

Relations with the Self and Relations with Others

Modes of Identification and Modes of Relation

The hypothesis that will serve as a guide through the analyses that follow is that the integrating schemas of practices whose general mechanisms we have studied in chapter 4 may be reduced to two fundamental ways of structuring individual and collective experiences: two modalities that I shall call “identification” and “relations.” Identification extends beyond the Freudian sense of an emotional link with some object and beyond a classificatory judgment that makes it possible to recognize the distinctive character of that object. It covers a more general schema by means of which I can establish differences and resemblances between myself and other existing entities by inferring analogies and contrasts between the appearance, behavior, and properties that I ascribe to myself and those that I ascribe to them. Marcel Mauss translated that another way when he wrote that “man identifies himself with things and identifies things with himself, doing so with a sense of both the differences and the resemblances that he establishes.”¹ This mechanism of mediation between the self and the nonself seems to me, from a logical point of view, to precede and be external to the existence of an established relationship with something other, that is to say, something the content of which can be specified by its modalities of interaction, given that the “other” in question here is not one term in a pair but an object that exists for me in a general otherness yet to be identified: an *aliud* then, not an *alter*.

That distinction is certainly an analytical, rather than a phenomenal, one, for identification immediately assumes a correlation to the object that is being provided with an identity: once it is classified in some ontological category or other, I shall be able to enter into some relationship with it. It is, however, important to preserve the distinction between identification and relation insofar as each of the ontological, cosmological, and sociological formulae that

the identification makes possible can itself underpin several types of relationship, ones that are therefore not automatically derived simply from the position occupied by the object and the properties conferred upon it. For example, considering an animal as a person rather than as a thing in no way justifies prejudging the relationship established with it, one that is as likely to stem from predation as from competition or protection. A relationship thus adds a further dimension to the primary terms set out by identification. For that reason, and in contrast to a structuralist or interactional stance, it seems necessary to envisage separately those two modes of integrating “the other.” Besides, these modes cover the original distinction that logic introduces between judgments of inherence and judgments of relations. In truth, the decision to treat on an equal footing, on the one hand, identification, which involves mainly terms, and, on the other, relationships, which involve mainly the links established between those terms, is one way of correcting the excesses of earlier anthropological approaches that, by granting preeminence to one dimension over the other—suggesting either that relations stem from terms or that terms stem from relations—had difficulty in tackling head-on any study of ontological distributions along with a study of social relations.

Relationships are thus here understood not in a logical or mathematical sense (i.e., as intellectual operations that make it possible to establish an internal link between two concepts) but rather as the external links between beings and things that are detectable in typical behavior patterns and may be partially translatable into concrete social norms. There is nothing surprising about the fact that these links of an anthropological nature correspond, in some aspects, to purely formal relations such as coexistence, succession, identity, correspondence, and origination, for the number of relations identified by epistemology since Aristotle is remarkably limited, so, in all probability, the whole collection of established ways of forging links between existing beings may in the last analysis be reduced to a corpus of logical relations. All the same, given that the declared ambition of this book is to gain a better understanding of collective behavior, the relations that concern us are those that can be detected from observable practices, not those that can be deduced from the formal rules governing logical propositions. Emphasizing that the relations in question concern, so to speak, external links between elements furthermore makes it possible to forestall any misunderstanding regarding the respective statuses of identification and relationships. Although identification defines terms and their predicates, it goes without saying that it also involves a relationship since it is based on judgments of inherence and attribution, but it is a relationship that becomes intrinsic to the object identified once one sets aside the process that established it as such. In contrast, the

relations that we shall be concerned with are of an extrinsic nature in that they refer to the connections that this object has with something other than itself, connections that are certainly potential in its identity but without it ever being possible to tell which one in particular will in effect be actualized. That is why I decided to ascribe to modes of identification a logical precedence over modes of relationship, since the former, by specifying the ontological properties of terms, partially influences the nature of the relations that may link those terms, yet without determining the type of relationship that will become dominant. First, then, we shall examine the ontological modalities of identification (part III) and their expressions in social life (part IV), before passing on to modes of relations and the links that connect them with modes of identification (part V).

Even at the general level at which I am considering them here, identification and relationship are by no means the only possible forms taken by the structuring of the experience of the world and of what is Other. To be more thorough, it would no doubt be necessary to complement them by at least five other modes that play a role in the schematization of practices. (1) *Temporality*: the objectivization of certain properties of duration according to various computing systems, forms of spatial analogies, cycles, cumulative sequences, and procedures of memorization or deliberate forgetfulness. (2) *Spatialization*: the mechanisms for organizing and dividing up space that are based on its uses, on systems of coordinates and cardinal points, on the importance ascribed to such or such means of marking out places, on ways of passing through or occupying territories and the mental maps that organize these, and on the possibilities that the environment affords for apprehending the landscape through vision and other senses. (3) The various systems of *figuration*, understood as the action by means of which beings and things are represented in two or three dimensions, using a material medium. (4) *Mediation*: the kind of relationship that depends on the interposition of a conventional device that functions as a substitute, a form, a sign, or a symbol, such as sacrifice, money, or writing. (5) *Categorization*: in the sense of the principles that govern explicit classifications of entities and properties of the world in taxonomies of every kind.

In the present work, I shall not be tackling those modes, partly in order to limit its size and partly because the analyses that follow show that the various combined forms of identification and relations suffice to explain the principles underlying most known ontologies and cosmologies. The reader is thus asked to accept the provisional hypothesis—hardly more than a hunch at this stage—that temporality, spatialization, figuration, mediation, and categorization depend for their expression and their occurrence on the various

configurations of identification and relationships (each of which are concrete realizations) that these secondary modes may engender. Three examples of this are cyclic temporality, cumulative temporality, and egocentric temporality. Furthermore, those configurations are probably derived from one or other of the structures made possible by the interplay of the two primary modes.

Each of the configurations resulting from the combination of a type of identification and a type of relationship reveals the general structure of a particular schema for the integration of practices, in other words, one of the forms that may be assumed by the mechanism for generating inferences that is described in chapter 4. It is this mechanism that allows the members of a collectivity to make different classes of specialized schemas compatible with one another while at the same time ensuring the possibility of engendering new schemas that bear a family resemblance to the original ones. Identification and relationships may thus be seen as the sources of the instruments for social life that provide the elementary means for human groups of variable dimensions and kinds daily to piece together a schematization of their experience, without, however, being fully conscious of the endeavor in which they are engaged or the type of object that it will produce. There are nevertheless two ways in which these schemas can be partially objectivized: by vernacular models, which are necessarily imperfect since effective social action depends upon the effacement of the cognitive mechanisms that structure it; and by scholarly models, such as those I shall be describing, whose equally patent imperfection stems, rather, from the fact that they are unable to take into account the infinite richness of local variants. But that is the risk run by any attempt to generalize, which has to sacrifice the spicy unpredictability and the inventive proliferations of day-to-day situations in order to reach a higher level of intelligibility regarding the mainsprings of human behavior.

The Other Is an “I”

Identification, which operates well upstream from the categorizations of beings and things that taxonomies reveal, is the ability to apprehend and separate out some of the continuities and discontinuities that we can seize upon in the course of observing and coping practically with our environment. This elementary mechanism of ontological discrimination does not stem from empirical judgments regarding the nature of the objects that constantly present themselves to our perception. Rather, it should be seen as what Husserl called a prepredicative experience, in that it modulates the general awareness that I may have of the existence of the “other.” This awareness is formed simply from my own resources—that is to say, my body and my intentional-

ity—when I set aside the world and all that it means for me. So one could say that this is an experience of thought prompted by an abstract subject. I do not need to know if this has ever existed, but it produces definitely concrete effects since it enables me to understand how it is possible to specify indeterminate objects by either ascribing to them or denying them an “interiority” and a “physicality” similar to those that I attribute to myself. As we shall see, this distinction between a level of interiority and one of physicality is not simply an ethnocentric projection of the Western opposition drawn between the mind and the body. Rather, it is a distinction that all the civilizations about which we have learned something from ethnography and history have, in their own fashions, objectivized. At this stage in our inquiry a brief description of the fields of phenomena that those two levels (interiority and physicality) encompass will suffice.

The vague term “interiority” refers to a range of properties recognized by all human beings and partially covers what we generally call the mind, the soul, or consciousness: intentionality, subjectivity, reflexivity, feelings, and the ability to express oneself and to dream. It may also include immaterial principles that are assumed to cause things to be animate, such as breath and vital energy, and, at the same time, notions even more abstract, such as the idea that I share with others the same essence, the same principle of action, or the same origin: all these ideas may be objectivized in a name or an epithet common to us all. In short, interiority consists in the universal belief that a being possesses characteristics that are internal to it or that take it as their source. In normal circumstances, these are detectable only from their effects and are reputed to be responsible for that being’s identity, perpetuation, and some of its typical ways of behaving. Physicality, in contrast, concerns external form, substance, the physiological, perceptive and sensorimotor processes, even a being’s constitution and way of acting in the world, insofar as these reflect the influence brought to bear on behavior patterns and a habitus by corporeal humors, diets, anatomical characteristics, and particular modes of reproduction. So physicality is not simply the material aspect of organic and abiotic bodies; it is the whole set of visible and tangible expressions of the dispositions peculiar to a particular entity when those dispositions are reputed to result from morphological and physiological characteristics that are intrinsic to it.

To suppose that identification is founded upon the attribution to existing beings of ontological properties conceived by analogy with those that humans recognize in themselves is to imply that such a mechanism can find in each one of us its self-evidence and a guarantee of its continuity. In other words, it presupposes accepting that every human perceives himself or herself as a unit that is a mixture of interiority and physicality, for this is a state that is neces-

sary if one is to recognize in others or deny them distinctive characteristics that are derived from one's own. Now, the idea that individuals everywhere and always consider themselves to be autonomous and unique entities has attracted strong criticism. So too, and even more so, has the idea that the perception of this singularity, which takes the form of a combination of intentionality and physical experience, is universal. It has become commonplace to cast doubt upon the generality of the idea of the self being conceived as a single unit of experience. It is argued that, in numerous cases, peoples do not consider the body to constitute an absolute limit to the person, since the latter is fragmented into many constitutive units, some of which are distributed among or determined by either human or nonhuman elements in its environment.² Common though they may be, such notions do not justify dismissing the fundamental distinction that Mauss, years ago, proposed between, on the one hand, a universal sense of self (i.e., a sense possessed by every human being "of one's individuality, both spiritual and corporeal") and, on the other, the very diverse theories (the components and spatial extension of which are extremely variable) of what constitutes a person that have, in some places, been elaborated.³

As Mauss had suspected and Émile Benveniste, following Peirce, clearly confirmed, the universality of the perception of the self as a separate and autonomous entity is borne out primarily by linguistic data, namely the presence in all languages of pronominal forms or affixes such as "I" and "you" that can refer only to the person making the statement containing the linguistic form "I" or, symmetrically, to the interlocutor, addressed as "you."⁴ But this semiotic "I" in no way implies that the speaker conceives of himself or herself as an individual subject wholly contained within the boundaries of his or her body, in the manner of the traditional image proposed by Western individualism. There is little doubt that in many societies it is believed that the idiosyncrasy, actions, and development of a person depend on elements exterior to one's physical envelope—elements such as the relations of every kind amid which that person lives. That is most famously the case in Melanesia, which is why Marilyn Strathern has suggested that, in this region of the world, we should describe a person not as an individuality but as a "dividuality," that is to say, a being primarily defined by his or her position and relations within some network.⁵ However, without denying the existence of a theory of a "dividual" person in Melanesia, we should bear in mind, along with Maurice Leenhardt years ago and Edward LiPuma more recently, that that theory coexists alongside—or is in some situations supplanted by—a more egocentric conception of a subject; and there is no evidence to suggest that this theory is a product solely of European colonization.⁶ But whatever the diversity of

the solutions adopted in order to ascribe some of the principles that constitute one particular human body as a person, it is safe to accept as a universal fact the form of individuation that an indexical consciousness of the self renders manifest and that is reinforced by the intersubjective differentiation that stems from the use of “you.”

The universality of reflective individuation constitutes a necessary but not sufficient condition for one to feel oneself divided between a plane of interiority and one of physicality. For such a distinction would not be recognized by an ordinary consciousness of the self, which inextricably intermingles a sense of, on the one hand, an internal unity that bestows powers of expression and coherence upon mental activities, affects, and perceptions and, on the other, continuous experience of a body that occupies a position in space, is the source of its own sensations, and is both an organ of mediation with the environment and an instrument of knowledge. We all know that we can “think” with the body as well as with the mind, both within the vast register of internalized abilities and also within the more mysterious one of intuitions condensed in a gesture, such as “speaking with one’s hands,” which physicomathematical diagrams reveal and the nature of which philosophers of science have tried to pinpoint.⁷ Descartes himself, despite his tenet of dualism and the priority that he ascribes to the cogito in one’s consciousness of the self, is ready to recognize that the sense of one’s individuality, the factor that makes one “a real man,” depends primarily on the intimate unity of the thinking soul and the feeling body.⁸

So, sensing a disjunction between one’s immaterial self and one’s physical self is not a common experience, but it does happen in those more rare states of dissociation in which the mind and the body—to use our usual terminology—seem to become independent of each other. It happens fleetingly but daily in moments when one’s “internal life” displays its control, in meditation, introspection, daydreaming, mental monologue, or even prayer: all these are occasions that prompt a deliberate or unexpected suspension of corporeal constraints. It also occurs, more detectably, in memories and in dreams. Even if, as often happens, such an experience is triggered involuntarily by some physical sensation, memory enables one to dematerialize, to escape partially from the temporal and spatial constraints of the moment, the better to be transported by one’s mind into some past situation in which it becomes impossible for the conscious mind to feel the suffering, pleasure, or even coenesthesia that we nevertheless know to be associated with the remembered moment. As for dreaming, this provides even stronger evidence of a split, for the vividness of the images that assail one seem out of step with the state of corporeal inertia that is the condition on which dreaming depends for the

emergence of such images. Less commonplace, finally, are situations of extreme dissociation induced by hallucinations or by temporary loss of one's senses as in ecstasy or catalepsy, or even those experiences of extracorporeal perception associated with drug taking or near-death experiences, when the self appears to detach itself from its envelope of flesh and to look down upon it from a distance. Yet such situations are not that exceptional: in many parts of the world, the ritualistic use of hallucinogenic substances or trances provoked by alcohol, fasting, or music can provide anyone with repeated proofs of a split between interiority and physicality that is all the more striking because it is deliberately provoked for the sake of the sensations that it procures. But the frequency of such phenomena is not important, for I am not seeking to determine an incontestable source for the sense of the duality of the person, as Tylor was when he suggested that dreams were the origin of the notion of a soul and from that notion stemmed a belief in spirits, which was the basis of an animist religion conceived as a projection upon inert objects of a principle of animation endowed with autonomy.⁹ My own intention, which is a far cry from assuming such risky causal links, is simply to emphasize that an awareness of a separation between an internal self and a physical self is not unfounded in ordinary life, as seems to be confirmed by recent work in developmental psychology, which detects in this dualist intuition an innate characteristic of human beings.¹⁰

Another indication of the universality of this separation between the physical and the moral is the fact that linguistic traces of it are to be found in all the cultures so far studied. It would seem that all languages distinguish between a level of interiority and a level of physicality within a certain class of organisms, whatever may be the extension given to such a class and whatever the words used to convey the two: in the language of Western observers, usually "soul" and "body." Of course, the terms used to translate "soul" are frequently numerous within a single language and therefore require copious commentaries, whereas the term that refers to the body is usually unique. But nowhere do we find a concept of an ordinary living person that is founded solely upon interiority—for instance, a soul without a body—or on physicality alone, that is to say, a body without a soul. Not until the materialist theories of consciousness in the last decades of the twentieth century, those of Antonio Damasio and Daniel Dennett, for example, did such a possibility become envisageable; and even then, such theories provoked stiff resistance to what, for many of our contemporaries, seemed to constitute both an offence to common sense and also an attack on the uniqueness of human nature.¹¹ For, obviously enough, this duality of a person is a matter of common sense, that is to say it is an empirical intuition everywhere detectable in well-

established forms of expression; it does not, of course, involve the complex mechanisms of consciousness of the self such as those that neurobiology strives to understand.

In my assumption of the universality of a conventional distinction between interiority and physicality, I am not unaware that interiority is often presented as multiple, nor that it is believed to be connected with physicality through numerous mutual influences. Even in the West, where the most elaborate forms of dualism can be found, a general consensus exists as to the coexistence of at least three principles of interiority—the soul, the mind, and consciousness—and to these, over the past century, have been added the Freudian triad of the ego, the superego, and the id, plus, even more recently, an extravagant outbreak of multiple personalities in North American psychiatry.¹² In this domain there are no limits to the imagination, and some peoples have proliferated the inner elements of a person by ascribing a whole set of them to each part of the body or a different set to each of the sexes, adding to these or subtracting from them in the course of the life cycle and suggesting an infinite number of functions for each of them so as to render them responsible for the entire range of situations in which an individual may find himself or herself. In Mexico, for example, the Tzeltal Indians of Cancuc attribute as many as seventeen distinct “souls” to a single person, while the Dogon are content, more modestly, with eight.¹³

All the same, however numerous the immaterial components of a person, whether innate or acquired, whether transmitted by the father, by the mother, by accident, or by some benevolent or hostile entity, and whether temporary, lasting, or eternal, immutable or subject to change, all these principles that generate life, knowledge, passion, or destiny take an indeterminate form. They are made of some indefinable substance that usually resides in the innermost depths of the body. To be sure, it is often claimed that these “souls” reside in some organ or fluid—the heart, the liver, bone marrow, or blood—or that they are linked with an element that cannot be dissociated from the living body, such as breath, the face, or one’s shadow. It is also said that they experience growth and decline and hunger and sexual desire, just as the organism with which they are associated does, and that part of their essence can be transmitted or alienated by the substance that underlies them or moves them around. But however intimately linked they may be with the nonphysical components of a person, the organs and humors in which these components are incorporated are never any more than imperfect objectifications of them. Their materiality cannot represent the totality of the predicates that one attributes to the elements of one’s internal identity: the liver does not move spatially outside the body when the soul believed to inhabit it is said to

travel during dreams, nor do the heart and lungs of a dead person move when they liberate the part of the individual that is believed to live on after death. We should, rather, consider these corporeal substances said to shelter souls as hypostases, convenient means for giving concrete expression to agents, essences, and causes the existence of which is usually inferred solely from the effects imputed to them.

The duality of interiority and physicality, which is present all over the world in various modalities, is thus not simply an ethnocentric projection of an opposition peculiar to the West between, on the one hand, the body and, on the other, the soul or mind. On the contrary, we should regard this opposition, in the guise in which it is forged in Europe, together with the philosophical and theological theories that it has prompted, as a local variant of a more general system of elementary contrast. In the chapters that follow we shall examine the mechanisms and organization of this contrast. It may well be surprising to find this dualism of the person, which has become somewhat discredited these days, acquiring a universality that I earlier denied to the dualism of nature and culture. Yet, as we have seen, there is no lack of empirical arguments to justify this preference, in particular the fact that consciousness of a distinction between the interiority and the physicality of the self seems to be an innate aptitude that is borne out by all lexicons, whereas terminological equivalents of the pair constituted by nature and culture are hard to find outside European languages and do not appear to have experimentally demonstrable cognitive bases. But what needs above all to be said here is that, contrary to an opinion currently in fashion, binary oppositions are neither a Western invention nor fictions of structural anthropology but are very widely used by all peoples in plenty of circumstances, so it is not so much their form that should be questioned but rather the suggested universality of their content.

The recognized formulae for expressing the combination of interiority and physicality are very limited. Faced with some other entity, human or nonhuman, I can assume either that it possesses elements of physicality and interiority identical to my own, that both its interiority and its physicality are distinct from mine, that we have similar interiorities and different physicalities, or, finally, that our interiorities are different and our physicalities are analogous. I shall call the first combination "totemism," the second "analogism," the third "animism," and the fourth "naturalism" (fig. 1). These principles of identification define four major types of ontology, that is to say systems of the properties of existing beings; and these serve as a point of reference for contrasting forms of cosmologies, models of social links, and theories of identity and alterity.

Before enumerating the properties of these combinations, I should explain the terms that I have used to designate them. Both because of my distaste for

Similar interiorities Dissimilar physicalities	<i>Animism</i>	<i>Totemism</i>	Similar interiorities Similar physicalities
Dissimilar interiorities Similar physicalities	<i>Naturalism</i>	<i>Analogism</i>	Dissimilar interiorities Dissimilar physicalities

FIGURE 1. The four ontologies

neologisms and also in order to conform with a practice as old as anthropology itself, I have chosen to use notions that are already well established but to confer upon them new meanings. However, this use of old terms may lead to misunderstandings, especially as the definitions of “animism” and “totemism” that I am proposing here are appreciably different from those that I have suggested in earlier studies.

We should remember that anthropologists have been accustomed to using the word “totemism” every time that a group of social units—moieties, clans, matrimonial sections, or religious groups—are associated with a series of natural objects, with the names of each of these units frequently being derived from an eponymous animal or plant. In *Totemism* Lévi-Strauss developed the idea that totemism was not so much an institution peculiar to so-called primitive societies but rather the expression of a universal classificatory logic that uses observable differential gaps between animal and plant species in order to conceptualize the discontinuities between social groups. Plants and animals spontaneously exhibit perceptible contrasting qualities—different forms, colors, habitats, and behaviors—and the differences in species that these render manifest are therefore particularly suited to signaling the internal distinctions that are necessary for the perpetuation of segmentary systems. Certain earlier conceptions of totemism emphasized the intimate association of the terms involved—for instance, a mystical link between a particular group of persons and a particular natural species. But Lévi-Strauss, on the contrary, perceives a homology between two series of relations, the one differentiating a collection of species, the other differentiating a collection of social units, with the former presenting an immediately available model for organizing the latter. Nature thus provides a guide and a framework—what Lévi-Strauss calls “a method for thinking”—that helps the members of certain cultures to conceptualize their social structure and to offer a simple iconic representation of it, one similar to that used by European heraldry.¹⁴

Lévi-Strauss’s intention was to dissipate what he called “the totemic illusion,” in order to associate totemism with a universal characteristic of the human mind. So, understandably enough, in his analysis he ascribed scant importance to the dyadic relations between a human and a nonhuman that

have sometimes been labeled “individual totemism.”¹⁵ My own ethnographic experience among the Achuar has made me realize that, like them, many Amazonian societies ascribe to plants and to animals a spiritual principle of their own and consider it possible to maintain personal relations with those entities—relations of friendship, hostility, seduction, matrimonial alliances, or those involving reciprocal services. Such personal relationships differ profoundly from the denotative and abstract relation between totemic groups and the natural entities that serve as their eponyms. In such societies, which are very common in South America but are also found in North America, Siberia, and Southeast Asia, attributes are conferred upon plants and animals—intentionality, subjectivity, affects, even speech in certain circumstances—including specifically social ones, such as a status hierarchy, behavior patterns based on respect for the rules of kinship or ethical codes, ritual activity, and so on. With a mode of identification such as this, natural objects constitute not a system of signs authorizing category-specific transpositions but, instead, a collection of subjects with which humans day after day weave a web of social relations.

Resurrecting a term at the time seldom used, I had earlier proposed calling this form of the objectivation of natural beings “animism”; and I had suggested regarding it as the symmetrical reverse of Lévi-Straussian totemic classifications. I suggested that, in contrast to the latter, animist systems did not use plants and animals to conceptualize the social order but, on the contrary, employed elementary categories of social practice to think through the links of humans with natural beings.¹⁶ This hypothesis emerged from the Achuar ethnographic findings. Among the Achuar, the women treat the plants in their gardens as children, while the men behave toward hunted animals and their spirit masters in accordance with the norms required in relations with relatives by marriage. Affinity and consanguinity, the two categories that govern the social classification of the Achuar and orientate their relations with “the Other,” thus play their part in the prescribed attitudes toward nonhumans. This correspondence between the social treatment of humans and that of plants and animals has turned out to be widespread not only in Amazonia but elsewhere too. I have provided a number of examples in chapter 1 of the present work: solidarity, friendship, and respect for elders among the Cree, marriage alliances with hunted animals among Siberian peoples, and commensality among the Chewong. In all these cases, the most common and valued norms of behavior in social life are thus employed to characterize the relations of humans with plants and animals that are regarded as persons.

However, that definition of animism as the symmetrical reverse of totemism suffered from a serious defect, for it led back to what it claimed to be escap-

ing, in that it surreptitiously imported into the characterization of nondualist cosmologies the analytical distinction between nature and society peculiar to the Lévi-Straussian explanation of totemic classifications.¹⁷ Furthermore, one has to recognize that Lévi-Straussian totemism is not commensurable with animism: the latter is certainly a mode of identification that objectivizes a particular relation between humans and the nonhuman elements in their environment; but the former is a mechanism of categorization that sets up purely logical correlations between classes of humans and classes of nonhumans.¹⁸ In short, despite my desire to avoid an overclassificatory interpretation of phenomena that clearly were ill-suited to such a reading, I had fallen into the pitfall of a dichotomy through sticking too closely to Lévi-Strauss's theory of totemism. That is why my first definition of animism and Lévi-Strauss's definition of totemic classifications could not serve as a starting point from which to characterize modes of identification even though, as we shall see, at a later stage those definitions remain valid as principles for justifying the frontiers between groups of humans and of nonhumans.

I had strayed off course primarily by seeking to define modes of identification, in other words ontological matrixes, starting from relational processes that were expressed by institutions. The mistake was excusable if one bears in mind that, ever since Durkheim, that has always been the way of proceeding. A sociological approach was favored, for at the time it was necessary to open up for the human sciences a positive domain of their own. Inevitably, religious beliefs, theories of the person, cosmologies, the symbolism of time and space, and conceptions of the efficacy of magic were all considered to be explainable, in the last resort, by the existence of particular social forms that were projected on to the world and that modeled practices employed to objectivize that world and make it meaningful.¹⁹ By proposing that the social stemmed from the psychic, Lévi-Strauss certainly avoided that tendency. But, given the uncertainty that still surrounds the laws pertaining to the human mind, that derivation was bound to be inductive: except in the case of his analyses of myth, his starting point was a study of institutions, from which he worked back "toward the intellect," rather than the reverse. However, a relational system can never be independent from the terms that it brings together, if by "terms" we mean entities endowed from the start with specific properties that render them either able or unable to forge links between one another, rather than interchangeable individuals or established social units. I have accordingly had to reject the sociocentric assumption and opt for the idea that sociological realities (stabilized relational systems) are analytically subordinate to ontological realities (the systems of properties attributed to existing beings). That is the price that has to be paid if animism and totem-

ism are to be reborn with new meanings. Now each redefined as one of the four combinations allowed by the interplay of resemblances and differences between the self and the Other at the levels of interiority and physicality, animism and totemism, along with naturalism and analogism, become elementary components of a kind of syntax for the composition of the world, from which the various institutional regimes of human existence all stem.