

LUCIEN LÉVY-BRUHL OR AN INHERENT AMBIGUITY*

LUCIEN LÉVY-BRUHL OU UMA AMBIGUIDADE ESSENCIAL

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Abstract: Lévy-Bruhl's thought, on the verge between philosophy and anthropology, reappears, misunderstood and underestimated, after nearly a century of neglect. This article intends to start his rehearsal in the history of his reception and the author marks out some guidelines for a reading based on the one given by Emmanuel Levinas in an essay dated 1957, Lévy-Bruhl and contemporary philosophy. According to Levinas, who had been a pupil in Strasburg of Lévy-Bruhl's students, in every page of the lonely writer of the *Carnets* we find the sketch of a new theory about human origin that escapes Structuralism and places in a still unexplored perspective concepts such as conscience, language and social membership. The Greek formalization of human experience that Durkheim did not wished to question had become by then, according to Lévy-Bruhl, too narrow, perhaps we could say too naive to be able to hold the phenomenology of the existence of those other populations, that ethnographers still referred to Europe. The datum of the plurivocity of mental activity, joined to the requirement of the universality of logic thought, meant for Lévy-Bruhl the need of crossing the bonds of the issues of classical philosophy in the same direction where Husserl, in the same years, was proceeding with a new search of essences. The article considers the political and historical situation Lévy-Bruhl worked in and, thanks to some recent studies, in particular those of Dominique Merllié and Frédéric Keck, it analyses the background of the progressive distortion and alienation of his theories in France and in the rest of the world. Using Emmanuel Levinas's hints as guide we proceed then to a survey in the implications of the idea of participation, especially for what concerns a possible re-formulation of the concept of the Unconscious.

Keywords: Lévy Bruhl. Emmanuel Levinas. Participation. Unconscious.

Resumo: Pensamento de Lévy-Bruhl, à beira entre a filosofia ea antropologia, reaparece, incompreendido e subestimado, depois de quase um século de negligência. Este artigo pretende iniciar o seu ensaio na história de sua recepção eo autor assinala algumas orientações para uma leitura com base no que foi dada por Emmanuel Levinas em um ensaio datado de 1957, Lévy-Bruhl ea filosofia contemporânea. De acordo com Levinas, que tinha sido um aluno em Strasburg de estudantes Lévy-Bruhl, em todas as páginas do escritor solitário das cadernetas encontramos o esboço de uma nova teoria sobre a origem humana que escapa Estruturalismo e lugares em alguns conceitos de perspectiva ainda inexploradas tais como membro linguagem, consciência e social. A formalização grega da experiência humana que Durkheim não quis questão tornou-se então, de acordo com Lévy-Bruhl, muito estreito, talvez pudéssemos dizer muito ingênuo para ser capaz de segurar a fenomenologia da existência dessas outras populações, que os etnógrafos ainda se refere à Europa. O dado da plurivocidade da atividade mental, juntou-se à exigência de universalidade do pensamento lógico, destinado a Lévy-Bruhl a necessidade de cruzar as ligações dos problemas da filosofia clássica na mesma direção em que Husserl, nos mesmos anos, foi prosseguir com uma nova pesquisa das essências. O artigo considera a situação política e histórica Lévy-Bruhl trabalhou na e, graças a alguns estudos recentes, em particular as de Dominique Merllié e Keck Frédéric, analisa o fundo da distorção progressiva e alienação de suas teorias na França e no resto do mundo. Usando referências de Emmanuel Levinas como guia, em seguida, proceder a um levantamento nas implicações da idéia de participação, especialmente para o que diz respeito a uma possível reformulação do conceito de Inconsciente.

Palavras-chave: Lévy Bruhl. Emmanuel Levinas. Participação. Inconsciente.

Resumen: Pensamiento de Lévy-Bruhl, el borde entre la filosofía y la antropología, reaparece de nuevo, incomprendido y subestimado, después de casi un siglo de abandono. Este artículo tiene la intención de iniciar su ensayo en la historia de su recepción y el autor muestra algunas pautas para una lectura con base en la dada por Emmanuel Levinas, en un ensayo del año 1957, Lévy-Bruhl y la filosofía contemporánea. Según Levinas, quien había sido discípulo de Estrasburgo de los estudiantes de Lévy-Bruhl, en todas las páginas del escritor solitario de los diarios nos encontramos con el esbozo de una nueva teoría sobre el origen humano que escapa del estructuralismo y de los lugares en los conceptos de perspectiva aún inexplorados tales como los miembros de la conciencia, el lenguaje y lo social. La formalización griega de la experiencia humana que Durkheim no hizo cuestión y se volvió entonces, según Lévy-Bruhl, demasiado ingenuo para ser capaz de mantener la fenomenología de la existencia de esas otras poblaciones, que "los etnógrafos

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todavía se refieren a Europa. El dato de la plurivocidad de la actividad mental, se unió a la exigencia de la universalidad del pensamiento lógico, destinado a Lévy-Bruhl la necesidad de cruzar los lazos de los temas de la filosofía clásica en la misma dirección en que Husserl, en los mismos años, fue continuando con la búsqueda de nuevas pesquisas de las esencias. El artículo considera que la situación política e histórica de Lévy-Bruhl, gracias a algunos estudios recientes, en particular los de Merllié Dominique y Frédéric Keck, que analiza el fondo de la distorsión progresiva y la alienación de sus teorías en Francia y en el resto del mundo. Utilizando las referencias de Emmanuel Levinas como guía a continuación, se procede a un estudio en las implicaciones de la idea de la participación, especialmente por lo que se refiere a la posible reformulación del concepto del inconsciente.

Palabras clave: Lévy Bruhl. Emmanuel Levinas. Participación. Inconsciente.

1 INTRODUÇÃO

*The representation is not
the original gesture
of human soul, but a choice.
Emmanuel Levinas*

In 1930 Hélène Metzger wrote for the magazine «Archeion» a short article entitled *Lévy-Bruhl's philosophy and the history of science*, where she presented the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl with these words:

We believe that it is capable of fully renewing our conception of human intelligence. So as chemists discovered helium in the sun before discovering it on Earth, the author, by studying the Savages, with a long and unexpected detour, laid stress on a steady effect of the proceedings of *our thinking* that until then had escaped even the most farsighted psychologists (METZGER, 1987, p. 125)¹.

A whole generation of French thinkers, formed by Lévy-Bruhl in the Sorbonne during the decades of his teaching would certainly have approved the opinion of Metzger at that time, as our work will try to clarify, since Lévy-Bruhl, philosopher and anthropologist, or better said, anthropologist because philosopher², Director of the Revue Philosophique and designated by Théodule Ribot as his heir, was famous in Europe in those years like Einstein and Freud and in France he enjoyed an unquestionable intellectual prestige. He stood out immediately for the early development of his brilliant intelligence³ at the École Normale and then continued his career at the University at the Faculty of Philosophy along with his friends of nearly the same age Émile Durkheim, Jean Jaurès and Henri Bergson asserting himself immediately as authoritative voice in the convulsive fervor that prompted French culture at a time when the legacy of the Revolution now settled placed social issues before unimaginable.

His involvement in the history of the third Republic was such that you could write a political profile of Lévy-Bruhl as well: born 10th April 1857 in Paris from an Alsatian Jewish family⁴

his participation in the struggle of French socialism was steady and intense and he remained alongside Jean Jaurès from school until the day when the latter was assassinated on 31st July 1914. Together with Marcel Mauss, Léon Blum and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl Herr, he helped to establish the magazine «L'Humanité», for which he wrote under the pseudonym Deuzelle (the two L of Lucien Lévy); he mobilized every resource in the Dreyfus affair, testifying personally at the trial and he wrote important articles in order to oppose the first world war⁵. Member of the Cabinet of his old pupil Albert Thomas at the Undersecretariat and then Ministry for Ammunition, from 1914 he accompanied several times at the front the syndicalist Ben Tillet as interpreter to visit British soldiers⁶. His social commitment was not for Europe only: from 1925 with Mauss and Paul Rivet he managed the Institute of Ethnology founded by Maurice Delafosse, strenuously defending an Ethnology method on field that respected the rights of the populations concerned. For this purpose in the latter part of his life, despite his advanced age, he engaged in a series of conferences that led him to travel around the world.

This interest without respite in the events of his time is nothing more than the corollary of his theoretical work because he was persuaded, as Auguste Comte, of whom he aimed to collect the inheritance⁷, that a real and decisive contribution to the history of ideas has to take into account the link between intellectual and social battle. It was as tribute to both his commitments, and therefore to the meaning of his philosophical project, that at his death 13th March 1939 the whole French culture with its exponents, no matter how close or distant from his positions⁸, paid him the honors due to a Dean.

His old pupils recognized themselves in him, celebrating his friendship and radical intellectual honesty⁹ in the funeral oration and then distinguishing themselves in the French culture

as innovators: Étienne Gilson¹⁰, Maurice Halbwachs, Georges Davy, Henri Wallon, Charles Blondel, Maurice Leenardh and Jacques Maritain, to cite only the most famous ones alongside with his son Henri Lévy-Bruhl. The founders of new schools such as Jean Piaget¹¹ and Edward Evans-Pritchard¹² claimed to be inspired by him; even Durkheim's sociological school, headed by Mauss after the death of the latter, while it envisaged him as dissident, put him among its founders all the same. In the light of his reflection on mentality, Lucien Febvre together with Marc Bloch began in Strasbourg that extraordinary subversion of historiography represented by *l'École des Annales* to which a historian sui generis like Philippe Ariès (1971) was very close; he developed the idea of mentality gathering with acuteness from the provocations of Lévy-Bruhl. The history of science found in his work a lot of essential stimuli to its development: Émile Meyerson was one of his most enthusiastic partisans and Alexandre Koyré (1945, p. 292-293), with words that we will try to clarify later on in these pages, could declare that it was:

a wonderful analysis of this prelogical mentality [...] and of the magic ontology in which it bathes and from which, with great difficulty, and only at times come to detach themselves the «logic» thought and rational ontology. And they remind us that in many respects we are all, just as we are, prelogical primitives¹³.

2 THE "INCIDENT" LÉVY-BRUHL

However, from March 1939 until today¹⁴, inexplicably, the results of the researches of Lévy-Bruhl and the influences they had on his contemporaries and many disciples were abandoned in the best hypothesis by the history of cognitive sciences; therefore it is not easy to find reliable sources unless you engage in lengthy searches: in France as in the rest of the world he is considered a minor character and his theories are deemed an outdated and insignificant stage in the history of anthropology. In the worst and most frequent hypothesis his concepts are cited by divulgators in a distorted and incomplete way: as Dominique Merllié pointed out, who first paid attention to this issue¹⁵, very few are the compendiums of human sciences, encyclopedias¹⁶, glossaries, in which the public can discover authentic information regarding the theses of Lévy-Bruhl, and it frequently happens to find accounts that state almost the opposite of the historical truth that, on the other hand, documents, and above all his published books testify without ambigui-

ty. It is sad, for example, to thus read in a magazine addressed to an African audience:

It is the honor of the French Ethnologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, to have conferred dignity to the scientific common places of European ethnocentrism [...]. In the series of ethnological essays starting with *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (published in 1910), until *La Mentalité Primitive* (work published in 1922 and generally regarded as his magnum opus), Lévy-Bruhl persisted in providing a scientific security to the detachment between Western man and the rest of humanity by proposing the term of "prelogical mentality" to define a way of thinking that he attributed to people and to non-Western breeds. According to Lévy-Bruhl, logic was the prerogative of the white man, closely associated with the Western civilization; in his opinion it was therefore barred by necessity to cultures developed outside this civilization. Racial evolution so construed by Lévy-Bruhl was intended to establish a radical disparity between the West and the rest of humanity, even to the level of mental operations. (ABIOLA IRELE, 2002, p. 83-106)¹⁷.

How we shall easily find out thanks to our tough synthetic examination of his texts¹⁸ allowed here, the image of Lévy-Bruhl painted in this essay cannot coincide with what a careful reader will remember after reading his pages, in which the concern of not nourishing in any way the ethnocentrism of many of his colleagues occupied the first place¹⁹. It is possible therefore that the reputation of Lévy-Bruhl has become so bad that no author considers it necessary to read his writings before mentioning them, contenting themselves instead of repeating uncritically a kind of black legend concerning his figure?

The issue is certainly mysterious and deserves further study. Certainly, as Merllié states, the ostracism of Levi-Strauss, Mauss heir and thus heir of the Durkheimian school, played a big role in his progressive discredit, for as we shall soon see Lévy-Bruhl had detached himself from them, elegantly and firmly asserting his autonomy of thought. No doubt the disdain of Sartre²⁰, who, after an initial enthusiasm felt that every conclusion reached by the research of Lévy-Bruhl was irrelevant to the rest of his philosophy helped to transform him into a dark and marginal thinker. Undeniably the courage with which Sartre performed a self-critique at the end of his life, which will be discussed in more detail later, seemed to the eyes of his detractors an unpardonable weakness, and unquestionably his poor bent to leadership was not in his favor in comparison with Durkheim. Yet this is not enough to explain such an ensemble and refusal to accept the indisputable transparency of his exposition in every published page²¹, denying to listen to the explanations that he affirms, discour-

aged, in a page of the *Carnets* to have lasted thirty years (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 164). According to ourselves only Emmanuel Levinas was authentically able to guess the purpose that crosses the works of Lévy-Bruhl, so as we shall soon see, we shall adopt a Levinasian lens for the rest of our work to find out what we thought the innermost reason of the curse that hit Lévy-Bruhl for nearly a century now. Perhaps it is at stake in this "curse", as defined by Merleau-Ponty, another cause as well as all those listed above. A more hidden one inherent to the deepest dimension of the writing of Lévy-Bruhl.

3 MENS NON OMNIBUS UNA, NEC DIVERSA TAMEN

If we plunge ourselves in the reading of his writings without fear of the taboo that surrounds them we realize that his prose so accurate and enjoyable tracks, increasingly accurate for each of his essays, the lines of a new form of mind, that just starting from his unyielding positivist faith finds at the bottom of every concept employed the torment of an elusive strangeness, and therefore forbids every claim of systematization on the cognitive world of human beings to the dialectical reason. Since the beginning of his research he stated that the study of rites and superstitions, customs relating to marriage, initiation of "inferior societies", introduces us to forms of imagination, and even combination of judgment and reasoning that our psychology completely ignores. Yet he never agreed to relegate these psychic structures in an impasse of evolution, considering them a challenge to our representative logic, according to a principle of method that is summarized in a syllogism extremely immediate. If the Primitives are humans, that of which Lévy-Bruhl was persuaded without any distinction²², and if their logic is actually different from ours, then they show us a hidden face of our own logic and put a question unfathomable and inescapable about ourselves. This is mainly what Durkheim and his school were unable to accept, and refused to hand down: the aporetic knot that emerges where Lévy-Bruhl claimed the dizzying possibility of a logical ambiguity rooted in the human mind. *Inherent ambiguity*²³, for which all attempts to timely exposure become paradox, and it is emblematic in this sense, the maxim that Paul Landowski imprinted on a medal engraved for Lévy-Bruhl in 1937: *mens non omnibus una,*

*nec diversa tamen*²⁴. This maxim should sum up the theoretical gain that the philosopher of *Mentalité primitive* offered to the history of human sciences: his project unfolds in the space of this *tamen*, who becomes a sort of stop, to whose breaking strength pure reason must submit.

According to Lévy-Bruhl (1970, p. 69) in fact "the Primitives see with our own eyes – do not perceive with our own intelligence". The pause that interrupts this phrase, adversative and explanatory together, insinuates a division in the categorical universe thus depriving it of power that empties legislative reason from its ambition to provide a complete formal definition of human cognitive processes. In the perspective of Lévy-Bruhl certainly no kind of idealism can take a look at the psychic life in a way to express it in its completion, but the pause in a.m. maxim is not deconstructive only, it is not a retreat of thought that gives up seeking one semantics for the intellectual life of all human beings: *una mens*, indeed. It is a suspension that crops white space again, as if it was the opening of a threshold: the threshold of a new heuristic model that draws in the map of things made by the human intelligence the simultaneity of two spirits ever present that perceive and between them the spiritual entity must conquer his own identity that is not given already. How can Lévy-Bruhl support a thesis like this?

15th February 1923 during the speech pronounced for the meeting of the philosophical society that was requesting him to state publicly the conclusions he had reached in *La Mentalité Primitive*, he mentions

the facts observed in a large number of inferior societies, for example: 1st the common characteristics of the vocabulary and structure of their languages, although different between them. 2nd their numbering proceedings. 3rd their aversion to cursive operations of the mind, and the concrete nature of their generalizations. 4th their indifference to second causes and their immediate application, under all circumstances, to mystical causes. 5th the importance that the "Primitives" attach to divination, in all its forms. 6th their interpretation of accidents, misfortunes, prodigious facts, "bad death". 7th their misanthropy, etc. (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1923, p. 633).²⁵

And immediately below he draws the following conclusions:

without prolonging this enumeration, it seems that the analysis of the facts confirms the hypothesis that primitive mentality has its own orientation and habits. *Neither space nor time, nor causality would be it what they are for us*. In short, for this mystical and prelogical mentality, not only the content but the very paradigms of experience do not seem to coincide exactly with our own (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1923, p. 633).

His statement that the Primitives do not perceive with our own intelligence begins then to clear: it is an intellectual structure arising from different mental habits, in all their complexity, what distinguishes them from us, from the mindset of "the adult and civilized white man"²⁶, as modeled on the ideal of Greek *logos*. The thesis of Lévy-Bruhl is oriented in the same direction of what Mauss claimed about *mana*: "[...] it goes without saying that such a notion has no reason to exist outside society, that it is absurd from the point of view of pure reason, and that it flows solely from the operation of collective life"²⁷ (MAUSS, 1965). Both Lévy-Bruhl and Mauss stress the evidence of an actual categorical heterogeneity between primitive logic and our own, which invests the fundamental cognitive functions such as space, time and causality; their lack of homogeneity in them and in ourselves pushes us to consider "absurd" notions that play a central role in their mental organization.

However, Lévy-Bruhl attaches to the difference between the two mentalities a value that transcends what importance Mauss was conferring, even defending like him the thesis that the primitive mentality gravitates exclusively in the circle of collective representation. He writes at the margin of Bergson's reflection about the cognitive function of time:

Bergson's well-known theory which requires us to conceive of time as a homogeneous quantum by fusing living duration and space, which is such a quantum, does not seem applicable to primitive mentality. It is only in races which are already somewhat developed, when the mystic preconnections become weak and tend to be dissociated, when the habit of paying attention to second causes and their effects is growing stronger, that space becomes homogeneous in the representations, and time tends to become so too. Thus the limits of our experience are sketched little by little, are strengthened and become fixed. Much later, when reflection leads us to make these ideas our own, we are tempted to believe that they are its constituent elements—innate, as the philosophers used to say. The observation and analysis of the collective representations of inferior races are far from confirming this hypothesis. (LEVY-BRUHL, 1966, p. 83).

It seems to me that in this passage there is a key essential to grasp the radicalism of the prospect of Lévy-Bruhl, and therefore to get closer to the nature of the difference between the two mentalities as he intended it: it is legitimate, he states, to confirm or deny a hypothesis about "our" notion of time through the use of Primitive experience.

The majority of the false notions circulating about the books of Lévy-Bruhl concern the fact that he postulated an unbridgeable gap

between the mentality of primitives and ours. According to some, as we saw above, he would have done so in a shameless ethnocentric perspective, according to others, more benevolent, his emphasis on the distance between the primitive and the white man would have been moved by a naive presumption to better guarantee their singularity to Primitives, except for withdrawing everything in the draft of the *Carnets*, when the tide of anti-Semitism showed that non including relativism could imply mortal perils for the minorities considered radically separated.

However, from what we read on the concept of time we discover something completely different: the passage just quoted shows that these rumors are not true, that these are only superficial interpretations incapable to grasp the real purpose of Lévy-Bruhl when he pointed out the differences between the mentality of the so-called inferior societies and the mentality of "civilized" people. First of all from his words it is clear that he first thought that philosophical inquiry, in this case that of Bergson, must understand as its subject the existence of "Savages" of humans at ethnological level, and question them as privileged witnesses of humanity if he wants to achieve a genuine increase in the penetration of human experience, if it wishes to strive towards the revelation of one essence able to discern the true nature of the human: "their" experience rises to the rank of touchstone in the verification of the logical validity of Bergson's thesis about space and time, the most primary coordinate of each psychic subject. Lévy-Bruhl, wrote this in 1922, in an epoch when "Savages" were considered by the majority of Europeans merely as subhuman beings or not yet humans.

Lévy-Bruhl invented the term and concept of *mentality*, which Durkheim and Mauss always regarded with distrust, but that has since become common in every language. In the concept of mentality Lévy-Bruhl defines the coordinates of space in which he places its investigation and Bruno Karsenti, in presenting the latest edition of the *Carnets* describes them with great effectiveness. First, says Karsenti, the idea of mentality is founded on a persuasion that Lévy-Bruhl shares with the durkheimian school:

Tylor, Frazer and Lang based their analysis on that axiom that human intelligence is everywhere and always identical to itself, so that it is always possible to explain its different manifestations, dating back to the principles that define this identity. What the French sociological school, in the path traced by Dur-

kheim, has the merit to establish is that the group, in its specific morphology, acts as a differentiator that comes to affect even forms of intelligence. [...] To put it differently, it is necessary to proceed in this field, as well according to a *comparative* method. (KARSENTI, 1998, p. XI).

Secondly, and this is the specificity of his theory that will detach him gradually from the durkheimian orthodoxy, Lévy-Bruhl, supports a second argument, describing in detail the notion of mentality, according to which:

There is no possibility of comparison if not on the basis of a *separation*. Again: the fact of not reducing the sets of collective representations to a single type lead to consider these collections as distinct types. [...] Collective representations should be considered in their difference, and to the extent that they aggregate in units of different types, i.e. different mentalities [...]. The purpose is therefore primarily to draw a line intended to prevent any reductionism (KARSENTI, 1998, p. XI).

It is the singularity of each human group and human groups of different ages, that Lévy-Bruhl intends therefore to preserve, in a theoretical commitment that appears really extraordinary within the scientific community of the period in which he conducted his own researches. The goal of "the difficult position of Lévy-Bruhl, namely that the plurality comes to determine every mind, and that the unit is, *at every point* an illusion" (KARSENTI, 1998, p. VII), is not equivalent to preach a sort of ethnological relativism, because in wondering if "thinking is not an operation essentially alien to itself, multiple in itself" (KARSENTI, 1998, p. VII), Lévy-Bruhl did not sought to question the unity of the human mind and thus the identical dignity of all people, regardless of their particular mentality. Yet with the utmost lucidity Karsenti says:

To admit the diversity of channels that logic assumes is not denying its unity, in the same way that talking about Primitives is not equivalent to break down the concept of humanity. Actually we have to think in reverse. The fact that a reality presents itself under the appearance of diversity commits us to look for its reasons at a level where only an analysis focused on the element of difference is able to make it re-emerge. (KARSENTI, 1998, p. XIII).

Lévy-Bruhl, Karsenti states, "thus acting reached a level of mental reality hitherto concealed, and was in a position to unveil the deepest aspects of the logic process without erasing their plurivalence. [...] the thesis of the unity of the spirit was discussed only to be re-established on another plane, in which the distinction of its modes of activity becomes

conceivable" (KARSENTI, 1998, p. XIV). It seems to us that this reading of Karsenti is supported by every work of Lévy-Bruhl, and we therefore wonder how can the latter have dared to take a road so innovative and solitary in the scene of anthropology that was emerging in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century?

4 A CHOICE PRIOR TO ALL LOGIC

In 1957 Emmanuel Levinas in an article²⁸ written for the monographic number of the *Revue Philosophique* dedicated to Lévy-Bruhl gave an answer to this question which we feel is the best ever given, although this reply is mostly unknown as well or barely acknowledged by the divulgators of the anthropology of Lévy-Bruhl. Moving from a close confrontation with the text of whom had been the master of his masters, Levinas came to show that identifying, analyzing and demonstrating the possibility of two different logical dimensions in the human psyche Lévy-Bruhl brought his personal contribution to the philosophical studies in which the European philosophy of the time was engaged. According to Levinas, the discovery of primitive mentality fulfils the aim of Lévy-Bruhl to understand how we really know²⁹ and from his point of view searching for the authenticity of human knowledge Lévy-Bruhl assigns a particular primacy to primitive logic: If we are not satisfied with the epistemological process as described by Western philosophy over the centuries, we realize that "the movement towards the object rests upon a deeper motion that is more visible in the primitive mentality than in ours" (LEVINAS, 1957, p. 568). Levinas quotes in support of his reading of Lévy-Bruhl some passages of the *Carnets*, in particular he refers to some passages in the *Carnets* which shows clearly that in the perspective of the latter "there is a mystical mentality more evident and more easily observable by the «Primitives» than in our society, but present in every human mind" (LEVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 131). Further, more explicitly:

I do not maintain [...] that there is a mentality owned by "Primitives". There is in their mentality a considerable part that is in common with ours. In parallel there is in the mentality of our society a part (more or less conspicuous, depending on conditions, beliefs, institutions, social classes, etc.), which is common for it to the "Primitives". You may, for convenience of exposition, detach this part from the rest, and in order to describe and analyze it more easily, prefer to consider it in the "Savages", retaining for it the designation of primitive mentality, but being fully aware that it is something human that you meet not only in these primitive societies, but in the others as well. (LEVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 165).

Studying primitive mentality means for Lévy-Bruhl to finally reveal how humans know, because only in the experience of the Primitives we can meet our own humanity in its original virtual duplicity and therefore we can see deep inside ourselves³⁰ looking at them as in a mirror. Levinas looking into what we thought to be the most subversive principle of the method by which Lévy-Bruhl approached the existence of the Primitives, finds its foundation in a statement that seems even more revolutionary: "representation is not the original gesture of human soul, but a choice" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1929, p. 567). A choice that logic declined according to "our" version had and has to make incessantly in the present simultaneity of the two different categorical sets pertaining to intelligence. They are the result of a choice just because, as it is essential to stress here, both for us and for inferior societies the representative logic on which the West had based its own history remains always a *possible* option: Lévy-Bruhl claimed that Primitives are organized in a world not regulated by concept even if "the possibility of representation is not excluded: that for which they are actually humans." (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 108). Representation is not a prerogative of white men, there is no doubt according to Lévy-Bruhl that when it may be of advantage for them the "Savages" do not hesitate to use our own cognitive processes:

like us, when they put a pan full of water on the fire, they expect it to warm up and finally to boil. For them, as for us, there are, in large numbers, sequences of regular events and they count on this regularity as we do: their uses and their techniques are a proof of it. If however, there is a difference between their mental attitude and ours, what is it? This is precisely the question that we put to ourselves. (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 37).³¹

What is the difference and what is therefore the law that in this difference supports primitive mentality? "Our" logic comes to truly understand itself only when it is free to ask this same question, when it can get in touch with mental habits that do not coincide with ours. This happens only if they are not previously reduced to insignificance, but if they are welcomed even if their presence is disturbing, emerging as a puzzle that forces us to confess a double bottom in our massive categorical universe. Then "our" logic finds its true essence, inasmuch as it is able to retrace its origins: to acknowledge the choice that created it and which involves in the alleged clarity of the concept the hidden shadow of another model of intelligence and ultimately of humanity.

The extraordinary ability of Lévy-Bruhl to deepen the paradox of this ambiguity with each new publication and to support it opposing its reduction to a system in an extremely complicated balance between representative logic and the thousand of real events of the daily life of "Savages"; it is based on his intent to practice anthropology primarily as a natural intensification of philosophy. He had no fear to reach conclusions that might prove to be useless for the purpose of a "use"³² of anthropology in horizons other than those of pure research and, at the same time, which might deprive of its foundations the Thomistic-Cartesian³³ ontology on which rested the philosophical reflection of that period in France. The aim of his researches is in conclusion ontological, as pointed out by Levinas in his essay dated 1957 in which he states that for Lévy-Bruhl's thesis

"the point is not, of course, to return to the same creed of the Primitives, but to let emerge structures of the mind that make this belief possible and, when all's said and done, ways of being – an ontology – that makes similar structures possible (LEVINAS, 1957, p. 558).

Therefore according to Levinas there is an ontological core at the heart of the study of Lévy-Bruhl, in the direction of a radical contestation of Greek ontology and of the different results it had produced down the centuries in the history of European philosophy: Levinas states that he leads thought to "the ruin of representation" (LEVINAS, 1957, p. 558). What does it mean? Lévy-Bruhl certainly tries to circumscribe *una mens*, he seeks just one eidetic order that could be able to give an account of the discontinuity that separates us from the mind of the Primitives, but his research is very close to that of Husserl's phenomenology³⁴, which repudiates any explicit or implicit idealism. His intention to preserve *the experience*³⁵ of the Primitives without reducing it beforehand in the configuration that the observer wants to lay on it, lead him to seek evidences, to reason about facts in which the difference between mental habits is made manifest, thus he can declare:

when I speak without any preliminary critique of mental habits different from ours in the Primitives, this language implies a parallelism that I have not expressly ascertained, and that, put in this way, so to speak, a priori, risks to become embarrassing; in fact, in this case we will wonder how the mental habits of "Primitives" would then have been deleted to make space for others. Uncalled-for difficulty, as the assumption involved in this expression. It would be a step forward if, instead of assuming these «primitive» mental habits, you would abandon the idea, at

least temporarily in order to examine the facts as far as possible without any preconceived idea. (LEVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 38).

The concern of viewing in his reflection exclusively the original integrity of primitive thought, allowed Lévy-Bruhl to oppose the ethnocentrism of idealistic origin that Tylor and Frazer bequeathed to British anthropology. Their theories ascribed the singularity of the primitive logic to a malfunction of their minds, as if they were children who give a false answer that white men knows instead thus preventing an authentic encounter with primitive mentality counteracting its disruptiveness. So we read in the *La Mentalité primitive*:

As long as we assume that their minds are orientated like our own, that they react as ours do to the impressions made upon them, we assume, by implication, that they should reason and reflect as ours do with regard to the phenomena and entities of the known world. But we agree that as a matter of fact they neither reason nor reflect thus, and to explain this apparent anomaly we make use of a number of different hypotheses, such as the feebleness and torpidity of their minds, their perplexity, childlike ignorance, stupidity, etc., none of which take the facts sufficiently into account. Let us abandon this position and rid our minds of all preconceived ideas in entering upon an objective study on primitive mentality, in the way in which it manifests itself in the institutions of uncivilized races or in the collective ideas from which these institutions are derived. Then we shall no longer define the mental activity of primitives beforehand as a rudimentary form of our own, and consider it childish and almost pathological. On the contrary, it will appear to be normal under the conditions in which it is employed, to be both complex and developed in its own way. By ceasing to connect it with a type which is not its own, and trying to determine its functioning solely according to the manifestations peculiar to it, we may hope that our description and analysis of it will not misrepresent its nature. (LEVY-BRUHL, 1966, p. 18-19).

At the same time, his "phenomenological" vocation, allowed Lévy-Bruhl not to stop at the revelation in a sociological key of collective representations³⁶, shared with Durkheim and his school. He instead, in the interdisciplinary tradition of his teaching, wished to discover its essential meaning and wanted to inscribe the collective representation in that question of meaning that philosophy asks to the economy of human facts without confining itself to a specific sphere. In this sense, the work of Lévy-Bruhl marked a truly epistemic break *ante litteram* in the human sciences just constituted as such, but above all it lead the way to a new logical formalization³⁷ of the comments provided by anthropology, that could replace the one already made by Greek metaphysics, in which circle the activity of Durkheim and his followers still continued to move. A new logical formalization that in the name of the recognition

through the "absurd" dimension of the Primitives carried out by anthropology knew how to advance the issues of a humanity finally open to otherness and thus embodied in time, no longer forced to give herself up in the purity of timeless *noesis*, where Greek logic still had to remain.

5 A THIRD OPTION

Many contemporary philosophers of Lévy-Bruhl (Bergson³⁸, Husserl, Rosenzweig, Wittgenstein to cite only the most well-known³⁹), strived in their investigations to operate the same a.m. "ruin of representation", they aimed at being able to question experiential data so as to circumscribe the new notion of a universal that sheltered an irreducible and constitutive historicity. However they were unable to compete directly with ethnological data according to the philosophical method started by Lévy-Bruhl, who devoted decades to the examination of testimonies received from remote latitudes. We can say that he proceeded beyond Husserl phenomenology where, as we have seen, he sensed that the timeless story of the phenomena of bipresence, of metamorphosis, of inseparability between totemic animals and members of the clan, spells and possessions, this time of the Primitives is the only one able to reveal to us the hidden nature of the historical time we live in. First he tried to grant logic dignity to the ambiguity of what we might describe as a "universal dynamic"⁴⁰ in which is finally kept the enigmatic face of humanity prior to history, so as to advance towards a science of the mind in which we can combine the laws of "our" logic and those of the other "irrational" logic in a dynamic universalisation that constantly crosses the human, and of which "inferior societies" were in the eyes of Europeans at the beginning of last century the most alarming incarnation.

For all these reasons, he suffered severely from the destabilizing effect that his explicit double membership provoked both among philosophers, who would only consider him an anthropologist and among his contemporary anthropologists⁴¹, the majority of whom, like Durkheim, although they were trained to philosophy, had chosen not to "transfer" the revelations of ethnology, deciding not to translate from one language to another. Lévy-Bruhl from its frontier position sought tirelessly interlocutors⁴², always tried to explain

himself, to question his positions, to accept criticism, fully aware of the risky journey he had taken and of the audacity of his claim, and so nearly labyrinthine in the refinement of his precautionary convolutions. But he found no adequate compliance, except in very few among his colleagues and disciples who sincerely admired him⁴³. He was never really understood, in an epoch where anthropologists were basically asked fast sociopolitical reading keys. This difficulty of understanding was from the beginning the major obstacle of his work and it resulted in the gaps and misunderstandings that were handed down while the distinctions between the two languages, that of philosophy and anthropology were broadening, making them strangers as time went by, while Lévy-Bruhl thought they were to be understood together. He had founded no schools and after his death the powerful durkheimian school took over and decreed the final disappearance of the project for which Lévy-Bruhl had worked tirelessly: an Ethnology on the field that meets the same boosts of meaning that regulated twentieth-century philosophy, looking for that *una mens* that *tamen* never fails to accompany. An anthropology project that answers to the appeals of a universal "dynamically" declined as we already saw and through which we can declare fully human in his difference each cognitive style that belongs to the human, without losing its regulating ideality.

For this reason we think that Lévy-Bruhl's project is of vital importance today: the essential ambiguity to which his works forces reason affects, as we said before, both antithetical cognitive paradigms of ethnocentric evolutionism, implicit in the durkheimian idealism⁴⁴ and the structuralist relativism, that suggested and still suggests in alternative to evolutionism a more or less refined juxtaposition between the different conceptual universes in which our mind and that of the "Savages" arrange themselves without searching for a common root in the human. Refusing to choose between one or the other of these paradigms, Lévy-Bruhl suggested a third option to anthropology because he found in both of them the lack of a genuine perception of the humanity of the other, which turned in the preclusion of the *experience* of others i.e., what will be clearer at the end of this work, of what we might call the unconditional surrender to his inviolable dignity.

As mentioned above, it was the space of a threshold that he attempted to conquer with his own critical reflection, on the heated

ground of the battle of ideas at the turn of two centuries in Europe. That space has not yet being rediscovered and it might turn to be a vital space in the world of human relationships were we are currently acting. It could allow, after almost a century, the new course of anthropology that Lévy-Bruhl wished: if finally understood, the difference between mentalities as he genuinely intended it could produce an effective transformation in the intellectual attitude still very ethnocentric that the "white man" has never truly abandoned. Unlike the recent past in which he wrote, today "primitive mentality" is no longer related to us by tales of missionaries and colonial officials, but we meet it on sidewalks all over Europe in flesh and bones and in the footsteps of men and women forced to flee from distant lands of the earth. In the schools our children sit next to them, and come back to tell us what they eat; how they dress and speak, what they believe is true. Increasingly often however we fail to acknowledge equal logic dignity to their and our truth, so different and so apparently distant in the evolution line of civilization.

Evolutionism declined according to the Vulgate of Darwinian natural selection is hidden well concealed in the xenophobic discourse that speaks inside each of us when we feel threatened: "we" built civilization, therefore our rights weight more than "theirs", because they failed to keep up with the technological development the world is living in. Evolutionism so understood⁴⁵ becomes a mental scheme in which it is impossible to recognize *another* in the authenticity of his presence, so much as to make irrelevant the reasons of despair that led these masses toward us. Irrelevant, insignificant, not because injustice in itself is no concern of us but, far worse, because to our eyes *this* injustice is not acknowledged unless as an inevitable corollary of the cultural gap that defines "their" existence in the evolutionary scale: not true injustice then, because suffered by non-humanity that ultimately marks each step outdone with respect to "us" leader of humanity, that we are on top and continue to rise, and that cannot and must not constitutively and in this evolutionary perspective turn back and take care of them. Unfortunately for the human dignity of the numerous others that often come from mental habits that frighten us because unknown, it does not seem that the recent history of anthropology was able to offer any instrument of rational defense and real use once the researches of Lévy-Bruhl were exorcised.

In what way then could the theoretical position that Lévy-Bruhl tries to circumscribe in his work allow to reject the evolutionary relativist Weltanschauung that secretly conditions our daily relationships and demonstrate in its atypical logic the equal dignity of each human person regardless of the cognitive performances he manifests?

6 THE INHERENT AMBIGUITY OF HUMAN LOGIC: simultaneity of participation and non-contradiction

In 1928 it appeared in the «Revue Philosophique» a text by Henri Wallon, father of the children psychology in France. He writes:

Perhaps we use too much, speaking of the Primitives, this statement that claims that they would be insensitive to the principle of non-contradiction. If it were really contradictory or inconsistent, their thought could not exist, because thinking is nothing if it does not set a relation [...]. There is no thought that does not postulate a doubling, because at the bottom of every thought there is the assertion of a relationship. Since the thought of the Primitives is organized, it is necessary that it has certain modes that allow it to double itself in front of its immediate and current content. (WALLON, 1928, p. 82-109).

In this passage of Wallon, which will become later the dialectical nucleus of a specific theory on children development⁴⁶, the teaching of his master Lévy-Bruhl echoes distilled in a few lines, and in it we can find in a highly effective synthesis the main points of the new logic that Lévy-Bruhl attempted to compose. Trying to understand it we will be able to resume and explain in a better way what we said so far so as to show the reasons of the new opportunity that a re-reading of the philosophical and anthropological works of Lévy-Bruhl could represent for the future of human sciences.

Does the principle of non-contradiction live in the mind of the Primitives to a different title than in the mind of "white adult and civilized men"? This is the problem that lies underneath Wallon's declaration. Since their first contacts with the "Savages", ethnographers who came from Europe and were acting on site failed to provide a unique response and Lévy-Bruhl, looking into endless amounts of examining reports on the "inferior" people, invented the fiercely challenged⁴⁷ term *prelogical* to describe what appeared to be a mentality different by nature from the European one; he then preferred the words *participation and mystic*⁴⁸ and eventually could be replaced by *affective category of the supernatural* in the Carnets. All terms comes from his earliest studies and aimed at describing the same

logical dimension of the Primitives which, as we already pointed out, according to Durkheim is ruled almost exclusively from collective representations, and therefore cannot be contained in the permanently set standards of Cartesian gnoseology for the contact between human mind and reality. The ultimate objective of Lévy-Bruhl is therefore the gathering of the cognitive *proprium* of those collective representations that differ from *ours*, for the purpose of finding again the lost foundation of our own logic: primitive mentality, or better as he senses the mentality "of those men we call very improperly primitive and that are at the same time so far and so close." (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1966, p. 5). is a witness "in flesh and blood" of that foundation and it is not in forgotten places of the earth but in the present of each of our cognitive processes.

What is then the nature of those collective representations such as Lévy-Bruhl intend them and that we defined with Levinas the "ruin of representation"? In *Les Fonctions mentales* Lévy-Bruhl writes that for human beings of the inferior societies:

The object is not simply understood by the mind in the form of ideas or images; Depending on the circumstances, terror, hope, *sacer horror*, the need and the intense desire to join in a common essence, the appeal addressed to a protecting power are the soul of these depictions and make them from time to time lovable, fearful, or properly sacred for those who are initiated to them [...]. This subject [...] will never appear in the form of a colorless and indifferent image. (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1970, p. 138).

The "representations" of the Primitives, Lévy-Bruhl maintains this term, although by that time it is connoted for him by a fully original value, foresee in their inside the primacy of emotional or dynamic elements which pervade them. The participatory dimension constitutes the positivity of the experience of reality pertaining to the primitive human being and, therefore, for the latter, the condition of transcendence possibility in the beings he meets. Participation is the mystic law that regulates the life and death of beings and objects. The individual who sticks to the group is deprived of autonomy, he has no faculty to decide about himself and what surrounds him: the law of participation depends on the knowledge, typical of "Savages", and constantly bears a mystical influence, having to deal with the numerous and powerful spiritual forces continually active. Therefore mental activity at ethnological level does not appear a merely intellectual phenomenon. On the contrary what belongs to the sphere of concept is unyieldingly

mixed with extratheoretical elements and even oriented by them: the access to the real cannot do without them and occurs through them so that "the causal links that constitute the very frame of nature, the foundation of its reality and its stability, have very little interest in the eyes of the Primitives." (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1966, p. 22).

Now, as it is clear from the passage of Wallon, which we can now return to, in the hypothesis of Lévy-Bruhl, exactly where it underlines the difference between the mental habits of Primitives and our own, the dimension of the principle of participatory nature that holds the psychic life of inferior societies cannot nevertheless cut out the operation of the principle of non-contradiction, as defined by Aristotle's metaphysics. According to Lévy-Bruhl, therefore, faced with the Savages we are not confronted by a discontinuity between "our" and "their" logic, but rather, owing to the incontrovertible fact that their reasoning appears oriented in conformity with conditions which are not "ours", we are in the presence of a discontinuity inside human logic as such. According to Lévy-Bruhl, starting from the data that the examination of "inferior societies" allow us to gather we infer that the possibility of human logic to accept formal representation comes paradoxically from the same dimension of participation. Why can we state this?

We find the answer if we understand what Wallon meant and was able to hand down to us, one of the few, about the work of the master: in the logic of Primitives, according to Lévy-Bruhl, the principle of non-contradiction⁴⁹ cannot but remain always virtually present because, first of all Primitives *know* inasmuch as their direct look on things is mediated, is reflected, because it is expressed at any rate in a language. This is the meaning of the affirmation of Wallon, which resounds with phenomenological echoes, for which "there is no thought that does not postulates a doubling", that is not the assertion of a relationship. Language, which creates the relationship between things and the images of things, and allows us to discover their meaning, is what, according to Wallon, "doubles" reality into a coherent structure, which frames it into a world. This process happens as much to "wild" as to "white" people, so that all primitive language could be translated into any European language of the colonizers⁵⁰. Primitives have therefore clearly at hand the inner logic of a conceptual system that arranges those notions that seem absurd to the European in a verbal universe able to express them.

This is a major point in Lévy-Bruhl's study: the evidence of the simultaneity of two laws, participatory and representative, in the minds of Primitives is given by their words that like ours can answer to the principle of non-contradiction, even in the dimension of participation, and therefore in the end prove to be true or false: despite the considerable differences that separate their languages from ours the translation is possible between two reference codes to a real world.

Unfortunately we cannot deal here with the issue of Primitives language as addressed by Lévy-Bruhl in fascinating pages: it deserves a separate and thoroughly study⁵¹. It is therefore the presence of the referential structure of language, common to every human being, that finally establishes the thesis of logic ambiguity, that, as we pointed out from the beginning, inhabits the mind of Primitives according to Lévy-Bruhl. Consequently they, whilst subjected psychically to the rules of a universe controlled by collective representation, cannot escape the law of non-contradiction, because they express themselves in words as we do. Now, how can he claim that this same ambiguity lies in the mind of "white men"?

That is the way: Primitives, we already saw, do not represent for Lévy-Bruhl the "find" of a surpassed stage in the evolution, inexplicably escaped to natural selection, but they are the evidence of a cognitive *choice* that Europeans had progressively abandoned as they organized themselves in social forms in which singularity and independence from the group were conquering an increasing value, but that is nevertheless innate and does not cease to manifest itself in some areas where the law of participation had retained its primacy. In 1910 Lévy-Bruhl stated about it:

Also in our society the representations and the ties of representation dominated by the law of participation are far from disappeared. More or less independent, more or less manipulated, they exist side by side with those who obey the laws of logic. The intellect itself tends towards a logical unit and proclaims the need of it. But our mental activity is both rational and irrational. Prelogic and Mysticism coexist with logic [...]. And if it is true that our mental activity is logical and prelogical at the same time, the story of religious dogma and philosophical systems can now lights up with a new day. (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1970, p. 454).

Let's turn again to the essay of Levinas dated 1957 in order to clarify this crucial thesis of Lévy-Bruhl. Levinas (1957, p. 568) writes that:

Human mind does not depends on an external situation only – climate, race, institution, or even acquired mental habits that would distort natural light – but it is in itself addition, that it emerges from an ambiva-

lent possibility of turning towards conceptual relationships or remaining bound to *participation* relations.

According to Levinas conceptual relations would therefore prove a choice that only later on opposes itself to the original data of participation relations: you can turn toward the concept or *linger*, remain in the previous condition, in the participation relationship. If, as we state again, for Primitives the objectifying representation, to which the history of philosophy assigned the function of an unavoidable *medium* of knowledge, does not guarantee access to reality, if abstractive representation is not considered by the psychic structure through which the primitive human being relates itself to being, this involves a fundamental consequence in Lévy-Bruhl, as Levinas clears: the vanity of any claim of absoluteness in logos. We had already introduced this point, on which Levinas (1957, p. 557) further continues:

this explosion of categories breaks with that representation which founded the whole psychological life and with the substance that supported being. The analyses of Lévy-Bruhl describe an experience that is not cast in those categories, that from Aristotle to Kant – and despite nuances – pretended to influence experience [...] Lévy-Bruhl precisely questions the alleged need for these categories for the possibility of experience. He describes an experience that makes fun of causality, substance, reciprocity, as of space and time, of those conditions of each “possible object”.

Now, in order to finally reach the goal we had set, we wonder as follows: to what extent the discovery of this *inherent ambiguity* in the original frame of human logic detected together with Lévy-Bruhl should mean a new wealth for anthropology?

7 INDIVIDUALITY AND MYSTICAL PARTICIPATION

Let's return for the last time to Wallon's passage to see that in his deepest level we found the most surprising novelty announced by the work of Lévy-Bruhl: the discovery of a differential quality of *feeling* in the two cognitive paradigms of representative abstraction and participation; differential quality destined to become along the way of his investigations a new principle of meaning that, according to Wallon, leads us to the bottom of each “thought”, understood as “the structure of a relation”. To regard every thought as the frame of a relationship means discovering its intentional structure, a notion which once again in Lévy-Bruhl is extremely close to that of Husserl. The affirmation of ambiguity, the nec-

essary overlap between the principle of non-contradiction, which regulates language, and the principle of participation which governs collective representations where the Primitives are immersed, expresses itself, according to Lévy-Bruhl, in the possibility of a difference in mental operations between Primitives and “white men” not only at representation level, but even more at the originate contact with the real, at that intentionality, which is sensation. He declares:

we may even risk to affirm that [...] the presence and strength of mystical elements in the representation makes possible for Primitives, in spite of appearances, *not to perceive things in our own way*. (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1990, p. 176).

Until the last page of his *Carnets* Lévy-Bruhl attempted to make accessible to its readers this result, which has nothing to do with ethnocentric claims⁵². Since thought is in the first place a relation structure, intentionality, before investigating the difference between the two versions of human logic at concept level it is necessary to discover that difference already at the level of perceptive-cognitive systems of thoughtless level, where, according to one or the other of the two possible psychic alternatives for human beings, i.e. representation and participation, even the cognitive functions of sensory content selection would be differently declined, of relationship in the original intuition of space and time, of comparison, identity [...] in other words the cognitive functions that play a role in the most basic perception.

To try to understand the value of all this for Lévy-Bruhl, we shall examine for example the perception of identity, to which that of space is directly linked: individual objects that the formal logic of representation exhibits as original data do not exist in the experience of Primitives described by Lévy-Bruhl, unless inextricably associated with other objects, melted in what Levinas in his precious article repeatedly cited indicates how a “merge, mysterious and inexplicable, of beings that lose and retain their identity at the same time.” (LEVINAS, 1957, p. 561). Lévy-Bruhl (1990, p. 176-177) repeats this idea very often:

Unity, plurality, duality, are not primitive thinking categories or usual description of objects having the same meaning that we assign to them. We are used to an abstract consideration of numbers and their relations. The logic of the opposition between one and many is so familiar for us, since our childhood, as is the opposition between the identical and the different. Instead primitive mentality [...] opposes not, as we do, unity to that which is not unity [...] many primitive languages do not bother to distinguish be-

tween singular and plural: they are content to do so when it seems absolutely necessary.

In the progress of his research Lévy-Bruhl comes to change the notion of collective representation in this new perspective, which he shared with the durkheimian school: as we just pointed out it became so powerful according to his analyses to affect even perceptive life, so that in the mind of a human being the intensity of the dependence from the group one belongs to is such that it affects his senses. Levinas again commented about it, referring to the objects perceived by the Primitives: "in order to feel them, to make them exist, we must already have participations [...] Without participation they wouldn't be objects of experience, they would not exist." (LEVINAS, 1957, p. 561). Physical extension itself, the outward appearance of space, is actually a fading to the Primitives: perceived space is not given to consciousness if not as mixture of objective and affective elements, therefore intrinsically involved in a movement, elusive and changing, unceasingly pointing towards its transformation and so constitutively refractory to theme, elusive in the substantial forms that allow the detection of causality.

Lévinas again highlights a statement made by Lévy-Bruhl about tool making, which I think is extremely exhaustive in this regard: "what matters most is not that the tools are well made, but that they are happy." (LEVINAS, 1957, p. 563)⁵³. The perception of space does not occur by means of the detachment of representation because it is not possible for subjectivity to reach the exteriority of physical extent in its authenticity without being emotionally tuned with it. It is the view of this different understanding of space that brings us close to the meaning of the word *participation*: for every human being to exist means to share in a force, an essence, a mystical reality, that comes to him from the surrounding context, and from himself as an indivisible fragment of that context. Paradoxically, the condition of the existence of the individual, the more essential one, is his sharing of the fading away of emotion into the community, the mystical connection that cancels individuality. The anonymity of participation produces its major consequences on the subjectivity that relates to it⁵⁴, and consequently on the perception of self, of the personal identity that everyone experiences⁵⁵.

Here we come, therefore, in an examination of identity and space, to analyze the dimension of the personality, which leads us to understand

more thoroughly the difference in perception that separates the two logical paradigms of representation and concept. Lévy-Bruhl (1927, p. 173-174) writes:

Individuality [...] is not, in their eyes, strictly limited. Due to membership [...] tracks, marks, leftover food, clothes, weapons, etc. things that are all truly a part of the individual [...] the borders of representation of individuality remain uncertain, [...] compared to them our personality seems to have suffered a reduction, a kind of shortening.

The idea of personal identity in primitive people is very vague according to Lévy-Bruhl, since community completely absorbs the individual: "the human person exists through his sharing in the essence of his group." (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1927, p. 83). This is a fundamental theory of his work, supported by evidence that he never tires of showing: due to the bond that makes him part of the group, the individual does not enjoy a personal existence. He writes:

To our eyes an individual, although complex, has this one primordial and essential character: to be one; otherwise it would not be an individual anymore, but rather a mixture of multiple individuals. But among the Primitives the acute inner feeling of their own person is not accompanied by an equally rigorous concept of individuality. Not only the borders of individuality remain vague and approximate [...]. As the element that establishes individuality fails, by linking it to the ancestors from which it originates, individuality itself could not exist. The individual is not himself unless by being at the same time something different from himself. Under this new aspect the individual, far from being one, is one and manifold: he is, so to speak, an actual "place of participation." (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1927, p. 228).

What Lévy-Bruhl wishes to emphasize most is that the dissolution in the group, therefore in the mystical force from ancestors that passes on to the individual through the social organism, causes in the primitive humanity an unbearable feeling of anguish: he dwells upon the list of examples which testify the original attitude of terror, that marks the relationship between human being and his constantly threatened life, among the Primitives. The immanence of the group in the individual causes terrible consequences: infanticide⁵⁶, for example, according to Lévy-Bruhl was widely practiced without any remorse for the loss of the child, since the infant isn't part of the group until he is initiated into it with a ceremony that represents his authentic birth: the guarantee of the positivity of the individual in relation to the satisfaction of collective needs.

Reflecting on those elements of the life of Primitives Lévy-Bruhl drew two conclusions: first, there is not in any way between Primitives

an innate sense of the value of personal existence as such, and, secondly, the value of each person depends so much from his participation in the group that the individual is not born, he is not even apprehended as existing until he is "fitted" into the mystical life of his society. *Participation* means above all that what matters first is the survival of the group: the sacrifice of every member in the name of the clan is indisputable, and this implies in the same way that every member must be determined to sacrifice another for the same reason. In a text dated 1946 Levinas introduces a theme of his phenomenology which owes much to the investigations of Lévy-Bruhl⁵⁷, and he maintains, fully in tune with the latter, that perception so as the Primitives experience it:

is the horror [...] like an indefinite menace of space itself disengaged from its function of receptacle for objects, as a means of access to beings [...] Horror is somehow a movement which strips consciousness of its very "subjectivity". Not by lulling it into unconsciousness, but throwing it into an impersonal vigilance, a participation, in the sense that Lévy-Bruhl gives to the word. (LEVINAS, 1986, p. 52-53).

Levinas in this context in which he sets up his ethical reflection calls into it the notion of mystical participation introduced by Lévy-Bruhl, and incidentally he names the unconscious, as rarely occurs in his work. I think that just tracking the most hidden reason of his hinting at the unconscious we can finally try to answer, here of course only in the form of a quick suggestion, to the question we left pending about the intake of new sap that the contribution of Lévy-Bruhl might offer to anthropology. As regards then the new opportunity to define intelligence, that a revival of his investigations from the point he was forced to leave them may represent for anthropology, at a time when it is called more than ever to make a final statement on the identical humanity of every child who is born, in the direction of a more secure foundation of human dignity. We believe that the words of Levinas just mentioned constitute a valuable clue to unearth the "secret" kept for almost a century by the work of Lévy-Bruhl.

8 NOT IN LULLING IT INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS

On the trail of this "secret", we learned how Lévy-Bruhl conducted his survey on the difference between the possible cognitive paradigms of the mind to show that this difference involves even the perception of ultimate data of identity, of space precognition, and therefore of our

single existence. As a consequence we dealt with his later broad reflection on the concept of person, which in "inferior societies" suffers substantial changes that originate in the different perceptive nature of the data available to the Primitives and that constitutes the plainest example of how essential are the implications of a categorical heterogeneity that we find extended to the same sensorial elements from which the act of knowledge starts from.

Treading along this path, as we saw, Lévy-Bruhl moved away from the durkheimian idea of culture and society in order to translate his anthropology in what could be named a phenomenology of primitive mentality, aiming at specifying the essential constitution of the human, though, as we already argued, this was an approach that radically undermined the conditions of a philosophy understood as pure and mere theoresis⁵⁸. In 1910, after ascertaining the presence of continuous conflicts between the needs of enduring collective representations and the dictates of conceptual logic in the consciousness of the "white man", he exposed in this sense the so-called paradoxes of reason: "we must definitely interpret in this way the alleged conflicts of reason with itself and what is real in its antinomies." (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1970, p. 454). Thence, according to his thesis on the "flaws" of our logical reasoning, the issues of the law of participation that continue to affect our mind of "white men" show themselves. We often repeated in fact that Lévy-Bruhl notices the coexistence of two different systems of intentionality in the cognitive structure of every human being. All this have been recalled many times so far, but it is only in this moment that we can get closer to the reason why Lévy-Bruhl stated that, of the two systems, the one ruled by participation law is at manifest level by the "Primitives" while in civilized societies is "simply repressed" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 210)⁵⁹ (Lévy-Bruhl writes precisely that in *Carnets* two months before his death). The use of the word repressed, typical of the psychoanalytic lexicon, is not fortuitous by Lévy-Bruhl, who knew Freud⁶⁰: he seems to be referring precisely to the psychoanalytic doctrine. About six months earlier, he wrote the following lines in his *Carnets*:

It is certainly a long time since I spoke of a logic other than ours, I restrain myself from saying the law or the principle of participation. But the background itself of this idea exists without this form: participation still appears to me as something essential to the primitive mentality and probably to the human

mind, something that goes together and perhaps acts as counterbalance to regulating principles of logical thinking. But if this is the case, where does the range of participation start and end? How are we to understand that it is something essential to the structure of the human mind, which is necessary to the representation it makes of objects and beings, and that we had to wait till the 20th century to find out its function? How to understand that neither psychologists nor logicals nor metaphysicians like Plato and Malebranche, who spoke, and very well too, of certain participations, did not assigned to it the function inside the mind that *Les Fonctions mentales* acknowledge to it. As it seems that participation implies something peculiarly rebel to intelligibility, how to understand that the human mind is at the same time the principle of rationality and irrationality? (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 129-130).

Viewing the almost dramatic doubt of Lévy-Bruhl it comes obvious to assume that the irrational, that he discovered in the participatory experience of Primitives, covers the same margins of the dimension that Freud probed in mental pathology. Yet the words of Levinas quoted above warn us that is not so, where he says, as we pointed out, that mystique participation as Lévy-Bruhl described it may not coincide with the act of "lulling it into unconsciousness". Why therefore, according to Levinas, Lévy-Bruhl did not appealed to the psychoanalytic hermeneutical key provided by Freud and his school⁶¹?

We can measure the distance between Freudian Unconscious and the different perceptive experience that Lévy-Bruhl announces as hidden, removed in the mind of every "white man", if we take into consideration the assessment that Freud himself gave the to experience of mystical participation in 1929. He defines the "oceanic feeling"⁶² by which a person tends to dissolve his own identity in a whole, as an early stage of the sentiment of the self, and he therefore believes that every mystical experience is merely a narcissistic revival of some primitive stages of development, which originates from the need to deny an external danger. The experience of participation comes from a need, it does not originate in a logical ambivalence present in our minds. Freud's position in relation to *logos* is on the other hand very different from that of Lévy-Bruhl: as is well known, the wiener psychologist believed that the goal of psychoanalysis was a successful mediation between the universe of passions and the issues of the outward world, and this mediation in his view is the concern of the rational principle of self, since no intuition could give a direction to human action, but only reason in its clarity and distinction holds this task. Nothing to do

with the demystification of Western logic that Lévy-Bruhl proposes in his writings.

No doubt what we called the *inherent ambiguity* of human logic produces, in its spreading to cognitive systems of thoughtless level, the transformation of the concept of "primitive mentality" in a notion that apparently looks similar to the Freudian Id, since it becomes inherently akin to sensorial perception: it happens in feeling and therefore to a physical, bodily, unaware level. But the similarity is deceptive. We believe that you can dare to affirm that the work of Lévy-Bruhl sketches the contours of *another Unconscious*⁶³, for which he attempted to develop a suitable language, in a long lonely undertaking interrupted only by his death, and that has very little to do with the Unconscious that Psychoanalysis will make familiar to the West. Right here, perhaps, you might find the greatest contribution of Lévy-Bruhl to the development of human and social sciences, contribution currently underestimated and we could say largely removed.

The Freudian Unconscious, it is crucial to see this aspect, is not placed in a linguistic universe, albeit *sui generis*, and therefore the dimension of the Id is not, by its very nature, subject to ethical evaluation: it is precisely unconscious because it *does not answer*, because it is not *responsible* for his actions, it is not included in the verbal world where responsibility can occurs. For primitive mentality as Lévy-Bruhl intends it the opposite is true, since in his opinion it is subject to the law of participation, but simultaneously to the law of non-contradiction. He demonstrates in fact, as we have shown, since *Les Fonctions mentales* the incontrovertible involvement of the law of non-contradiction in primitive mentality: verbalization is the natural goal the Primitives aim at in every moment of their experience, just like "white men". Although they seem drowned into the realm of "absurd", as we heard Mauss define it, Primitives words retain indeed their power to transform human existence into a real or fake world, and this applies to perceptive information as well, which, according to the frame of mind he defended Freud would have called non-verbal. Psychoanalysis as Lévy-Bruhl had known it did not push this theory so far as to detect in each human cognitive level the result of the language that shaped it, and maybe it is not yet able to do so today⁶⁵.

It is in this distance from Psychoanalysis that we can measure Lévy-Bruhl's daring in all its radicalism: in his hypothesis the repressed irrational of primitive mentality is not "lulled into unconsciousness", as stated precisely controversially by Levinas against Psychoanalysis. It is not "lulled", silenced, as happens to the sphere of extra-verbal instinct postulated by Freud because language on the contrary in the flow of mystique collective representation is the privileged vehicle of the law of participation: the words of the group originate and support the sense of belonging of every initiate⁶⁶.

Comparisons with psychology, however, cannot suffice to clarify the ontological aspect that the notion of mystic participation, or what we called another unconscious takes in the end in Lévy-Bruhl's anthropological reflection. As we stated above, only Levinas was able to discern, in his essay dated 1957 that we used as privileged guide through this article, the subversive⁶⁷ outcome which, like Husserl's Phenomenology, the survey of Lévy-Bruhl in the perceptive world of the Primitives could mean for the understanding of human reason coded by Greek metaphysics first and then by that of Descartes, which never ceased to provide its last foundation to durkheimian sociology. The *ontological* implication of Lévy-Bruhl's study on the "repressed", the most hidden but full of consequences, seems to have had first an ethical outcome, that can be only hinted at in this article.

This result marks the direction that a future review of the thought of Lévy-Bruhl should take: when Lévy-Bruhl describes the participatory dimension of collective representation, of that *other unconscious* of which he explored the possibility, he cannot help but deploring⁶⁸ the inhuman practices that were depicted so numerous in his texts, and this is not a judgment on the value of Primitives, but on the effect that primitive mentality has in the mind of the *individual* member of the group. This is possible only in the perspective of an unconscious shaped by words: the irrational of primitive mentality encoded in a language, although spoken by a group, that dissolves the individual and that carries out this fading thanks to words, paradoxically preserves the possibility of choice for every single member through the faculty of each speaker of lying⁶⁹. Faculty who does not fade, mysteriously, even in its most complete coincidence with the group and that paradoxically testifies of its continuous aware-

ness of the relationship that each word bears with reality. From this point of view you can therefore make an assessment and ethical application of what is happening in the sphere of passions, in the unconscious, unlike what psychoanalysis teaches us. This fact opens a new chapter to the idea of human dignity: if in the human even the irrational and unconscious life descends from a verbal fact, and in conclusion this unconscious life depends on a choice that the individual makes among his words, then the power of the *responsibility* of that choice deepens and gets abysmal. Power of *responsibility* that the "psychoanalytic" version of the unconscious can no longer "lull". In fact, we can only mention it here, it is still Levinas who provides the best characterization of the other so far unexplored unconscious that Lévy-Bruhl tried to define when he was describing the emotional and affective complex of mystical participation. In fact according to the French philosopher consciousness necessarily needs the power of sleep that the personal unconscious grant to it in order to exist: in it therefore we can say that consciousness is defined as such. The impersonality of mystical participation has nothing to do with this "power of sleep". It comes earlier and it well symbolized by contrast by the lack of sleep in which, at least, the conscience of the individual must cease to exist (LEVINAS, 1986, p. 60). The birth of the subject, according to Levinas, cannot occur if not thanks to sleep, thanks to the detachment of a single asleep body from the *insomnia* of an impersonal indefinite. He writes, apparently so enigmatic, but what becomes clear in his reference to Lévy-Bruhl:

The sparking of consciousness [...] does not refer at all to objective space, the very phenomenon of localization and sleep — which is the uneventful event, the inward event. Unconsciousness as sleep is not a new life which is enacted beneath life; it is a participation in life by non participation, by the elementary act of resting. What does sleeping consist in? To sleep is to suspend physical and psychic activity. [...] The summing of sleep occurs in the act of lying down. To lie down is precisely to limit existence to a place, to position. [...] Sleep reestablishes a relationship with a place *qua* base. [...] Consciousness comes out of rest, out of a position, out of this unique relationship with a place. (LEVINAS, 1986, p. 63-64).

The non-participation that occurs in the act of sleeping means therefore according to Levinas the original choice of coming out from the mystical universe where neutral and indifferent space cannot accommodate the unique singularity of the human being and from that choice, preliminary of every act of consciousness, depends exactly the birth of conscious-

ness: paradoxically it appears as soon as it is possible to sleep. It is not possible to deepen Levinassian insightful phenomenological analyses, but using the continued reference they have to the work of Lévy-Bruhl there is always a deeper relationship between *ethics as first philosophy* and the questions that remained open in the *Carnets*. This appears increasingly clear since Levinassian ethics moves from the theoretical, anthropological, phenomenological, and gnoseological questions that Lévy-Bruhl placed along the sphere of irrational participation, in search of the *other unconscious* formed by collective representation. This issue resulted already in Lévy-Bruhl's work as special feature of the sphere of action, of the ethical dimension of human in its inalienable value. From the study of moral philosophy in particular, moreover, he began his extraordinary intellectual adventure: the thesis in philosophy that he discussed in 1884 had as title *The idea of responsibility* (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1884).

In the same year 1884 the heyday of European imperialist power was celebrated with the beginning of the Berlin Conference, which according to strict criteria shared in the pillaging of the colonies and, at the same time, prepared the ground for the war that would cost the lives of eight million of Europeans and opened the way to world war II.

Racial hatred would then explode with all its terrible consequences and it would bring into the foreground the question of difference between mentality. The field of participation, peculiar of primitive society would reveal in fact a distinctive cognitive category of white man: in the rhythm marked by the goose-step are inexorably collapsed centuries of the concept of logic in which Europe identified, to give way to the logic of collective representation in all its dreadful need of depersonalization, demonstrating how the analysis of Lévy-Bruhl inhabited the human mind. They thus, demystifying the origin of human experience of the representation, demonstrate the fragility of the status of person based on the identity of the individual who Europe claimed the heritage of his philosophical tradition, and claimed the urgency of its re-establishment. In the radical indictment to which he subjected the logos of Europeans colonizers, Lévy-Bruhl from the early 1900s already established all the premises to a statement that Levinas, almost a century later, included in the preface to the latest edition of *Quelques réflexions sur la philosophie de l'hitlerisme*,

statement which he delivers to us as the soul of his writing in 1934:

The conviction that the source of the bloody barbarism of National Socialism lies not in some contingent anomaly within human reasoning, nor in some accidental ideological misunderstanding [...] the conviction that this source stems from the essential possibility [...] into which we can be led by logic and against which Western philosophy had not sufficiently insured itself. (LEVINAS, 1934, p. 199-208).⁷⁰

NOTAS

1. Hélène Metzger, clever crystallographer and chemist, was deported to Auschwitz and died at only fifty-five, but her contribution to the history of science is indispensable: she was an active collaborator of the International Centre of Synthesis of Henri Berr in Paris; Thomas Kuhn celebrates her in *The structure of scientific revolutions* as basic inspirer together with Alexandre Koyré, Emile Meyerson and Annelise Maier. Niece of Lévy-Bruhl, at her uncle's school she proposed a new hermeneutics of genesis of scientific theories, that sprang from an original perspective about the role of logic in the progress of science.
2. Lévy-Bruhl considered himself a philosopher till the end, and the fidelity to his idea of philosophy as a scientific approach to authenticity of human deeds led him consequently to anthropology: "I had the ambition to add something to the scientific knowledge of human nature using the data of ethnology. My training was philosophical, not anthropological: I proceed from Spinoza and from Hume, instead of from Bastian and from Taylor, if I dare evoke here so great names". (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1957, p. 413).
3. Dominique Merllié in the monographic issue that the *Revue Philosophique* dedicated to its ancient manager in 1989, reporting some news from the biography of Jean Cazeneuve (1963), refers that the young Lévy-Bruhl, pianist, for a while was doubtful between the university career and the conductor one: when he decided for the latter, he continued to go to the concerts with his score arm in arm (MERLLIÉ, 1989). His deep knowledge of French literature and his great ability of speaking fluently many languages are perceived in the prose of his books, clear and elegant; even Claude Lévy-Strauss, harshly hostile to the anthropological positions of Lévy-Bruhl, couldn't celebrate: "an exceptional clear spirit and a charming style enchant he reader every moment. A few other specialized works show as much fluency and promise as much satisfaction. You can still feel in his work, after that his first conclusions have been expunged by his own solicitation, the charm and the generosity of his soul." (LÉVI-STRAUSS, 1945, p. 540).
4. The founders of sociology and ethnology in France, Durkheim and Mauss, come from jewish families of Alsace-Lorraine, like Lévy-Bruhl. The Hebrew community of this region was the last

that decided, in 1792, to take a civic oath, that was required from the Republic born from the Revolution; from this Hebrew contest of more identity awareness came the leading figures of what was called "new Marrano movement" (MELZI D'ERIL, 1999), that was completely achieved in France at the end of the XIX century, with the exception of the diplomatic career and of high finance of Court of Counts, jobs still strictly forbidden. The Hebrews became especially well-off bankers and established academicians; they lived the same adventure of penetration in French society and culture, not rarely with marriage alliances, that cement the different economic and intellectual capitals during the difficult ascent to the recognition of equal rights (some examples, Bergson marries an heir of Rothschild, Durkheim a Dreyfus girl with a very large dowry, Lévy-Bruhl the daughter of jeweller Bruhl, for this reason he decided to change his surname in Lévy-Bruhl). According to an interesting theory of Tobie Nathan, ethnopsychiatrist disciple of Georges Devereux, in this picture of spectacular conquests of Hebrew-French *intelligentia*, the contribution of this one to social science can clarify more the whole process of the current assimilation; it is particularly illuminating the role played in these new subjects by Alsatians, among them the feeling of belonging didn't stop to increase because of the waves of immigrants from East, that had destabilizing results. In an interview in *Nouvel Observateur* in 1981 Claude Lévi-Strauss declared that the success of Hebrew minority in Human Science depended on the characteristic of absolutely novelty of these subjects and on the consequent lack of already very well-established university dynasties; with all this, according to Tobie Nathan, the particular existential situation of its founders was able to constitute sociology and ethnology as new knowledge, that sprang from the inevitable reflection that each of them was led to express about their origin from a *milieu*, from a tradition, "primitive" in its irrational dependence from religious rituals, whit which they had to break in order to be admitted in the "civilized" world of science, but they couldn't do without not depending on it in their own inner conscience of themselves. The study of cultures in their radical alterity should depend, then, on a sort of moving, of objectification of the inward conflict, that had to tear the personality of the famous Hebrew professors at Sorbonne. If it is so, all the more reason is important to try to establish, here, what is the notion of alterity that emerges, in a different meaning from that of Durkheim and Mauss, in the work of Lévy-Bruhl. [Compare regarding the historical question of Hebrew emergency in France in those years Christophe Charles (1984, p. 45-49) e Philippe-E. Landau (2002, p. 91-106)].

5. To begin with 1886 he regularly taught in Paris at *École libre des sciences politiques*, founded by his friend Émile Boutmy after the Sedan Battle. His famous text is *L'Allemagne depuis Leibniz* (Hachette, Paris), in which he proposed to French

politicians an alarmed analysis of German nationalism. His worries became more and more serious during the years and his engagement in articles on magazines of political study increased.

6. The facts are reported by Merllié (1989), the paper appeared in the above mentioned monographic number of *Revue Philosophique* in 1989. In the note 86 on p. 446 he quotes the passage from a letter written by Lévy-Bruhl to Xavier Léon, who was asking him a text for *Revue de Méthaphisique et de Morale*, in February 1915. Lévy-Bruhl writes: "I have not a moment for me. The *Bulletin de l'Alliance Française*, where I'm working, together a few friends, to fight German propaganda against neutral people, takes absolutely all my time. The Bulletin is published twice a month, in six languages, French excluded. Our press run amounts nearly to one hundred thousand copies, and the increasing success of this publication asks for all the available energy or time we have. We are committed to bringing it up to the final conclusion of peace. That is to say that I cannot think of writing anything not complying my commitment to this *Bulletin*".
7. Frédéric Keck (2008), gives a broad framework of the particular perspective from which Lévy-Bruhl intended the "comtian" method and theories", and of the decisive influences that such perspective had on the development of his anthropology. A separate discussion should be addressed to the influence of Hume on Lévy-Bruhl, but above all it would be necessary to assess the implications of his debt to his teacher, Fustel de Coulanges, which so far have been dealt with only by Silvia Mancini (1989, p. 63).
8. For instance, Charles Peguy, arch-enemy of Durkheim and Mauss sociology and ethnology, was however a student of Lévy-Bruhl and, while levelling cutting remarks to the new human sciences, never failed on the contrary to reserve warm memories for "the great liberality, the kindness of spirit, and heart too, of philosophy in the lessons of our teacher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl" [Cited by D. Merllié (1989a, p. 494, nota 5). See Paul Masson-Oursel (1939)].
9. It emblematically emerges from of the thousand of terminological and methodological precautions entered in Lévy-Bruhl's *Carnets* (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998), the work he worked to up to the last day of his life and published posthumously in 1949, where, providing a rare example of scientific severity, he agrees to submit the results of his entire work to the critical review of his colleagues to the aim of improving the obtained results. However I think it is important to note that this sincere willingness for the comparison stems from what he intended for, since the beginning and at a time the superiority of the white race was still undisputed, the sense of research: the effort to relate to human events, analyzed with the utmost respect, without claims to systematization, in an attempt to preserve the *proprium* of the studied societies, and to

get closer to the facts, as he often loved to underline, according to a firm custom of epoché very similar to the phenomenological one. He write in *La Morale et les sciences des mœurs*: "History and anthropology bring us into the presence of an infinitely varied and complex reality, and we are compelled to recognize that we shall only obtain knowledge of it at the price of long, methodical and collective effort; just as when it is a question of the nature we perceive by our senses. As soon as we consider societies differing from that in which everything seems clear to us, because everything is familiar to us, we meet at every step problems that common sense, aided only by the current reflexion on and knowledge of "human nature", is unable to solve. The fact which disconcert us doubtless obey laws, but what are they? We cannot guess. In one sense, social reality presents more difficulties as regards scientific research than the physical world, for even supposing the static laws to be known, the condition of a society at a given moment is only intelligible by a knowledge of the evolution of which it is the outcome; and how rare are the cases in which historical knowledge of the past is sufficiently complete and sufficiently certain for nothing that is indispensable to be lacking!" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1903, p. 68). And in 1927, interviewed by a French literary weekly, he condemns the ignorance "that makes to misunderstand and disregard all what is advanced, sensitive, and often appealing in the languages, arts, and institutions of these other parts of mankind" mentioned by D. Merllié (1989b, p. 423).

10. "About Levy-Bruhl, Gilson wrote: «In a country where many have done well no one has ever done better» (*Les nouvelles littéraires*, 18 marzo 1939)" (SHOOK, 1991, p. 285).
11. Compare G. Jahoda, (2000, p. 218-238) and Peterman (2000, p. 405-437).
12. In the english-speaking nations, thank to Evans-Pritchard studies there are some works inspired by Lévy-Bruhl: Rodney Needham (1972), and Robin Horton (1973). In english is important also the article of Paola Zambelli, (1995). In Italy there are an abstract in «*Intersezioni*», 12, p. 305-409, 1993. In Germany, Cassirer looks carefully at Lévy-Bruhl studies in his philosophical reflections about myth and in his distinction between logic discursive and creative imagination. See: E. Cassirer (1923).
13. Koyré ascribes to Lévy-Bruhl the merit of having preserved the unity of the human mind from the attacks of relativism in anthropology, Koyré says that "the analysis of Lévy-Bruhl showed such deep well, this formal identity of the categories of thought"(ZAMBELLI, 1967, p. 22).
14. Noteworthy next to the works cited in Merllié and Keck are some works devoted to Lévy-Bruhl in years not far from the publications of human sciences in Europe. In France Philippe de Lara in Ellipses edition looks into the similarity between Wittgenstein Evans-Pritchard and Lévy-Bruhl in the language of philosophy and in the anthropologic field, and he does justice to Lévy-Bruhl about a lot of issues. P. De Lara (2000; 2005). In England Cristina Chimisso shows the importance of Lévy-Bruhl in the evolution of history of science in France. Compare Chimisso (2003, 2008). In Italy Ernesto De Martino's bad criticism obstructs the diffusion of Lévy-Bruhl's studies in spite of the interest shown by Cesare Pavese in Lévy-Bruhl's arguments. Nowadays to the beautiful essay of Patrizia Di Palma, (DI PALMA, 1983) were added that of Silvia Mancini (1989), of Mariapaola Fimiani (2000), and recently of Carlo Prandi (2006). Stanislas Deprez (2010a, 2010b).
15. He writes in each single study dedicated to Lévy-Bruhl an example of a real dossier of misunderstanding, but in particular: D. Merllié (1989b, 1993).
16. In Italy the situation is not dissimilar to the french one as described by Merllié. See for example the entry Lévy-Bruhl in the *Dizionario di Antropologia* (FABIETTI; REMOTTI, [19--]).
17. The author even asserts that Lévy-Bruhl collects Hegel's heritage who believed that the African continent was excluded from the history of the Spirit because embodying, in his opinion, the denial of the human being.
18. For a selected bibliography you can turn to Dominique Merllié, (1989, p. 559-588). In the same monographic issue on Lévy-Bruhl, Merllié and other authors draw together a profile remained till today unmatched of the figure and scientific activity of Lévy-Bruhl in his main themes. See then the URL of the website of the University of Quebec where, at the section "classics of social studies", the full texts of the anthropological works of Lévy-Bruhl are freely accessible to all visitors.
19. Just one example among all possible ones, to understand how he never failed to show a personal involvement in the account of ethnological facts that he suggested in his books: he states regarding the conduct of colonial officials towards the inferior societies that "to the misjudgment of primitive mentality you have to add bad faith and abuse of violence. This chapter in the history of relations between whites and Indians is as monotonous as revolting" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1927, p. 123).
20. See in this regard Howard Davie (1997, p. 422-431).
21. Mauss himself, although honestly taking the distance from the core of his argument, does not hesitate to recognize in his commemoration of Lévy-Bruhl's undeniable talent his form of communication: "As for me, what I like best in all these books, to which I have often and openly opposed, is the beautiful and clear erudition, the facts chosen, always instructive, even when the examples are pretty, funny, curious, the translations are excellent, the numerous and happy find, is the plant, the perfect development. A beautiful model in French, with a touch of English spirit" (MAUSS, 1939, p. 251-253).

22. What made Lévy-Bruhl so sure of the full participation of the Primitives "in human nature"? Asked today this question seems nonsense, but it was the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe, when the propaganda of colonialism, even when it was benignly paternalistic, painted "the little black", as defined in Italian, as if they were immersed in an underdeveloped world. The colonizers related to them as "inferior societies". It was only natural for every cultivated European of the time, even if generously sympathetic to the inferior societies, to infer the low probability of a comparison on the same level from the point of view of logic and thus ultimately from the human between white man and "Savages". On the contrary the title of Lévy-Bruhl *"Mental functions in the lower society"* dated 1910 contained a polemic idea addressed to the psychology of the time, since his book by its cover already argued that the "mental functions" were evidently common to white man as to primitive. It would be very important to establish precisely which books, in the strictly positivist Comtian learning of Lévy-Bruhl nurtured his conviction and transformed it into a position.
23. We take this definition from the philosophy of art by Maurice Blanchot, since it seems to us to adhere perfectly to the image of human soul that Lévy-Bruhl intended to hand down during his tireless battles of thought. Blanchot was, together with his friend Levinas, pupil of two students of Lévy-Bruhl, passionate supporters of the master's thesis. Compare *infra*, p. 14, note 39.
24. This is an adaptation of a famous verse from the Second Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: *Facies non omnibus una nec diversa tamen*, became proverbial.
25. This is the title of the text of Lévy-Bruhl, which may have had more polemic resonance in France. He was now very famous, but his rejection of uncritical adherence to the ideas of Durkheim elite made difficult his position as an intellectual "dissident" in the ranks of French ethnologists. The debate around his work, and particularly around the notion of mind as he understood it, emerges in the Notice published by Armand Colin. Colin was invited to teach at the Société Philosophique in 1923 in the presence of Lord Ashbourne, Gustave Belot, Paul Fauconnet, Xavier Leon, Raymond Lenoir, Marcel Mauss, Dominique Parodi, Henri Pieron and Max Weber. In this lesson, followed the reading of a letter of Etienne Gilson, who was unable to be present. Today his speech is fully downloadable from the site <<http://www.sofrphilolo.fr/?idPage=34>>.
26. As reminded Dominique Merlié (1993, p. 6), the expression is employed by T. Ribot (1870), which was the manifesto of the French scientific psychology. Lévy-Bruhl often quoted this expression (for example we find it in L. Lévy-Bruhl, 1910, p.1-2, and in *La morale et la science des mœurs* (1903, p. 70) and he used it during a conference in Oxford in which he said: "Our psychology and our logic have done admirable progress. They are, as Théodule Ribot has noted in the past century, psychology and logic "of the white man, adult, civilized". Has the time come for them to enrich and expand extending the scope of their research?" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1931, p. 25). The expression has come into common usage, but it is important to note the symbolic value that it meant to Lévy-Bruhl.
27. M. Mauss (1903, 1985); Italian translation by F. Zannino (MAUSS, 1965). *Mana* is a controversial concept that regards the psychic world of the Polynesian groups. For Mauss it was a category of collective thinking, which indicated a positive force transmitted between the different members of the group, and based on our concept of magic. As regards the meaning of "collective life" see below, footnote 45.
28. You can find a great similarity between the phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas and the work of Lévy-Bruhl. Levinas, student in Strasbourg of two students of Lévy-Bruhl, Charles Blondel and Maurice Halbwachs, repeatedly cites Lévy-Bruhl in his texts, and in 1957 prepares for the special issue commemorating the *Revue Philosophique* the short essay (LEVINAS, 1957), Francesco Saverio Nisio (2005, p. 328) writes about this essay that "still remains the most penetrating interpretive essay of philosophy on Lévy-Bruhl". Jill Robbins (1999, p. 86-88) examines the influence of Lévy-Bruhl on the development of Levinasian thought, pointing also to his philosophy of the image. Later on we will try to better define the relationship between the two thinkers.
29. In his introduction to the thought of Lévy-Bruhl, Levinas notices that the first ideas of Lévy-Bruhl had secretly oriented philosophy, and aims to demonstrate how. He defines Lévy-Bruhl's philosophy an "intellectualist empiricism" that does not recognize, however, the "a priori of reason": the unity of the human mind for philosophy is not a given fact, but a task to accomplish.
30. Émile Meyerson affirmed the same thing in a letter in which he compares the method of Lévy-Bruhl with the history of science, and his testimony converge with that of Hélène Metzger. He says about Lévy-Bruhl that "by making an intimate knowledge of a «mentality» in appearance so different from ours, he allows us an entry similar to the penetration of which the study of the history of science created the starting point. And we also realize that trying to use data from two different orders to learn the guiding principles of human thought we follow similar routes. In fact, if we merely consider the historical dimension of each particular acquisition of science, and if we try, in each case, to approach directly the past to the present, we are prepared to conclude that those who preceded us in time reasoned simply wrong. Instead we come to convince ourselves that they

were thinking exactly as we would have done if we had been in their place, if we consider all of their points of view and if we compare them to the experimental practise at their disposal, and if we try to realize how for them, the first is connected with the last or in other words, if we try to justify their opinions. Conclusion to which, moreover, we could have come from the beginning if we had considered the difficulty to conceive a true evolution of the brain in the number of the few generations that separate us from our civilized forefathers. So we have to force us to think differently than we are used to in order to find, beneath the apparent diversity of patterns, an essentially identical plot. The same goes for what concerns primitive thought. Again the explanation that it provides, compared with only our own ideas, first appear simply erroneous, infantile. But M. Lévy-Bruhl did not stop at all to this first impression, and convinced that these men should think reasonably, he began to seek the reasons of their thoughts, and so he dedicated himself to think as they did" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1929, p. 697).

31. In this passage Lévy-Bruhl considered himself still far from limiting the question: "If I return to the formula of *Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* according to which «their thinking is not conceptual like ours», I have to circumscribe more closely the meaning to be given to the word thinking in the same way that I had to find a sufficient accuracy for the shaping and use of concepts, considered for us and for them. Otherwise, there wouldn't be univocity. Their thinking is different from ours, as they thought, how their concepts as concepts - although it is true that, in principle, their mind form concepts such as ours, and think like us. We must therefore groped analysis of the facts which allow to grab, below the identity function, the differences in the product of this function, and, if possible, their causes" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 228).
32. Many of the theories of primitive mentality made in those years in fact respond to the needs of justification that colonialism sought for the operation of systematic bleeding of the "inferior societies" made by Europeans. Keck shows, in the text we mentioned, the lands administered by the French, and it seems significant the testimony of a colonialist, who reported: "On one side, we know that it is critical that the head of the cantonal has its indigenous character and uses the feudal spirit still in him, on the other hand, we are led by the very force of colonization to bend him to our administrative mentality" (KECK, 2008, p. 137).
33. It would be very interesting in this regard to analyze the great affinity that shows the intent of Lévy-Bruhl deconstructive work of Martin Heidegger in his Marburg period, up to *Sein und Zeit*. One could hypothesize that the enthusiasm of the young Levinas for this depended largely by a reading from his previous Lévy-Bruhl's thesis.
34. It is now published in Italian for Vittorio De Palma (HUSSERL, 2008, p. 75-82). The letter from Husserl to Lévy-Bruhl 11 March 1935, made famous in the fifties in France by a famous course of Maurice Merleau-Ponty at the Sorbonne. The father of phenomenology was glad to be very close to Lévy-Bruhl theorys against psychologism. In this text, in which he thanked Lévy-Bruhl sending the *Mentalité primitive*, Husserl recognizes the merit of having founded a work that should be adopted as the model of rigorous anthropology, the first evidence of a pure anthropology, since it is able to present the Primitives as individuals and not as a "psycho-physical objects", as intended the psychologism that Husserl's phenomenology was fighting. He presents the investigation of Lévy-Bruhl as an important stimulus in the future of phenomenological research: Lévy-Bruhl, was able to proceed beyond the *a priori* that consciousness means, towards the origin of consciousness itself. Mariapaola Fimiani cites this letter to Husserl and says: "The thoughts of Lévy-Bruhl clearly suggest, for Husserl, the dual path of logical and ontological, and converge with the interests of a philosophy committed to overcoming the constraints of an anthropologism that is only sterile reply of psychologism, and therefore indicate that the problems of correlation *ourselves-word* invest rather matters of transcendental phenomenology concerning different «us as possible»" (FIMIANI, 2000, p. 51, note 43).
35. The notion of experience in the latest publications of Lévy-Bruhl acquires a special value which is then used in France by Bataille and the Surrealists, in the wake of Freudian psychoanalysis. Frédéric Keck (2008) outlines the contours in Chapter 4; compare Karsenti (1998, p. VII) lingers in his presentation to the Carnets.
36. A passage in the Carnets is very exhaustive concerning the definition of collective representation: "A hand detached from the wrist, i.e. the living body is no hand any more; it is a fragment of solid and liquid materials that does not deserve such name (Aristoteles). The hand is represented and thought of only together with the body; it is a part of it but the body can still be represented and conceived without it, even if maimed. In the same way the member of the clan of the horde, etc. if detached from the social body he belongs to faces the same destiny of the mutilated hand: he becomes a mere beings capable of moving, feeling, etc. but he had lost his essence: he is no more a member of the tribe like the cut hand is no longer an organ. If we take this consideration seriously we find that a great deal of the details in the life and thought of the Primitives become suddenly clear. First of all the importance or better said the need of initiation because without it the individual does not enter the group and the group would be destined to dissolve itself without initiated people. When death snatches one of the members from his living group he has to join necessarily the dead group; if this does not

- happen his existence loses all meaning again like that of the hand cut from the arm. From this derives in many primitive societies and others the duty of funeral rites. The dead cannot do without initiation exactly as the living: if they are deprived, they are condemned to utter dismay and they could be angry with the living and therefore dangerous". (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 19-20).
37. According to Keck, (which mentions this issue in a speech given in 2004, it is possible to find out a development project of new logical formalization of Lévy-Bruhl in the work that Emile Brehier (1928), his student and successor at the Sorbonne and the direction of *Revue Philosophique*, published on Stoic logic in 1928: *La théorie de l'incorporel dans l'ancien stoïcisme*, Vrin, Paris. Lévy-Bruhl had dedicated one of his early essays dedicated to Seneca: *Quid de Deo Seneca senserit*, Paris 1884.
 38. The relationship between Bergson and Lévy-Bruhl should be investigated in a specific study. Bergson openly discusses and criticizes the arguments of anthropology in *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*. Bergson's work undoubtedly lies on the borders of sociology, and the confrontation between the two philosophers would be very interesting, since friendship between the two never failed. The controversy that found them lined up on opposite positions focuses in particular on the concept of causality, and from this argument you can deduct all the great similarities between their works, but also the resistance that Bergson opposed to the more radical thesis of Lévy-Bruhl. Compare, for a special issue of the *Revue philosophique* of 1989: P. Soulez (1989), and F. Keck (2008, p. 170).
 39. For a description of the philosophical milieu in which Lévy-Bruhl was moving as he opened the way towards anthropology in Europe, edited by Frederic Worms: AA.VV. 2004.
 40. Frédéric Keck (2008, p. 98, 109-111) uses this expression and emphasizes that Lévy-Bruhl takes this to his reinterpretation of Comte's theories.
 41. The intervention of Franz Boas (1929, p. 672) into the presentation of *L'âme primitive's* is characteristic, because so many of his detractors will use the same argumentation; the statement according to which it would not be possible to identify a common logic to all the "Savages". After exposing, revealing his doubts about the heart of the reflection of Lévy-Bruhl, Boas concludes with a critique that shows how difficult it was to admit in a work of anthropological research the priority of a universally valid essence, although, as we mentioned, understood in a "dynamic" way. He writes: "On the basis of the experience of my personal relations with primitive peoples, I sum up that we are not faced with a simple phenomenon, but with a wide variety of conditions that may help to explain the attitudes, apparently pre-logical, of primitive man".
 42. Merllié, into the special issue of the *Revue Philosophique*, just mentioned, devotes an essay to the relationship between Lévy-Bruhl and Durkheim (1989, p. 493 ss), showing how the latter was mainly supporting the access of Lévy-Bruhl in the academic world of Paris, and reports the break between them since the publication of *Les fonctions Mentales* in 1910. Lévy-Bruhl suffered greatly from the hostility of the old friend, but his support to the Durkheimian school never wavered, especially during the war when it lost the leadership of Durkheim, overwhelmed, up to his death, by the grief for the loss of his son André on the Balkan front. Lévy-Bruhl in later years tried to establish a contact with Malinowski who admired the method of participant observation [Compare the letter of Lévy-Bruhl to Malinowski, cited in F. Keck (2008, p. 229)].
 43. Along with Maurice Leenhard who supported his course through the years, Edward Evans-Pritchard was one of the few anthropological colleagues with which Lévy-Bruhl had a very fruitful dialogue. Evans-Pritchard defended his theories in a famous lecture given at Cairo, and spread to England. (See in this respect E. Evans-Pritchard, 1990).
 44. Jean Cazeneuve intended to highlight the detachment of Lévy-Bruhl from the evolutionism, writing, about his views on the phenomenon of religion, that in his opinion: "So there is definitely a historical evolution from one term to another, because we can find intermediate stages, but this development bears a change from a mental structure to another one [...] the apparent evolution of Lévy-Bruhl relates only to the historical phases of the phenomenon, and we must find behind this a seemingly structuralist conception". (CAZENEUVE, 1965, p. 76). Of the same meaning of Cazeneuve, of a apparent mixture between evolutionism and structuralism, shunned by both, were Emile Brehier (1949), Lévy-Bruhl's successor at the Sorbonne and at the guidance of the *Revue Philosophique*, and Gerardus Van der Leeuw (1928). This strangeness measures the distance between Lévy-Bruhl and Durkheim, who on the contrary, like most sociologists of the time, joined the evolutionary model, stating for example that the existing societies are nothing but different combinations of the same original society, whose metahistorical truth allows us to class them as if they were its various incarnations, and even to determine what these are found close to their historical order, already provided for in their ideal representation. We read, for example, about the difficulty of classifying a company in an alleged evolutionism: "This difficulty is especially peculiar to sociology. It scarcely exists in biology. Very rarely, indeed, are animal species compelled to take on unforeseen forms. The only usual modifications they undergo are those occurring regularly in each individual, principally due to the effect of age. Therefore, the rule is easily established, since it can be observed in a great many cases. The ordinary condition can be known at each

stage of the development of the animal and even in periods of crisis, and the same is true in sociology for societies belonging to the inferior cultures. Since many of them have already completed their cycle of development, the law of their normal evolution is (or, at least, can be) established. For the highest and most recent societies this law is by definition unknown" (Durkheim 1895). "We may, therefore, formulate the three following rules: 1. A social fact is normal, in relation to a given social type at a given phase of its development, when it is present in the average society of that species at the corresponding phase of its evolution. 2. One can check the results of the preceding method by showing that the generality of the phenomenon is bound up with the general conditions of collective life of the social type considered. 3. This verification is necessary" (Ivi). With a view equally distant from that of Lévy-Bruhl, Mauss said: "Human societies are now living far from all of the same nature and evolution of the same rank. To treat them so is unfair to those who developed the civilization and the meaning of the law more fully" (MAUSS, 1969, p. 584).

45. Claude Lévi-Strauss called it the false evolutionism, or pseudo-evolutionism, based on an ideological bias that purports to apply to the world of human nature the same laws that should apply to the organic nature. In *Race and History*, he writes "The biological evolutionism, which was founded by Darwin, is based on the observation of the evolution of humans by means of purely genealogical relationships. But this notion doesn't work for material objects, beliefs or social institutions. So the pseudo evolutionism, as well as the social or cultural evolution simply interprets facts, without any scientific rigor. The pseudo-evolutionism has no scientific basis, and too often it is confused with the biological evolutionism" (LÉVI-STRAUSS, 1952, p. 108).
46. The analysis of Wallon, philosopher and neurologist, marked the history of twentieth-century psychology, anticipating, in many aspects, Lacan's and Winnicott's. He is famous for his controversy with Piaget's about the correct understanding of the new interpretative keys provided by Lévy-Bruhl to the study of the mind: the Swiss psychologist, looking for the original device that regulates reason, declared his debt to the work of Lévy-Bruhl thinking of clearly separating the various stages of mental development of children, as his theory demanded; Wallon on the contrary thought that on the basis of the results of the reflection of Lévy-Bruhl it was possible to recognize in the evolution of humans' cognitive functions a dynamic process that knows no separate stages, because in the newborn are already present *in nuce* all the mental operations necessary to development, in a constitutive mixture. Concerning the acquisition of the ideas of Lévy-Bruhl among the French-speaking psychologists it is important to compare it with the work of Charles Blondel, also a student of Lévy-Bruhl, the first enthusiastic populariser of the master, and in particular C. Blondel (1925, 1926). See also J. Piaget (1928, p. 31-60). As regards the position of Piaget in the argument with Wallon: J. Piaget (1977). The thought of Lévy-Bruhl, even if forgotten by the history of anthropology, however, has deeply marked the unfolding of European culture in the twentieth century: as the history and historiography of science, the psychology of that time suffered in the same way the benefits of his analysis on the simultaneous continuation of different mentalities, and made them their own, especially just in children psychology, where the child is now finally considered in his cognitive dimension different from the adult human being in every aspect, and not just a promise of what he will become as he grows up.
47. That is why the mentality of the Primitives can be rightly named at the same time pre-logical and mystical. These are two aspects of the same fundamental property rather than two distinct features. This mentality, especially when you consider the content of representations will be called mystical; pre-logical if we look instead to the links. With the word pre-logical we should not at all mean that this mentality is a kind of stage front, over time, the appearance of logical thought. Have there ever been groups of humans or pre-humans whose collective representations never obeyed the laws of logic? We ignore it, and in any case it is very unlikely. At the very least, the mentality of the society of an inferior kind, which I call pre-logic, in the absence of a better name, holds nothing for this character. It is not anti-logical, but it is not even a-logical. Calling it pre-logical I just want to say that it does not bother to avoid the contradiction. It obeys, first, the law of participation. Thus oriented, it does not rest upon contradiction (that would make it absurd for us regularly), but it does not even undertake to avoid it. Absurdity is indifferent for most of the time. That is why it is so difficult for us to understand it" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1910, p. 106).
48. However, since his early attempts to formulate his ideas Lévy-Bruhl actually employed all three terms: "The mentality of Primitives, mystical beings, is necessarily pre-logical, which means that, first of all it deals with the properties and mystical forces of objects and beings; it conceives the relationship by submitting it to the law of participation, without worrying about contradictions that a thinking that knows logic would no longer tolerate" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1970, p. 134). Again, in the *Carnets*: "In fact, I have not used the word «pre-logical» for more than twenty years now because it caused me many problems. I replaced it with many less compromising expressions: «These minds have, in certain circumstances, our own need for logic - they are oriented differently - they have other habits of mind». Apparently, as I used other expressions, I gradually softened, tempered the difference that I had believed to exist between primitive mentality and our logical point of view. In *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* this difference is strong, striking, and

repeatedly affirmed; a primitive mentality is opposed to the other like essentially different, and although I recognize at the same time the fundamental identity of structure of all human spirits, all capable of thinking, talking, counting, etc., I steadily reproached the contrast that I tried to establish between the mental functions of Primitives and ours" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1998, p. 50-51). It seems very interesting to notice what Mary Douglas found about it: "Interesting secondary effects about the thesis of Lévy-Bruhl. [...] as a technical term the prefix «pre» presupposes a functional prerequisite. The analogy is a prerequisite to logical discourse, because the logical operations cannot begin only when the elements of a syllogism are combined into a set of similar terms. In this sense the analogy is a precondition of predicate logic, and therefore, it is truly pre-logical. [...] Once admitted that pre-logical means functionally earlier, the term can be used in a neutral way" (DOUGLAS, 2007, 62).

49. *Especially the death*. See L. Lévy-Bruhl (1927, p. 217, 250-251).
50. See L. Lévy-Bruhl (1970, p. 68).
51. Compare O Quine (1976), Keck (2008, p. 13-16; p. 228-234) and S. Mancini, (1989, p. 155-164).
52. See D. Merllié (1993, p. 7).
53. Levinas quotes L. Lévy-Bruhl (1922, p. 350).
54. Levinas comments: "What we call the I is itself submerged by the night, invaded, depersonalized, stifled by it. The disappearance of all things and of the I leaves what cannot disappear, the sheer fact of being in which one *participates* whether one wants to or not, without having taken the initiative, anonymously. Being remains, like a field of forces, like a heavy atmosphere belonging to no one" (LEVINAS, 1957, p. 51).
55. Mauss wondered in 1938, during a speech in Huxley Memorial Lecture: "Who know even wheter if this «category» wich all of us here believe to be well founded will always be recognised as such? It is formulated only for us, among us. Even its moral strenght – the sacred character of the human person – is questioned, not only throughout the Orient wuch has not yet attained the level of our sciences, but even in countries where this principle was discovered. We have great possessions to defend. Whit us the Idea could disappear (MAUSS, 1999, 381).
56. See more L. Lévy-Bruhl (1927, p. 236-239).
57. It refers to the "*il y a*", topic unavoidable to the understanding of the Levinassian ethics, and introduced to be precise, in one of his early stories, *Le ressasement eternal*, by Maurice Blanchot.
58. Meaningful in such sense is the cut that he gave to his lectures on the philosophy of Descartes, already decidedly breaking with the tradition of Cartesian metaphysics: it is famous the course about Cartesio that Gilson, from his notes of student, reported almost entirely on the first monographic number of the «Revue Philosophique» dedicated to Lévy-Bruhl in the centenary of his birth: E. Gilson (1957, p. 432). The well-known essay by Antonio Damasio (1994), we can say at this point follows in the footsteps of Lévy-Bruhl in his deconstruction of the metaphysics of Descartes, bringing the support of neuroscience.
59. So Merllié comments: "A parallel is imposed. We can consider that Freud has made another part of the program outlined by Ribot explaining the «logic» of psychopathological behaviors, and showing that they clarify «the normal» ones. If the resistances to the psychoanalysis have been lively, they seem outdated since the work of Freud has established itself in a completely different way from that of Lévy-Bruhl. Such difference of destiny may be partially explained, no doubt, by the fact that Freud has surrounded his work of a conceptual framework, reworked several times, such cumbersome to make it looking as a highly theoretical or esoteric work. While Lévy-Bruhl has more rather tried to cancel, or present only to a sketch, the notional building that seemed necessary to stage the analyses and documents intended to convey his message. He has thus provided a work looking exoteric, therefore, more difficult to defend on the part of experts or priests, or against transpositions or popularizations. Still, the one acted as the founder of a school, which was not in the temperament of the other" (MERLLIÉ, 1993, p. 7-8). According to Merllié, Lévy-Bruhl was fully aware of the similarities that existed between his work and Psychoanalysis, and this is demonstrated by the topics and the language of the *Mentalité primitive* (MERLLIÉ, 1993, p. 7, note 27).
60. They met in Vienna in 1935: during a conference of Lévy-Bruhl in Vienna Freud invited him to his house to thank him for sending the *La Mentalité primitive*.
61. Robert Segal draws a parallel between the work of Jung and Lévy-Bruhl in that of R. Segal (2007), proposing unfortunately the persistent misunderstanding of the theory of Lévy-Bruhl, but in his analysis, however, clearly shows the incompatibility between the two models for decoding the unconscious.
62. We refer to the work of Freud (1985). He writes on pages 200-201: "So it is a feeling of indissoluble connection, of belonging inseparably to the external world as a whole. To me, personally, I may remark, this seems something more in the nature of an intellectual judgment, not. It is true, without any accompanying feeling-tone, but with one of a kind which characterizes other equally far-reaching reflections as well. I could not in my own person convince myself of the primary nature of such a feeling. But I cannot on that account deny that it in fact occurs in other people. One can only wonder whether it has been correctly interpreted and whether it is entitled to be acknowledged as the *fons*

et origo of the whole need for religion. I have nothing to suggest which could effectively settle the solution of this problem. The idea that man should receive intimation of his connection with the surrounding world by a direct feeling which aims from the outset at serving this purpose sounds so strange and is so incongruous with the structure of our psychology that one is justified in attempting a psycho-analytic, that is, genetic explanation of such a feeling. Whereupon the following lines of thought present themselves. Normally there is nothing we are more certain of than the feeling of our self, our own ego. It seems to us an independent unitary thing, sharply outlined against everything else. That this is a deceptive appearance, and that on the contrary the ego extends inwards without any sharp delimitation, into an unconscious mental entity which we call the *id* and to which it forms a facade, was first discovered by psycho-analytic research, and the latter still has much to tell us about the relations of the ego to the *id*. But towards the outer world, at any rate, the ego seems to keep itself clearly and sharply outlined and delimited. There is only one state of mind in which it fails to do this.—an unusual state, it is true, but not one that can be judged as pathological. At its height, the state of being in love threatens to obliterate the boundaries between ego and object. Against all the evidence of his senses, the man in love declares that he and his beloved are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact". It is interesting to estimate the distance between the position of Lévy-Bruhl and Freud on the unconscious, by comparing the last lines of the passage of Freud's thesis that the young Levinas argued in those same years in his famous introduction to Husserl's phenomenology: "the acte of love has a sense, but this does not mean that it includes a representation of the object loved together with a purely subjective feeling which has no sense and which accompanies the representation. The characteristic of the loved object is precisely to be given in a love intention, an intention which is irreducible to a purely theoretical representation" (LEVINAS, 1930, p. 75, 1995, p. 44-45). Levinas in the moment he published this statement was certainly by now student of Husserl but as we have seen already well aware, because of his studies, of the theses of Lévy-Bruhl: at the end of this work it should be clear that Lévy-Bruhl himself could not but subscribe the Levinasian perspective, and we would move us to say that this has always implicitly underlies the arguments of the *Mentalité primitive*, received in their authenticity. That is why the divergence found in the same field between the phenomenology announced by Levinas and Freud's rationalism can once again concurs to appreciate the extraordinary closeness of the positions of Lévy-Bruhl to phenomenology, in his transcendental turning point: contiguity that deserves closer scrutiny.

63. Karsenti seems to predict somehow this same assumption when investigating the *participation*

du dedans describing it as "the ultimate need" of thought, Lévy-Bruhl in *Carnets* (KARSENTI, 1998, p. XXXVI).

64. You might find a happy correspondence between Lévy-Bruhl's position and that of Lev Vigotskij, who in those same years, was proposing the hypothesis of the word as "performatrice of thought". Also according to Vigotskij we should not give our intelligence processes that words have already come. First of all see L. Vigotskij (2007).
65. The Jungian explicitly rejected, since the thirties of last century, the research findings of Lévy-Bruhl, considering him too guilty for having too much clearly separated the "two logics". See in this regard C. R. Aldrich (1949). As for the ancestry of Kleinian psychoanalysts, the existence of a "structural unconscious" in the Freud of the first topic, that does not coincide *tout court* with the repressed unconscious, was taken from 1975 by Matte Blanco as the most authentic discovery of Psychoanalysis, and it could perhaps be an element of continuity between the ideas of Freud and those of Lévy-Bruhl. The work of Matte Blanco, moreover, seems to take up the legacy of the thought of Lévy-Bruhl by postulating the existence of a bi-logic in human thought. Compare Ignacio Matte Blanco (2000).
66. In the *Fonctions mentales* Lévy-Bruhl dwells at length on the language description of Primitives and it detects "the mystical character that it inevitably plays in lower societies [...] and this power belongs not only to proper nouns, but to all terms, whatever they may be [...] it follows that the use of words cannot be indifferent: the mere fact of pronouncing them [...] may establish or destroy important and fearsome presences. There's a magic action in the word, therefore precautions are necessary, which will be reflected in the creation of language reserved for certain occasions or certain categories of persons" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1970, p. 217-218). The text proceeds to list the specific instances where this happens, and is of very great interest in relation to the definition of the power of language to give rise to collective representations, which then decide the existence of each member. The subsequent discussion of Lévy-Bruhl on the myth starts from language samples and magical rituals narrated in these pages.
67. How much impact has Lévy-Bruhl's ontology of participation on the levinassian transition to the *Autrement qu'être*? In Italy only Francesco Paolo Ciglia devoted large space to this issue. See first F. P. Ciglia (1982, 1985, 1996).
68. Lévy-Bruhl usually chooses to "appear" in the introduction only and directly at the conclusion of his essays, and merely to comment laconically the reported events, speaking only of the choice and sequence of episodes, and he fits some adjectives into the key points. Sometimes, however, he cannot avoid commenting on the reports listed and this allows us to dis-

cover his intense involvement in everything he writes. For instance, among the many possible examples, about the widespread practice of murdering the widow after her husband's death, he writes at the end of his argument: "These sometimes frightening prohibitions and obligations forced on widows find their own explanation. They are supposed to treat them [the widows] exactly in the same way as their husband's belongings; they should be sentenced death but generally you let them live, but in the worst conditions" (LÉVY-BRUHL, 1990, p. 291).

69. Regarding the danger of lying in primitive society, Lévy-Bruhl gives this testimony: "If a man has the habit of lying, and someone puts on his hat, distraction can contract the infection of lies ... the same goes for shoes ... Once I had a maid from Namhsan Palong, she was coming with me in Burma. A servant in Burma, on a rainy day, borrowed for five minutes, without permission, the sandals of my Palong. I never saw a woman seized by so much fury [...] the tears flowed down her cheeks and she told me that the sandals were new, but she would never wore them anymore: she feared that the defects of the bad liar Burmese servant would passed on to her" (L. Lévy-Bruhl, *L'âme primitive*, cited Italian translation, p. 136). Reflection on lie was occupying a major position in the philosophy of language of Europe and America during the life of Lévy-Bruhl, as well as in the French philosophy of that period, and Freud and his school could not do without it. This is a huge topic for which volumes of specific analyses would not be enough. Here we only cite, to clarify the position of Lévy-Bruhl, the text by Alexandre Koyré clearly inspired by him in developing its valuable analysis of secret societies and totalitarianism. Koyré says: "Each secret group is either a doctrinal or a action group, a sect or a conspiracy – and the boundary between the two types is very difficult to trace [...] it is a group that has a secret, or rather that owns secrets. We wish to say that, even when it is a pure action group, as a gang of gangsters or a palace conspiracy that does not possess a secret and esoteric doctrine, which is required to safeguard the mystery from the eyes of the uninitiated; even in this case, its existence is inextricably linked to the maintenance of a secret, and even a double secret, the secret of their existence as well as the purpose of its action". (KOYRÉ, 2010, p. 12) This is what happens in every "inferior society" in which the collective representation of single thought prevails: the survival of the group is guaranteed first and foremost by words. Yet language in its very essence acknowledge the possibility of lying, as history of philosophy teaches and as does Koyré in the opening of its work. Therefore paradoxically there is an innate way-out from the existence of the totalitarianism of collective representation and it assures to the individual, at any time, the possibility of regaining his singular identity.

70. E. Levinas (1934) (since 1997 it was available by Rivages' editions, it is added to Miguel Abensour's essay); Italian translation by A. Cavalletti, *Alcune riflessioni sulla filosofia dell'hitlerismo*, (LEVINAS, 1996, p. 21). As we tried to reconstruct in this work, we think that the difference between the mentality according to Lévy-Bruhl's hypothesis is extremely congenial to the persuasion of Levinas whereby "the authentically human is the Jewish being of every man" (LEVINAS, 1988, 2000, p. 192), because the monotheism of Israel is the only guarantee that sheltered humanity from itself. Levinas adds, with amused irony: "do not be frightened" (LEVINAS, 1988, 2000, p. 192).

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