

Lévi-Strauss, Claude

Claude Lévi-Strauss (klōd lā'vē-strous), 1908–2009, French anthropologist, b. Brussels, Belgium, Ph.D Univ. of Paris, 1948. He carried out research in Brazil from 1935 to 1939. From 1942 to 1945 he taught at the New School for Social Research in New York City, and during this period met and was influenced by Franz Boas and Roman Jakobson. In 1948 he was appointed professor at the Institut d'Ethnologie, Univ. of Paris, and research associate at the National Science Research Fund, Paris. After 1959 he was professor of anthropology at the Collège de France. He was elected to the French Academy in 1973.

One of France's foremost 20th-century thinkers, he revolutionized the study of anthropology, changing the Western world's understanding of civilization and culture. Influenced by developments in linguistics (see structuralism), he founded structural anthropology, a theory that views culture as a system united by reason in which common structures underlie the activities of all societies despite their apparent differences. Analyzing the structure of myths in various cultures, he found universal patterns of thought, behavior, motifs, and structures across the spectrum of human societies. Lévi-Strauss also revealed the intelligence, subtlety, and sophistication of so-called "primitive" societies while refusing to romanticize tribal culture. He noted the disappearance of many of the world's tribal cultures and languages, and warned of the dangers of a modern Western "monoculture." His views greatly influenced such French thinkers as Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault.

His memoir, *Tristes Tropiques* (1955, tr. 1961), was both a critical and popular success. His other works include his first book, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949, tr. 1969), which established his scholarly reputation, and such volumes as *Race and History* (1952), *The Savage Mind* (1962, tr. 1966), *Totemism* (1962, tr. 1964), *Structural Anthropology*, (2 vol., 1958–73, tr. 1963–76), *The View from Afar* (1983, tr. 1985), *The Jealous Potter* (1985, tr. 1988), and *The Story of Lynx* (1991, tr. 1995). *Mythologiques*, often hailed as his masterpiece, is a structural analysis of native mythology in the Americas and consists of *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964, tr. 1969), *From Honey to Ashes* (1967, tr. 1973), *The Origin of Table Manners* (1968, tr. 1978), and *The Naked Man* (1971, tr. 1981).