

Currents Hronika Actualités

Scientific conference: **Structural anthropology today. In honor of Claude Levi-Strauss**, Faculty of Philosophy of Belgrade University, 28-29. November, 2008.

On the occasion of the one hundredth birthday of the founder of structural anthropology, and one of the greatest anthropologists and intellectuals of the XX century, *Claude Levi-Strauss*, the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Faculty of Philosophy of Belgrade University held a scientific conference with an aim to present and evaluate achievements, critical reviews and reception of structuralism in contemporary anthropology.

Initially, on Friday, 28.11., on the day when Levi-Strauss was born, a cocktail party was arranged in the premises of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, where the gathered audience were greeted by the introductory speaker prof. dr. Ivan Kovačević, the head of the Ethnology and Anthropology department, as well as prof. dr. Nikola Pavković, who as a young, prospective PhD in Paris had the opportunity to attend Levi-Strauss's lectures.

On Saturday 29.11. a day long scientific conference took place, during which many motivating papers could be heard that presented a new perspective on structuralism, the extension of its application on some contemporary phenomena, as well as a critical retrospect on the structural paradigm. Contributors (associates) of the Ethnology and Anthropology department of the Faculty of Philosophy such as prof. Ivan Kovačević PhD, prof. Bojan Žikić

PhD, prof. Senka Kovač PhD, ass.prof. Dragana Antonijević PhD, ass.prof. Miloš Milenković PhD, ass.prof. Danijel Sinani PhD, Zorica Ivanović PhD, and M.A. Gordana Gorunović took part at this conference, along with prof. Aleksandar Palavestra PhD from the Department of Archaeology and ass.prof. Ivan Vuković PhD from the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Along side, Ljiljana Gavrilović PhD, scientific researcher from the Ethnographic Institute of SANU (Serbian Academy of Science and Art) also participated at the conference, as well as a guest from Croatia – Ines Prica PhD, scientific researcher from the Ethnology and Folklore Institute in Zagreb, and a guest from Slovenia ass.prof. Vlado Kotnik PhD from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Kopar.

Ivan Kovačević opened the conference with a presentation through which he offered an explanation as to why structuralism and not functionalism left such a significant and decisive role in the modernization of Serbian ethnology/ anthropology in the paper **Modernism and structuralism. Serbian ethnology/ anthropology in the final quarter of the XX century.**

Miloš Milenković discussed the rapport in-between structuralism and post-structuralism in Serbia, emphasizing the value discrepancy that structuralism, as the founding discourse of anthropology as a science, enjoyed in Serbia in relation to a dissimilar circumstance in the American anthropology, in which the reception of the

afore mentioned and its post-counterpart were parallel, mostly to the disadvantage of the former, the origins of which were established by the author in his captivatingly titled paper **Oh, if Derrida had only missed that flight** to emanate from different functions that structuralism had in these two scientific communities. *Gordana Gorunović* recognized the relation of different approaches to anthropology in Claude Levi-Strauss's and Clifford Geertz's works, trying to ascertain certain, up to now unrecognized similarities in the scientific discourse **Geertz vs Levi-Strauss: Latent structural assumptions in Geertz's culturalism?**, while *Ivan Vuković* presented his reflections on the matter of understanding structuralism as one of the possible uses of Kant's ideas about the existence of *a priori* formal framework in **Transcendental idealism and structuralism**.

After this "theoretic" sessions, next on the agenda was papers which discussed some concrete aspects of Levi-Strauss's researches, as well as his intellectual engagement. The paper by *Ljiljana Gavrilović* **Levi Strauss : UNESCO = anthropology : politics**, emphasized the significance Levi-Strauss had in writing the Declaration on races and his battle against racial prejudice and discrimination in general; while *Vlada Kotnik's* lecture directed us toward reading of "Mitologies" as analogous to Wagner's opera "Ring" and generally toward Levi-Strauss's inclination to music in the paper **Levi-Strauss and the Opera**. This was followed by the presentation by *Senka Kovač* concerning Levi-Strauss's studies of masks, rituals and myths of Indians from the north-western coast of the Pacific towards finding structural similarities: **Claude Levi-Strauss: The myth and mask**. At the end of the second session, all present could listen to an attention-grabbing lecture by *Aleksandar Palavestra*

about the implications of relatively rare uses of structuralism in archaeology in the paper titled **Structuralism in archaeology**.

Prior to the beginning of the afternoon session, the participants and guests together watched a film entitled "A propos de Tristes tropiques" by Jean-Pierre Beaurenaut, Jorge Bodanzky and Patrick Menguet from 1991. The third and the lastingly session, which was dedicated to different receptions of Levi-Strauss's concepts and theories, was opened by *Ines Prica* with her paper **Bricolage: Contemporary radiation of Levi-Strauss's concepts**, in which she correlated the term "bricolage" with the paradoxes of contemporary societies in the period of transition as proper "bricoleurs". *Dragana Antonijević* used Levi-Strauss's concept of oblivion motive and semantic field of "disturbed communication" showing the odds of those styles of thought imposing themselves in the public opinion and discourse, in her work **On the occasion of Levi-Strauss's concept of "disturbed communication": Styles of thought and normative function of disturbed communication structure in the transitional Serbia**. *Zorica Ivanović* in her paper **Kinship as gift exchange: Claude Levi-Strauss and the contemporary interpretation of gift (edness)** considered today's position of Levi-Strauss's concept of kinship and women exchange in the light of modern anthropology of kinship, and concluded that many of Levi-Strauss's ideas concerning this subject are outdated and surpassed. *Daniel Sinani* looked back on the application of structural theory and methods in the research of Serbian folk religion, particularly stressing two national authors (Dušan Bandić and Ivan Kovačević) who followed this approach, in his paper **Structuralism in the studies of national religion in Serbia**. The final paper by *Bojan Žikić*

unfortunately was not presented, for the author was unable to attend the gathering, although the title and the abstract of his paper promised a very interesting and unusual presentation – **What are genres good for? Dividing, distinguishing and classification in the structural and cognitive anthropology through the example of musical culture.**

This scientific conference passed in a good, constructive, amicable and relaxed atmosphere, showing that a gathering dedicated to a "difficult" theoretic paradigm such as structuralism can be very inventive, original and entertaining!

Dragana Antonijević