THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN
AN ESSAY IN STRUCTURAL RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The text is Luke 10:25-37 which fits well the immediate context whose emphasis is on movement and journey. There are three communications: Luke to Theophilus, Jesus to the lawyer, and both to the interpreters of the Law. Semic and action codes predominate although the inventory of codes is quite full. But there is minimal use of the phatic and rhetorical codes and the onomastic one is completely absent. Semic structure involves three question and answer sequences within the frames of an initial question and terminal answer. The actantial outline is extremely complicated. Textually, there are axes of opposition between the lawyer and Jesus in the dialogue, between robbers and Samaritan in the parable, and thence between lawyer and priest/Levite in the dialectic of both units. Metatextually, there is the wider and lethal opposition between Jesus and some contemporaries. Neighbor is a dialogic relationship which may well reverse one's expectation of where such relationship should exist. [Translated by John Kirby of McGill University from "La parabole dite: 'Le bon Samaritain.' Recherches structurales," Etudes Théologiques et Religieuses 48(1973)61-79. Numbers and sub-titles (section V) were added editorially]

We postulate, as the basis of our work, that the way in which the section is divided into verses corresponds to what we would have done if it had been necessary for us to divide it into lexies, or units of meaning. We retain, as a convenient device, nothing more, the division into chapters. We shall work from the Greek text, but we shall have recourse to various translations from time to time.

I. CONTENT OF THE TEXT

1.1. The pericopes included in Luke 10:25-42 are peculiar to this Gospel. They are not, of course, the only fragments peculiar to it. What we wish to draw attention to is that we are dealing here with a non-synoptic passage
in the corpus generally described as "synoptic." This peculiarity does not imply that the terms, the semes, the utterances that we are going to meet are absolutely without isotopy, that is, the fixing of a word's meaning by other words, either within or outside the text under consideration. But it does imply that the isotopy cannot be sought in the parallel texts of Matthew and Mark.

1.2. Can we find, in the pericopes under consideration, any indications which would help us to understand why they are inserted at this precise place in the work of Luke?

1.3. From the very first reading we cannot help being struck by the frequency of references to comings and goings in the sequence of narratives and discourses which make up Luke 9:51-10:42:

Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem (9:51);
While they were on the road (9:57);
After that, the Lord sent seventy (10:1);
The seventy returned with joy (10:17);
A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho (10:38);
Jesus was on the road with his disciples (10:38).

Phrases or words indicating movement become rare at this point, and, in fact, do not appear again until 13:22. In the same way, if we work backwards, we do not find a reference to a change of place before 8:26. We do find a reference to going up and coming down a mountain in 9:28, 37, but no movement out of an area.

1.4. A second point is that we discover in 9:51-10:42 a large number of verbs of movement:

send: 9:52; 10:1,3 (as ἐκβάλλω in 10:2);
enter: 9:52; 10:5,8,10,38;
go: 10:7 (μεταβαίνω), 30 (καταβαίνω);
follow: 9:57,59,61;
come near: 10:9,11,34;
descend: 10:30,31 (καταβαίνω once more);
leave: 10:3, etc.

1.5. The correlation of these two sets of verbs suggests the setting out of diagrams which would show the
itineraries of the various actants: Jesus, his disciples, the wounded man, etc. If we were to superimpose these diagrams, the result might be significant: thus, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, while the man comes down from Jerusalem to Jericho; the disciples precede Jesus on the road just as the man precedes the Samaritan.

1.6. We note immediately pairs of opposites of the type: come/go, enter/leave, approach/withdraw etc. These are such that the first term necessarily entails the second (even if it is not expressed) unless, to quote Barthes, "a trap is set."

1.7. We might well suspect that the "plot" found in the parable of the Good Samaritan is not isolated from the rest of the context, since the verbs of movement that we have found in it represent about one-fifth of the verbs of movement in all of 9:51-10:42. This is very close to the proportion of verses in our text to verses in that context (13 out of 54).

1.80. Is it legitimate to take the sequence in which we are interested out of the context in which we find it? Here we are faced with the problem of the closing (cloture) of the text. No doubt, there is always something arbitrary in taking a text out of its context. It is only at the end of the analysis that we know whether our action was legitimate or not.

There are two indications in the text which appear to sanction the legitimacy of our action.

1.81. In the first place, our sequence is opened by a phrase which belongs to the narrative code, where it has a well-defined function, that is, to serve as a link between one pericope and another: Καί Ἰδοὺ (10:25). To find another phrase belonging to the same code and of equal force, we would have to go to 10:38: ἐν δὲ (ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν in other manuscripts) and then on to 11:1: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν.

1.82. In the second place, the verb which introduces the sequence is "to stand up" (ἀνέστη) in 10:25. This implies a movement by the lawyer which should find a cor-
relation at the end of the sequence. In fact, in 10:37, the one who stood up is told to "go": ἀνήρευσε! The correlation here is not to sit down but to leave. This is not incongruous. When one stands up, one can either go away or sit down again.

1.9. We have, then, found the limits of what we shall call the text. We designate as immediate context the passages 9:51-10:24 and 10:38-42. The Gospel of Luke will be called the work, and the Gospels as a whole, the corpus. If we refer to other books of the Old or New Testament, we shall speak of the Bible. Our text, then, is the collection of narrative or discursive syntagms to be found in Luke 10:25-37.

II. NATURE OF THE TEXT

2.1. The text begins as a narrative with the verb of 10:25a in the past tense, but it immediately becomes a discourse in the form of a dialogue with 10:25b in the first person singular. It finishes as a discourse with the second person singular, present tense, in 10:36.

2.2. The discourses, however, have a narrative background. They form part of a narrative as can be shown by, among other things, the resumption of the past tense verb (εἶπεν) at the point where the first dialogue is joined to the parable (10:29). We are told what Jesus said. The communication of the text is, therefore, a somewhat complicated problem.

2.3. The author, Luke, tells us, his readers, and even before us, those for whom he first wrote (Theophilus, according to 1:3), what Jesus told a lawyer when the latter entered into debate with him. Thus Luke directs to Theophilus, and to the general reader, the story that Jesus directed to the lawyer. This story, the sender of which is Jesus, although he is not mentioned by name, and the receiver of which is his questioner, is included in a longer story of which Luke is the sender and Theophilus (and the reader) is the receiver.

2.4. Incidentally, a third circle of communication may
be added. In 10:26 the question is asked: "What is written in the Law?" We are dealing here with a fragment of a hermeneutic code and we shall come back to this later. It is a question of interpreting a text.

2.5. But in so far as the Law is known and interpreted not by the lawyer alone but by a much wider circle, which could include the reader, it is clearly this wider circle, the circle of interpreters of the Law, which functions as receiver of the text in its entirety. As receiver, but, equally, with one of its members, Jesus, as sender, since he will propose an interpretation of the Law.

2.6. Thus the text has a triple level of communication, of senders/receivers, even when considered at the surface level:

But, of course, the last two levels of communication are already included within the first and widest level.

2.7. Beyond these, other levels of communication come to light: from the commentator to the reader, from the preacher to the hearer, etc. Each time another text will be produced. Its distance from the original text will depend upon how much the original situation of destination is kept in mind. Of course, in so far as the text is destined for the circle of interpreters of the Law, which circle is able to be expanded indefinitely, any commentary, as an interpretation of an interpretation, as a hermeneutic metalanguage, will always have some relationship with the original destination between sender and receivers that the surface text reveals. But it must never forget the fact that Luke told what Jesus said to a lawyer. It cannot be said that the catechetical, ethical, or homiletic uses to which this parable has been put have always obeyed this rule of prudence.
III. THE CODES

3.0. We proceed now to an inventory of the codes, it being understood that this inventory is not exhaustive. The first verse alone gives us four.

3.1. "And a certain lawyer stood up ..." The mention of the lawyer introduces the cultural code. In the same code we find: Teacher (25), priest (31), Levite (32), Samaritan (33), innkeeper (35), and brigands or bandits (30). Each of these terms is full of allusions, and in order to decipher them we would have to appeal to the knowledge about the distribution of social, political, religious, national, and other functions that we find in the corpus and, more generally, in the Bible and in the para-biblical literature.

It should be noted that these terms are distributed as opposites within the text:
- on one side the lawyer, on the other the Teacher;
- on one side the priest and the Levite, on the other the Samaritan and the hotel keeper;
- on one side the brigands, on the other "the one who showed mercy" ...

Some of the positions of the actantial diagram are thus filled out:

Opponents: the bandits;
Helpers: the Samaritan, the hotel keeper;
Non-opponents, on-elpers: the priest & Levite.

3.2. The verb "to get up" is the first element of a code of actions, in which we group together everything related to movement: to read (26), to reply (27), to say (28), to justify, by saying (29), to go down (30), to fall among (30), to strip (30), to go away (30), to go down (31), to come near to (32-33), to approach (34), to bind up the wounds (34), to pour oil and wine (34), to lift (34), to take (34) to take care (34), to give money, to take care, to pay, to return (35), to be the neighbor of (36), to show mercy, to go, to do (37).

The pairs of opposites in this code, when they are linked together, support practically the whole plot of
the narrative, and mark out the paths of meaning.

3.3. "To put to the test" (ἐκπεύραζω). This is an example of the anagogia code. We put under this code everything which says something about what is being told or related. The text is here considered as a trap to catch the principal actant. The anagogic code is not necessarily normative. It controls the reading of the text (usually as the author's own) but this does not exclude the possibility that other readings of the text may result from the analysis, readings which were neither seen nor desired by the author.

3.4. "Inherit eternal life." Here appears one of the most important codes in the text, the semic code, in which we are going to meet all the terms and expressions with which a field of coherent meaning is strewn: to be written in the Law (26), to read the Law (26), to love the Lord with all the heart, soul, and strength, to love one's neighbor as oneself (27), to do that and live (28), to wish to justify (29), to be the neighbor (36), to show mercy (37). What characterizes the semic code is that it constitutes a unity of signifieds rather than of signifiers. It is a unit at the level of meaning, whereas other codes, e.g., the cultural code, will need to be interpreted.

Here, the signifieds are joined to one another by the implication that each has for the one that follows it:

- Eternal life implies the Law;
- The Law implies love of God and of neighbor;
- Neighbor implies its own definition;
- The definition of neighbor implies mercy.

The parts which make up this code, when put together, constitute a complete discourse, which is interrupted by the tale of the man who fell among robbers.

In its relationship to the discourse, the narrative can be said to be metaphoric because it expresses, at the level of narrative, an important aspect of the discourse. It "metaphorizes" the expressions: to love one's
neighbor, to show mercy. But these two expressions are themselves in the relationship of metonymy: to show mercy is a metonymy of: to love one's neighbor.

Thus, the semic code is in reciprocal relationship with the action code. The narrative is to the discourse what the concrete is to the abstract, what the image is to the statement, what the fable is to the aphorism. Apart from this, and we shall come back to it later, at the end of the narrative the word neighbor is going to have a radical change from the sender-receiver relationship which it announced at the beginning. The object of the discourse will become the subject of the narrative:

Who is my neighbor? (29)
Who do you think was neighbor? (36)

3.5. We have already drawn attention to the narrative code with the Kaλ ὧν which opens the text (25). Other elements of this code are: he said to him, he replied (26,27), wishing to justify himself (29), Jesus answered (30), and the next day (35), Jesus said to him (37).

3.6. The text also brings to light a hermeneutic code in which we find a whole complex of questions: What is written in the Law? What do you read there? (26), And who is my neighbor? (29), Who do you think was neighbor? (36). This code is called hermeneutic, because it introduces interpretations of, in this case, the Law and the parable. In passing, it should be said that there is no objection to putting the same word or the same expression in two different codes at the same time. A code is not a lexical or semantic field, although a word could belong to several lexical or semantic fields, by virtue of its plurality of meaning (polysémie).

3.7. We now come to the mention of Jerusalem and Jericho. These belong to the topographic code, infrequent in our text, but very frequent in the work and in the corpus, as also in the immediate context (9:51). In many ways, these words could also be put in the symbolic code, not to mention the cultural code, if we thought of them not just as geographical references but also as allusions
to places filled with historical and eschatological meaning, that is, if they are metonymies or metaphors for other units of meaning.

3.8. The mention of "the next day" (35) could belong to a chronological code, attested weakly in the text but rather strongly in the immediate context: When the time came (9:51), after that ... (10:1), Jesus was praying one day (11:1).

3.9. The symbolic code, which we mentioned before, is present through the mention of "approaches" and "withdrawals" which run throughout the text: Who is my neighbor, that is, Who is near me? The Samaritan "draws near" while the priest and the Levite move away. Hence the question: Who has been the neighbor? Many narratives have references to space which have a symbolic function. We find another example in the immediate context where Jesus goes up and comes down the mountain of the transfiguration, a notation that is corroborated by 9:18: Jesus was praying alone. This way of referring to space implies the superimposition of a symbolic space upon a geographical space, and thus proposes the reading of the text at two successive levels.

3.10. The phatic code makes only one appearance in our text, if indeed it appears at all. It could be attached to the phrase: ὀρθῶς ἀπεκρίθης (28), if we translate it as: Well done! This would mean that it would be the equivalent of such expressions as: Good! Agreed!, which remind us of the "hinges" frequently found in Plato's dialogues. But I am inclined to think that the translation: "You have answered rightly," is a reply to the question in 10:26, and therefore cannot be just a pause in the conversation to bring about suspense. This excludes it from the phatic code.

3.11. To continue along the same line, the rhetorical code is also very sparingly used, although it is better attested than the phatic code. It is seen, first of all, in redundant language: "What is written in the Law? What do you read there?" This duplication is a mark of the
oratorical style. The series of questions also belongs to this code: What is written?

   It is written: You shall love ... your neighbor!
   Who is my neighbor?

This method of procedure is called "explication" (explication) in rhetoric.

3.12. Finally, the very structure of the text introduces the metalinguistic code. I mean, of course, the apparent structure since we do not yet know the real structure. Metalanguage is the term applied to language on language, that is, to commentary. Clearly, the parable is a comment, in its own way, on the word: neighbor. In our text, the relationship of the metalinguistic code to the hermeneutic code should be noted. The interpretation of a word in the question is made in a different language.

3.13. We cannot help noticing the absence of the onomastic code. No proper name appears except that of Jesus, which comes in at the very end (10:37). But this absence is heavy with meaning. All the actants are designated by their functions; no one is identified by his proper name. It is not persons, using the word in the modern sense, but roles, that the text brings into play.

3.14. If we consider only the relative importance of these codes, I do not think we shall be far wrong in putting forward the hypothesis that it is around the semic and the action codes that the whole text is going to turn. And we have already seen that these two codes are reciprocally related. The other codes, and primarily the cultural code, may nuance and somewhat complicate the path of meaning. But there is every chance that the latter will be sketched in by the relationship between the action and the semic code, since, as we have seen, the parable, belonging to the narrative genre, and therefore actantial, is the metalanguage of the word "neighbor" and has therefore a heavy investment of meaning.

   Indeed, the word "neighbor" is going to serve as a pivot for the entire text, and it is around it that everything will be distributed.
IV. THE SEMIC STRUCTURE

4.1. The text is constructed so that three questions and three answers are subsumed under an initial question which apparently does not receive an answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Initial Question:</th>
<th>A*. Final Answer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What must I do to inherit eternal life?</td>
<td>No apparent answer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. First Question:</th>
<th>B*. First Answer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is written in the Law?</td>
<td>It is written: You shall love ... your neighbor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Second Question:</th>
<th>C*. Second Answer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is my neighbor?</td>
<td>The parable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Third Question:</th>
<th>D*. Third Answer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who do you think was neighbor?</td>
<td>The one who showed mercy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This diagram needs to be completed. We start with two remarks.

4.2. The apparent absence of an answer to the initial question is not as radical as a superficial reading would lead us to believe. The question of the lawyer (25): "What must I do (ποιήσας) to inherit eternal life" is picked up in 10:37, in the final answer of Jesus to him, and with the same verb: "do likewise" (ποιεῖ ομοίως). This refers to the attitude of the one who had shown (literally "done") mercy, in the parable. Can we find, in the parable, a word which is connected with the initial question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The antithesis of life is death. But the man of the parable is left "half-dead." The Samaritan and, later on, the innkeeper are going to give life to the half-dead man by caring for him. And it is the sum of the acts of the Samaritan which will be described by the lawyer as: doing mercy. A set of links thus joins the verb "to do" in 10:25 with the same Greek verb in 10:37:

10:25. do \(\rightarrow\) eternal life
10:30. half-dead man \(\leftarrow\) show of mercy
10:36. "do" mercy \(\rightarrow\) give life
10:37. do this (mercy) \(\rightarrow\) (live eternally)
If this conjecture is right, the "do the same" of 10:37 gives an effective reply to the question: "What must I do" of 10:25.

4.3. The alternations between the sender and the receiver of the questions should be noted. In A and C it is the lawyer who functions as sender. In B and D it is Jesus. But if the above hypothesis is right, the lawyer is the receiver, not only in B and D, but also in 10:37, "do the same (and you will live)," which then takes the empty place of $A^\#$.

4.40. This may be conveniently summed up in the following diagram:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lawyer</th>
<th>Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A$</td>
<td>$B$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$C$</td>
<td>$B^#$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$D^#$</td>
<td>$D$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This diagram makes several points clear:

4.41. The axis $A-A^\#$ crosses the entire text.

4.42. The questions and answers operate the whole length of the subsidiary axes.

4.43. Two of these axes, $B-B^\#-C$ and $C^\#-D-D^\#$ pivot around $C-C^\#$, that is, the question which leads up to the parable and the parable itself.

It is not necessary to give too much importance to diagrams such as this. Their main use is to transcribe graphically what one knows, but in such a way that the
latent structure of the text shows itself more clearly.  

4.5. Let us look at these axes in turn. If \( B^* - C \) and \( C^* - D - D^* \) pivot around \( C - C^* \), it is because they present a certain symmetry. This is evident when we compare \( B^* \) to \( D \). In both cases it is a question of neighbor; a common \textit{same} ties the two syntagms together. It should also be noted that the syntagm, "and your neighbor as yourself," is only a part of the statement \( B^* \). There is a certain loss of discursive material between \( B^* \) and \( D \): a reduction by removal.

4.6. The loss of material is clear when we consider the axis \( B - B^* - C \). We start from the Law in general and from its summary, and from this summary we cut off a segment which will, by itself, provide the matter of the question around which everything will be organized. We have therefore taken one road rather than another, we have made a choice of what is going to be discussed. The question could equally well have been: Who is God? since the verb "to love" has both God and neighbor for its object. In that case the narrative would have been completely different, in the very nature of the case.

It is interesting to observe that nowhere in the work, in the corpus, or even in the Bible has this other choice been made. One can draw from this whatever theological conclusions one wishes, but this is not the purpose of structural analysis, and the question lies outside its competence. It limits itself to noting that the text has made a choice and operates within that choice.

4.7. Moreover, if we look at the axis \( C^* - D - D^* \), we note another choice, equally limiting in its effects: \( C^* \) presents several \textit{actants}, the attitude of each being a carrier of meaning; \( D \) proposes a choice between the meanings available; \( D^* \) chooses the meaning "mercy."

4.8. The journey of meaning thus starts from the Law to end in the exercise of mercy, through the mediation of the idea of \textit{neighbor}. This idea is the result of moving backward and taking one meaning from the meanings that were available for Law and then moving forward and
investing this in one of the meanings present in the acts of "drawing near." The parable is at the center of an arrangement which, on the one hand, goes back from neighbor to the Law in general and, on the other, moves forward through the different attitudes of the actants to the one attitude which alone is judged essential.

V. ACTANTIAL OUTLINE

5.1. The Variety of Oppositions.

If every actantial outline implies opposition between actants, opposition which is, to a certain extent, overcome, we have to deal with at least two actantial outlines in our text. One is found in the parable, another is found in the dialogue which immediately precedes and follows the parable, the discourse within the narrative.

5.2. Opposition I. The Dialogue: Lawyer and Jesus.

5.20. The anagogic code would, in fact, suggest that we read the text as the narrative of a test imposed on Jesus (on the Teacher ... of the Law?) by the lawyer.

5.21. In the test, the lawyer is in the position of Opponent. The actantial position of Helper is not filled. Or rather, it is going to be filled in a paradoxical way by the lawyer himself who, at the end, will indirectly admit his defeat by making his own the word by which Jesus surmounted the test. From being the one who puts Jesus to the test, he becomes the one who is tested by Jesus. The reverse is true in the case of Jesus.

5.22. That which is at stake in all this, the Object in the actantial diagram, is not mentioned in our text. To discover it, we have to look at the work and the corpus. Jesus, by being put to the test in which his life is at stake (with all kinds of "persons" in the position of Opponent: Judas, the Sanhedrin, the Roman authorities, etc.), transforms the situation and becomes the one who puts to the test those who killed him.

5.3. Opposition II. The Parable: Robbers & Samaritan.

5.30. This metatextual situation is not, however, without illustration in the parable itself. A comparison
between the actantial diagram that we have just suggested and the one we are going to find in the story called "the good Samaritan" would not be without interest.

5.31. To draw this latter diagram, we must note, first of all, that the one who is simply called "a man" is, at one and the same time, in the positions of Object and Subject and of Sender and Receiver. A man (in Jerusalem) sends himself (to Jericho). On the road he meets some bandits (Opponents) who interrupt his quest, and a Helper (the Samaritan) who, by caring for him, makes it possible for him to continue his quest, although we are never told if he accomplishes it. Our diagram would then be as follows:

Sender: 
A Man (Jerusalem) → A Man → A Man (Jericho)

Helper: 
The Samaritan → A Man ← The Bandits & the Innkeeper

5.32. This outline, however, does not take all the aspects of the narrative into account. In particular, it does not help us to understand what we were saying earlier about the choice of attitudes which the lawyer is asked to make, and which ends with his admission that priority must be given to the attitude called "mercy." Here two additional facts must be taken into consideration.

5.33. First of all, two people are going to be in a paradoxical position from the actantial point of view. The priest and the Levite are neither Helpers nor Opponents. It is this double negation which excludes them from the actantial diagram. They do nothing more than look and pass on. Do they, then, add anything of importance to the story? To answer this question, we must look at the cultural code.

5.34. Secondly, then, we find in this code some designations which are familiar (bandits, innkeeper), and others which are less familiar such as, priest (Ἰερεύς not πρεσβύτερος), Levite, Samaritan. I do not mean that the first-named ones do not raise problems, but that the second set
has a more enigmatic character in our culture.

5.35. It is the corpus which tells us that people designated as scribes, lawyers, priests, Pharisees, etc., are in conflict with Jesus and are violently opposed to him. The same corpus tells us, in referring back to that part of the Bible called the Old Testament, that the Judeans (and the Galileans and others "provincials") hated the Samaritans. In the immediate context of our text (9: 52-54), some Samaritans do not allow Jesus to enter their village.


5.40. In the text, then, we are dealing with a double play of oppositions. In addition to the Opponents which we have already mentioned: Jesus vs. the lawyer, we have also the pair: Priest and Levite vs. the Samaritan. While the first pair of Opponents give rise to the text, the second pair does not play the same role in the narrative. It is, so to speak, grafted onto an opposition much more fundamental: the brigands vs. the Samaritan. It adds nothing to the actantial diagram since the priest and the Levite do not intervene in the action save to "look" and "pass by."

5.41. Rare, indeed, are the narratives which introduce into their plot "persons" who have no position in the actantial diagram. The oblique introduction of the priest and Levite can only be justified if they are in some kind of relationship with one of the actants. Here the relationship is one of opposition. The mention of the Samaritan leads to a comparison between his position, that of Helper, and the other positions. In the dynamics of the actantial diagram, the bandits are the Opponents, while the priest and the Levite are Non-Helpers/Non-Opponents. They are on the outside looking in.

5.42. If the priest and Levite play no role in the actantial diagram, save as representing non Opponents/non Helpers, they play an important role in the articulation of the narrative and of its discourse. The lawyer will be
asked: "Which of these three has been the neighbor ...?" in 10:36. We have already spoken about the semic function of this choice. But it also has a polemical aspect.

5.43. The choice that the lawyer must make is not just between three "characters," but between a Helper and two Non-Helpers/Non-OPponents, and, curiously, the Helper is a Samaritan. The other two are Opponents of the Samaritans:

**Helper:** Samaritan  ![vs.](non-helper/non-opponent: priest & levite)

5.44. In leading the lawyer to choose, and to choose the Samaritan against the priest and the Levite, Jesus constrains him to say that the person who gives the right interpretation of the Law is the very one who is excluded from the "circle of interpreters," or, at any rate, from the circle of authorized interpreters, by the priests and the Levites. At the same time, the lawyer will be a good interpreter of the Law, but only if he takes the side of the one who is judged to be a bad interpreter of it, that is, the Samaritan. This very complex mixture of oppositions may be outlined thus:

**Sender:** (Man)  ![→](object: man)  ![→](receiver: (Man))

**Opponent:** Priest & Levite  ![→](law)  ![←](samaritan: man)  ![←](bandits)

5.45. From this we can see that, as far as the interpretation of the Law is concerned, the lawyer recognizes as his Helper, his cultural Opponent, the Samaritan.

5.5. The Unity of Oppositions I-III.

If we now try to bring together, in one diagram, all the various roles that we have discovered in the text (and not just in the narrative), we shall get something like the diagram at the head of the next page. We can see how the outline constituted by lines 1 and 4 includes the outline given in lines 2 and 3.

It is mercy which fulfils the communication of the
Law, in spite of the opposition of the priest and Levite. It does so with the aid of the Samaritan, and then with that of the lawyer who was at first Opponent of Jesus, since the question he directed at Jesus concealed a trap, a "test." In diagram format:

Sender: Lawyer → Object: Law → Receiver: Jesus
Sender: Man → Object: Man → Receiver: Man
Helper: Samaritan → Subject: Man → Opponent: Bandits
Helper: Samaritan → Subject: Mercy → Opponent: Priest & Levite

5.6. Opposition IV. Metatextual: Jesus and Others.
5.60. But we must go further still and bring metatextuality into our considerations, because, as we saw earlier, an interplay of opposing forces, the stakes of which were the life of Jesus, had brought to grips the interpreters of the Law (among others) and Jesus himself.
5.61. The above double diagram, an intratextual one, is itself included in a metatextual one. It would, naturally, take a great deal of research to set up this latter diagram. I hope I shall be excused for doing it quickly and for setting out an hypothesis that I do not have time to demonstrate. It seems to me that Jesus himself, being the Opponent of the "interpreters of the Law," becomes the Subject of an actantial diagram in which he can count on no other help than that of God. The test, repeated in the many confrontations which mark the direction in which the corpus moves, comes to a climax by putting Jesus, the Subject, to death, and not just to "half-death" as with the man in the parable.
5.62. From that point of view we would diagram thus:

Sender: X (God?) → Object: X (Knowledge of Law?) → Receiver: Interpreters of the Law
Helper: God → Subject: Jesus → Opponent: Priests, Levites, Others.
If we superimpose all these outlines on each other, we would have an outline in which the priests and Levites would be in the position Opponent, while in the actantial position Subject we would find successively: the wounded man - mercy - Jesus, and these three terms are not without relationship to each other.

I hasten to add that a more extended analysis would have to bring in here those narratives in which the position of Jesus as Subject is better indicated, and especially the famous twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. In Matt 25:31-46 we see, in effect, that the people there are described as: wounded, injured, disparaged, etc.; at the same time, we find the Helpers, the elect, and the Non-Helpers/Non-Opponents, the "damned." The identity of the subject is explicitly stated. It is Jesus himself in the persons of the "little ones."

We can see, therefore, how, within a corpus, one text can develop from within another, partly because of a common structure (which is fairly commonplace), but more particularly because of the relationship between *semes* which can be compared because of their organization into structures.

The structural analysis of a text is not finished as long as we have not established the relationship of all the texts within a corpus, and, eventually within the entire genre to which the corpus belongs, not to speak of all literature!

At this point, I think the reader would agree that we have laid bare more than one set of meanings running through our text:

a) eternal life, the Law, neighbor, mercy;
b) ambush, indifference, Samaritan, rescue of the wounded man;
c) Jesus "wounded," indifference of the damned, the "drawing near" of the elect, election. (This last meaning appears like a watermark)

We could also arrange these meanings in columns, thus:

a) *First Column:* the testing of Jesus on the question of eternal life, the testing of the man who fell
into the ambush, the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.

b) Second Column: the content of the Law, the indifference of the priest and Levite as to its content, the indifference of the damned to those who suffer.

c) Third Column: the search for the neighbor, the discovery of the Samaritan as a neighbor, the status of the elect, the neighbors of those who suffer.

d) Fourth Column: mercy as an interpretation of the Law, the merciful action of the Samaritan, the election of the elect.

IV. THE QUESTION OF NEIGHBOR

6.0. One question remains unsolved, however. That is the one which is posed by the movement from the active to the passive in the double formulation of the problem as to who is the neighbor. While the question of the lawyer is in the active, that of Jesus is in the passive:

Who is my neighbor?

Who proved to be neighbor to the wounded man?

6.1. Certain commentators have tried to solve the problem by treating the passive as an active: whom did the Samaritan consider to be his neighbor? Or, by playing on the peculiarities of the Aramaic verb. Or, finally, by considering the second question to be the result of a grammatical error.

6.2. These hypotheses cannot be excluded a priori. But structural analysis takes the text as it finds it, and tries to deal with the questions that are posed by the text as it stands. How can we deal with the question which is raised here?

6.3. Let us say first of all, that the parable revolves around different questions about nearness:

The bandits draw near to the wounded man to despoil him;

The priest and the Levite move away from the man whom they see to be wounded:

The Samaritan draws near to the man to help him.

These different movements are rendered in the Greek text by two verbs which show the opposition much better than in
the above translations: προσέρχομαι (proserchomai, to draw near) and ἀντιπαρέρχομαι (antiparerchomai, to pass by).

6.4. These two movements make the wounded man the center of the narrative. It is the different relationships to him which are going to be a basis for the value judgment at the end of the discourse. This centrality strongly reflects the fact that, in the actantial diagram, the man is the Subject of the quest as well as its Object. He "acts" in the narrative in the sense that it is around him that the functions Helper/Opponent are distributed.

6.5. This active role of the wounded man is often obscured by a prejudice, a prejudice which perhaps the lawyer shares, namely, that the neighbor is necessarily inferior since he is the one to be helped, out of our bounty or goodness of heart! But in the entire narrative genre, the Subject is never "inferior." He is never an inert object over which the Helpers and Opponents fight. If our text appears to disobey this rule, it is because the action of the Subject is postponed. The wounded man is, in the narrative, in a position of suspense, waiting for the meaning that the discourse is going to give to him. We have said several times that the discourse includes the parable narrative in such a way that each refers to the other.

6.6. Later on, the man is going to recover his strong position as actant, in his recognition of the "neighbor" in the Samaritan who saved his life. While this is not explicitly said in the narrative, it is implied in the discourse. By saying, "which of the three proved to be neighbor of the man who fell among the bandits?" Jesus suggests an end to the story which need not be put at the narrative level, since, by a transposition that we have already pointed out, it is the lawyer himself who, by recognizing the "neighbor" in the Samaritan (although everything about this latter repelled him rather than drew him near) is going to be told to go and act in the same way, to exercise mercy, to "be a Samaritan." The
invitation to show mercy takes its meaning here from the inversion that has just been affirmed. In exercising mercy, recognize your neighbor in the one who repels you but who, none the less, draws near to you, contrary to those to whom you are close but who have drawn away from you.

6.7. Thus, the lawyer is, at one and the same time, in the position of the Samaritan ("do the same") and also in the position of the wounded man:

a) in so far as he takes the Samaritan's position, he is to show mercy to every man, even those who are different from him and separated from him by culture;

b) in so far as the Samaritan is his neighbor, in the act by which he rescued him, he is told to love his neighbor whom he has not chosen and who has, by chance, saved his life.

6.8. Thus the love of neighbor is to be taken in two ways, because a drawing near is always a two-way affair. To draw near is to come closer to another and to bring the other closer to you.

6.9. It is this complex set of relationships which is paradoxically expressed by the reversal of the question about neighborliness in 10:36 and the "do the same" of 10:37. This confirms and fills out the meaning of "as yourself" in 10:27 which implies a relationship of self to self. We have seen, however, that this relationship comes through the "neighbor"; it involves, not only: love yourself as you love your neighbor, but also: love yourself as your neighbor loves you.

We must stop at this point, where we pass from the discovery of meaning to the "recapture of meaning," to use the luminous expression of Paul Ricoeur. The movement from one to the other may be prepared for us by structural analysis, but the movement itself is beyond its sphere and its power.

APPENDIX

I have tried to find in the work, the Gospel of Luke, the sequences in which certain structural character-
ISTICS OF OUR TEXT APPEAR ONCE AGAIN. ALTHOUGH RATHER SUMMARY, THE FOLLOWING COMPARISON IS NOT WITHOUT INTEREST.

7.1. WITH REGARD TO THE REVERSAL OF THE ACTANTIAL ROLES OF HELPER AND OPPONENT, WE HAVE SEVERAL FRAGMENTS WHICH PRESENT A CONVERSION SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE LAWYER WHO, THOUGH AT THE BEGINNING AN ADVISORY OF JESUS, ENDS UP BY TAKING HIS SIDE:


b) LUKE 14:1-6. THE PHARISEES, SUMMONED TO SAY WHETHER OR NOT A MAN SHOULD BE HEALED ON THE SABBATH, AND THEIR OPINION BEING THAT HE SHOULD NOT, THEY ARE SILENT, Thus GIVING SILENT CONSENT TO THE HEALING ACT OF JESUS.

c) LUKE 18:1-8. THE "UNJUST" JUDGE, AT FIRST THE OPPONENT OF THE WOMAN WHO SEeks JUSTICE, FINALLY COMES AROUND TO GRANT IT.

d) LUKE 23:47. THE CENTURION CRIES OUT AT THE MOMENT OF JESUS' DEATH: "CERTAINLY THIS MAN WAS INNOCENT." IT IS TRUE THAT HE IS NOT MENTIONED BEFORE AND THIS LEAVES SOME UNCERTAINTY AS TO WHETHER HE WAS AN OPPONENT OF JESUS.

These somewhat disparate samplings are interesting, especially when we remember that reversals like this are very rare in popular tales. Generally speaking, the Opponent is fixed in his function. He never changes his position, he simply disappears. In French folklore, neither the ogre, nor the wolf, nor the wicked witch ever become "good." A remarkable exception to this rule are the tales of Christmas, in which the "conversion" of the "evil character" is, in some ways, the rule. Doubtless the cultural (anthropological, ethical) background is different in this case, and the distribution of ethical functions would therefore be different also.

7.2. LUKE 12:57-58. HERE EXPLICIT ADVICE, PUT ON THE LIPS OF JESUS, IS GIVEN TO BE RECONCILED WITH THE ADVER-
sary before the judgment comes, which will give to all the litigants their just due. The reversal is not presented as an unexpected result of the action, but as something which is to be sought.

7.3. Luke 17:11-19. Another reference to a Samaritan. Here he is the only one of ten lepers who, contrary to all expectation, returns to thank Jesus for healing him. Thus the Samaritan remains the one who does something that he is not expected to do. This reversal of character is parallel to the inversion of roles in our text.

7.4. Luke 13:23-30. This passage bears some resemblance to Matt 25:31-46. But here it is a question only of the damned, and it is stated that some among them can say: "we have eaten and drunk in your presence and you have taught in our streets" (13:26).

7.5. Finally, with regard to the reversal of relationships which we have discussed when dealing with the question: "who proved to be the neighbor of the man who fell into the hands of the brigands?" we find a similar reversal in the story of the woman who poured the perfume on the feet of Jesus in Luke 7:36-48. "Thanks to that (the ointment and the manifestation of the woman's love), her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little" (7:47). The logic of the first sentence would normally lead to: "The one who loves little is forgiven little." What we have here, then, is a reversal in the chronological order: Pardon precedes love. The reversal is therefore only at the level of the apparent structure.
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