that is both concrete, since it is incorporated in individuals and put to work in their practices, and particularized, since it reflects some objective property of the relations to existing beings. Moreover, this interface possesses a high coefficient of abstraction, since it is detectable solely from its effects—although that does not mean to say that it emanates from mysterious entelechies such as a collective unconscious or some symbolic function.

All the same, the schematization of experience is not abandoned to arbitrary, fortuitous inventions and unpredictable circumstances. Those no doubt play a role in the emergence of specialized schemas of the habitus type, the wide variety of which is attributable to the diversity of the historical contexts in which they operate. But over and above these many particular capabilities that are immanent in practices, human beings also resort to a much more limited number of more general integrating schemas in order to structure their relations with the world. These schemas manifest themselves in what are, after all, a quite limited number of options available for distributing resemblances and differences between existing entities, and for establishing, between the groups defined by that distribution and within them, distinctive relations of a remarkable stability.

The rest of the present book will be devoted to elaborating this idea, which is founded upon the conjecture that all the schemas at the disposition of humanity for specifying its relations within itself and with the outside world in fact exist in the form of predispositions, some of which are innate while

others stem from the very properties of communal life—in other words, from the different practical ways of ensuring the integration of both the self and Others in a given environment. But these structures are not all compatible with one another, and every cultural system, every type of social organization, is the product of a selection and a combination that, although contingent, are frequently repeated in history, producing comparable results. Anthropology that seeks to be consequential has no choice but to gain an understanding of the logic of this work of composition, by lending an ear to the themes and harmonies that stand out from the great hum of the world and concentrating on emerging orders whose regularity is detectable behind the proliferation of different customs.