DIOGENES

Foreword

Diogenes
2015, Vol. 60(2) 3–4
Copyright © ICPHS 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0392192114567613
dio.sagepub.com
SAGE

Claude Lévi-Strauss, the renowned anthropologist, philosopher, and writer, died at the biblical age of nearly 101 years. The author of *Tristes Tropiques*, the interpreter of myths and critic of the modern world, will continue to fascinate readers and to divide them. Lévi-Strauss' oeuvre has become part of the intellectual heritage of the twentieth century.

In 2008 all over the world the centenary of his birth was celebrated with conferences, exhibitions and book presentations. The Collège de France honored the outstanding thinker with three conferences, the Musée du quai Branly devoted a commemorative day to him, and UNESCO held an exhibition of photographs and archives in Paris.

The first tribute came from Naples, where the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, the Ethno-Anthropological Research Centre (CREAM), the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS) and *Diogenes* organized the international conference 'Claude Lévi-Strauss nel centenario della nascita', which was accompanied by a photo exhibition of Marion Kalter. This first event was followed by conferences in Brazil, Chile, China, France, Gabon, Germany, Iceland, India, Mexico, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, and the United States.

Numerous publications have come to mark the centenary. With the volume of the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade Lévi-Strauss was given one of the most prestigious recognitions as a French writer. The UNESCO Courier dedicated a special issue to him, comprised of articles written by the author in the 1950s and 1960s. The Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici paid tribute to Lévi-Strauss with the Italian edition of his articles published in *Diogenes* between 1953 and 2006. The anthology of these texts, published under the title *Claude Lévi-Strauss nel centenario della nascita* with an introduction by Ugo E. M. Fabietti, represents the second in a collection of volumes that contain the most important articles published in *Diogenes* over the past sixty years. The first volume was published in 2006 and it was dedicated to the poet and politician Léopold Sédar Senghor, a symbolic figure of multilateralism and international cooperation. Like Lévi-Strauss, he was among the first authors who published in *Diogenes* and both writers have played a major role in the history of UNESCO. Senghor participated in the founding act of UNESCO as a member of the French delegation and it is with him that we still associate the enthusiasm that characterized the post-war years through the early 1960s, in which most states of the so-called Third World gained independence. Lévi-Strauss was called in 1949 to serve on the committee to draft the *Declaration on Race*, which was approved in 1950. Returning from Pakistan that same year, where he performed – on UNESCO's mandate – research on the state of the social sciences, he participated in the creation of the International Social Science Council, for which he served as Secretary-General from 1952 to 1961. With his 1952 essay *Race and History*, written again at the request of UNESCO, he rejected all forms of racism, whereas with his text *Race and Culture* (1971) he wanted to oppose the other extreme, abstract universalism. The tensions that developed between Lévi-Strauss and UNESCO after his 1971 essay finally dissipated when in 2005 he returned to the organization's headquarters in Paris.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192114567613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Diogenes has published five texts of Lévi-Strauss. According to the guidelines of the journal he wrote in these articles on the developments in anthropological research, its mission, and its limits, expanding the discourse on the possible and desirable transdisciplinary research perspectives. The first article, 'Panorama of Ethnology (1950–1952)', appeared in 1953, followed by the review article 'The Art of Deciphering Symbols' in 1954 and his seminal essay, 'The Problem of Invariance in Anthropology' in 1960. In 1975 *Diogenes* published an excerpt from the article 'Anthropology' that Lévi-Strauss had written for the *Enciclopedia del Novecento*, and in 2006, after a long pause, the journal published the lecture that Lévi-Strauss gave in Paris on November 16, 2005, at the 60th anniversary of UNESCO.

The Italian edition of these texts inspired the conference in Naples and with the publication of the present essays Lévi-Strauss returns once again to *Diogenes*. Linguists, historians, philosophers, and anthropologists gathered at Palazzo Serra di Cassano for a collective reflection on the heritage of the matchless thinker who, some argue, refounded anthropology. During his very long and productive career, Lévi-Strauss explored numerous dimensions of human life. The main issues we encounter already in *Tristes Tropiques*: the question of the disappearance of 'primitive' cultures in the clash with 'civilized' cultures, the difficulty of understanding otherness, his search for the structures that govern the cosmos, the re-foundation of the human sciences, the hubris of humans and the catastrophe of the population growth.

At the end of his enormously wide-ranging investigations, Lévi-Strauss evokes in *Mythologiques* the image of the supreme myth of human history. Since humans became aware of themselves, they have tried with their labors to avert the inevitable fate of all and everything: dissolution into nothingness. However, the law of entropy can only be removed, but not suspended. Religions try to make our awareness of our mortality more bearable. Lévi-Strauss asks humans to bear the thought of the disappearance of humanity itself.

Wolfgang Kaltenbacher

https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192114567613 Published online by Cambridge University Press