

TOTEM AND TABOO

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Sigmund Freud

Translated by
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NOTE

SIGMUND FREUD [1856-1939], the widely acknowledged father of psychoanalysis, maintained a long-term private practice as an analyst, offering the mentally ill a treatment he sometimes called "the talking cure." Yet he once astonished an analyst and by remarking "I don't really think I'm a frightfully good analyst—too impatient." Indeed it may be said that his true life's work was to explore, refine and disseminate his theories about human behavior and the origins of mental illness, and foster growth in the field of medicine he had pioneered.

A critical phase of this work was the rigorous self-analysis Freud undertook in 1896, following his father's death. It has been said that he had a love-hate relationship with his father and indeed several of the childhood recollections he analyzed in depth involved conflict between them—as well as guilt over sexual feelings that, as a boy, he'd experienced towards his own mother. The complex social customs governing parent-child relationships and the many taboos inherent to them were naturally, therefore, of great significance to his self-analysis and most of his writings. *Totem and Taboo*, written in 1913, has been called one of Freud's most "audacious" texts, because in it he attempts to link the beginnings of those customs—indeed the beginnings of human civilization itself—to a moment in primitive societies when a son may have acted out his own familial conflicts by rising up and killing his father.

Freud was himself, by many reports, a devoted father to his six children. He was also an energetic, enterprising author and lecturer, and the founder of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society. Many of this society's members developed psychological theories of their own that were to challenge or threaten Freud's and as a result the "Psychological Wednesday Circle" weathered a long string of interpersonal storms. Nevertheless Freud's efforts and ideas greatly facilitated and inspired their work and others', including that of his youngest child Anna, who grew up to become a pioneer herself, in child psychology.

adequate command over the material to be elaborated. Both groups will have to content themselves with whatever attention they can stimulate here and there and with the hope that frequent meetings between them will not remain unproductive for science.

The two principle themes, totem and taboo, which gave the name to this small book are not treated alike here. The problem of taboo is presented more exhaustively, and the effort to solve it is approached with perfect confidence. The investigation of totemism may be modestly expressed as: "This is all that psychoanalytic study can contribute at present to the elucidation of the problem of totemism." This difference in the treatment of the two subjects is due to the fact that taboo still exists in our midst. To be sure, it is negatively conceived and directed to different contents, but according to its psychological nature, it is still nothing else than Kant's "Categorical Imperative," which tends to act compulsively and rejects all conscious motivations. On the other hand, totemism is a religio-social institution which is alien to our present feelings; it has long been abandoned and replaced by new forms. In the regions, morals, and customs of the civilized races of today it has left only slight traces, and even among those races where it is still retained, it has had to undergo great changes. The social and material progress of the history of mankind could obviously change taboo much less than totemism.

In this book the attempt is ventured to find the original meaning of totemism through its infantile traces, that is, through the indications in which it reappears in the development of our own children. The close connection between totem and taboo indicates the further paths to the hypothesis maintained here. And although this hypothesis leads to somewhat improbable conclusions, there is no reason for rejecting the possibility that it comes more or less near to the reality which is so hard to reconstruct.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

WHEN ONE reviews the history of psychoanalysis¹ one finds that it had its inception in the study of morbid mental states. Beginning with the observation of hysteria and the other neuroses² Professor Freud gradually extended his investigations to normal psychology and evolved new concepts and new methods of study. The neurotic symptoms were no longer imaginary troubles the nature of which one could not grasp, but were conceived as mental and emotional maladjustments to one's environment. The stamp of degeneracy impressed upon neurotics by other schools of medicine was altogether eradicated. Deeper investigation showed conclusively that a person might become neurotic if subjected to certain environments, and that there was no definite dividing line between normal and abnormal. The hysterical symptoms, obsessions, doubts, phobias, as well as hallucinations of the insane, show the same mechanisms as those similar psychic structures which one constantly encounters in normal persons in the form of mistakes in talking, reading, writing, forgetting,³ dreams and wit. The dream, always highly valued by the populace, and as much despised by the educated classes, has a definite structure and meaning when subjected to analysis. Professor Freud's monumental work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*,⁴

¹*The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement*, translated by A. A. Brill. Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph Series.

²*Selected Papers on Hysteria and Other Psychoneuroses*, translated by A. A. Brill. Monograph Series.

³*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, translated by A. A. Brill. T. Fisher Unwin, London, and the Macmillan Co., N.Y.

⁴Translated by A. A. Brill. George Allen, and Unwin, London, and the Macmillan Co., N.Y.

marked a new epoch in the history of mental science. One might use the same words in reference to his profound analysis of wit.⁵

Faulty psychic actions, dreams and wit are products of the unconscious mental activity, and like neurotic or psychotic manifestations represent efforts at adjustment to one's environment. The slip of the tongue shows that on account of unconscious inhibitions the individual concerned is unable to express his true thoughts; the dream is a distorted or plain expression of those wishes which are prohibited in the waking states, and the witticism, owing to its veiled or indirect way of expression, enables the individual to obtain pleasure from forbidden sources. But whereas dreams, witticisms, and faulty actions give evidence of inner conflicts which the individual overcomes, the neurotic or psychotic symptom is the result of a failure and represents a morbid adjustment.

The aforementioned psychic formations are therefore nothing but manifestations of the struggle with reality, the constant effort to adjust one's primitive feelings to the demands of civilization. In spite of all later development the individual retains all his infantile psychic structures. Nothing is lost; the infantile wishes and primitive impulses can always be demonstrated in the grown up and on occasion can be brought back to the surface. In his dreams the normal person is constantly reviving his childhood, and the neurotic or psychotic individual merges back into a sort of psychic infantilism through his morbid productions. The unconscious mental activity which is made up of repressed infantile material forever strives to express itself. Whenever the individual finds it impossible to dominate the difficulties of the world of reality there is a regression to the infantile, and psychic disturbances ensue which are conceived as peculiar thoughts and acts. Thus the civilized adult is the result of his childhood or the sum total of his early impressions; psychoanalysis thus confirms the old saying: The child is father to the man.

It is at this point in the development of psychoanalysis that the paths gradually broadened until they finally culminated in this work. There were many indications that the childhood of the individual showed a marked resemblance to the primitive history or the childhood of races. The knowledge gained from dream analysis and phantasies,⁶

when applied to the productions of racial phantasies, like myths and fairy tales, seemed to indicate that the first impulse to form myths was due to the same emotional strivings which produced dreams, fancies and symptoms.⁷ Further study in this direction has thrown much light on our great cultural institutions, such as religion, morality, law and philosophy, all of which Professor Freud has modestly formulated in this volume and thus initiated a new epoch in the study of racial psychology.

I take great pleasure in acknowledging my indebtedness to Mr. Alfred B. Kuttner for the invaluable assistance he rendered in the translation of this work.

A. A. Brill.

⁵ *Wit and Its Relations to the Unconscious*, translated by A. A. Brill. Moffat, Yard and Co., N.Y.

⁶ Freud: *Leonardo Da Vinci*, translated by A. A. Brill. Moffat, Yard and Co., N.Y.

⁷ Cf. the works of Abraham, Spielrein, Jung, and Rank.

CHAPTER I

THE SAVAGE'S DREAD OF INCEST

PRIMITIVE MAN is known to us by the stages of development through which he has passed: that is, through the inanimate monuments and implements which he has left behind for us, through our knowledge of his art, his religion and his attitude towards life, which we have received either directly or through the medium of legends, myths and fairy-tales; and through the remnants of his ways of thinking that survive in our own manners and customs. Moreover, in a certain sense he is still our contemporary: there are people whom we still consider more closely related to primitive man than to ourselves, in whom we therefore recognize the direct descendants and representatives of earlier man. We can thus judge the so-called savage and semi-savage races; their psychic life assumes a peculiar interest for us, for we can recognize in their psychic life a well-preserved, early stage of our own development.

If this assumption is correct, a comparison of the "Psychology of Primitive Races" as taught by folklore, with the psychology of the neurotic as it has become known through psychoanalysis, will reveal numerous points of correspondence and throw new light on subjects that are more or less familiar to us.

For outer as well as for inner reasons, I am choosing for this comparison those tribes which have been described by ethnographers as being most backward and wretched: the aborigines of the youngest continent, namely Australia, whose fauna has also preserved for us so much that is archaic and no longer to be found elsewhere.

The aborigines of Australia are looked upon as a peculiar race which shows neither physical nor linguistic relationship with its nearest neighbors, the Melanesian, Polynesian and Malayan races. They do not build houses or permanent huts; they do not cultivate the soil or keep

any domestic animals except dogs; and they do not even know the art of pottery. They live exclusively on the flesh of all sorts of animals which they kill in the chase, and on the roots which they dig. Kings or chieftains are unknown among them, and all communal affairs are decided by the elders in assembly. It is quite doubtful whether they evince any traces of religion in the form of worship of higher beings. The tribes living in the interior who have to contend with the greatest vicissitudes of life owing to a scarcity of water, seem in every way more primitive than those who live near the coast.

We surely would not expect that these poor, naked cannibals should be moral in their sex life according to our ideas, or that they should have imposed a high degree of restriction upon their sexual impulses. And yet we learn that they have considered it their duty to exercise the most searching care and the most painful rigor in guarding against incestuous sexual relations. In fact their whole social organization seems to serve this object or to have been brought into relation with its attainment.

~~Among the Australian the system of Totemism takes the place of all religious and social institutions. Australian tribes are divided into smaller *septs* or clans, each taking the name of its *totem*. Now, what is a totem? As a rule it is an animal, either edible and harmless, or dangerous and feared; more rarely the totem is a plant or a force of nature (rain, water), which stands in a peculiar relation to the whole clan. The totem is first of all the tribal ancestor of the clan, as well as its tutelary spirit and protector; it sends oracles and, though otherwise dangerous, the totem knows and spares its children. The members of a totem are therefore under a sacred obligation not to kill (destroy) their totem, to abstain from eating its meat or from any other enjoyment of it. Any violation of these prohibitions is automatically punished. The character of a totem is inherent not only in a single animal or a single being but in all the members of the species. From time to time festivals are held at which the members of a totem represent or imitate, in ceremonial dances, the movements and characteristics of their totems.~~

~~The totem is hereditary either through the maternal or the paternal line (maternal transmission probably always preceded and was only later supplanted by the paternal). The attachment to a totem is the foundation of all the social obligations of an Australian: it extends on the one hand beyond the tribal relationship, and on the other hand it supersedes consanguinous relationship.¹~~

¹ Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, Vol. I, p. 53, "The totem bond is stronger than the bond of blood or family in the modern sense."

The totem is not limited to district or to locality; the members of a totem may live separated from one another and on friendly terms with adherents of other totems.²

And now, finally, we must consider that peculiarity of the totemic system which attracts the interest of the psychoanalyst. Almost everywhere the totem prevails there also exists the law that *the members of the same totem are not allowed to enter into sexual relations with each other, that is, that they cannot marry each other*. This represents the *exogamy* which is associated with the totem.

This seemingly maintained prohibition is very remarkable. There is nothing to account for it in anything, but we have hitherto learned

² This very brief extract of the totemic system cannot be left without some elucidation and without discussing its limitations. The name Totem or Totam was first learned from the North American Indians by the Englishman, J. Long, in 1791. The subject has gradually acquired great scientific interest and has called forth a copious literature. I refer especially to *Totemism and Exogamy* by J. G. Frazer, 4 vols., 1910, and the books and articles of Andrew Lang (*The Secret of Totem*, 1905). The credit for having recognized the significance of totemism for the ancient history of man belongs to the Scotchman, J. Ferguson MacLennan (*Fortnightly Review*, 1869-70). Exterior to Australia, totemic institutions were found and are still observed among North American Indians, as well as among the races of the Polynesian Islands group, in East India, and in a large part of Africa. Many traces and survivals otherwise hard to interpret lead to the conclusion that totemism also once existed among the aboriginal Aryan and Semitic races of Europe, so that many investigators are inclined to recognize in totemism a necessary phase of human development through which every race has passed.

How then did prehistoric man come to acquire a totem; that is, how did he come to make his descent from this or that animal foundation of his social duties and, as we shall hear, of his sexual restrictions as well? Many different theories have been advanced to explain this, a review of which the reader may find in Wundt's *Volkerpsychologie* (Vol. II, *Mythus und Religion*).

I promise soon to make the problem of totemism a subject of special study in which an effort will be made to solve it by applying the psychoanalytic method. (Cf. the fourth chapter of this work.)

Not only is the theory of totemism controversial, but the very facts concerning it are hardly to be expressed in such general statements as were attempted above. There is hardly an assertion to which one would not have to add exceptions and contradictions. But it must not be forgotten that even the most primitive and conservative races are, in a certain sense, old, and have a long period behind them during which whatsoever was aboriginal with them has undergone much development and distortion. Thus among those races who still evince it, we find totemism today in the most manifold states of decay and disintegration; we observe that fragments of it have passed over to other social and religious institutions; or it may exist in fixed forms but far removed from its original nature. The difficulty then consists in the fact that it is not altogether easy to decide what in the actual conditions is to be taken as a faithful copy of the significant past and what is to be considered as a secondary distortion of it.

from the conception of the totem or from any of its attributes; that is, we do not understand how it happened to enter the system of totemism. We are therefore not astonished if some investigators simply assume that at first exogamy—both as to its origin and to its meaning—had nothing to do with totemism, but that it was added to it at some time without any deeper association, when marriage restrictions proved necessary. However that may be, the association of totemism and exogamy exists, and proves to be very strong.

Let us elucidate the meaning of this prohibition through further discussion.

a) The violation of the prohibition is not left to what is, so to speak, an automatic punishment, as is the case with other violations of the prohibitions of the totem (e.g., not to kill the totem animal), but is most energetically avenged by the whole tribe as if it were a question of warding off a danger that threatens the community as a whole on a guilt that weighs upon all. A few sentences from Frazer's book³ will show how seriously such trespasses are treated by these savages who, according to our standards, are otherwise very unimpaired.

"In Australia the regular penalty for sexual intercourse with a person of a forbidden clan is death. It matters not whether the woman is of the same local group or has been captured in war from another tribe; a man of the wrong clan who uses her as his wife is hunted down and killed by his clansmen, and so is the woman; though in some cases, if they succeed in eluding capture for a certain time, the offense may be condoned. In the Ta-Ta-thi tribe, New South Wales, in the rare cases which occur, the man is killed, but the woman is only beaten or speared, or both, till she is nearly dead; the reason given for not actually killing her being that she was probably coerced. Even in casual amours the clan prohibitions are strictly observed; any violations of these prohibitions 'are regarded with the utmost abhorrence and are punished by death' (Howitt)."

b) As the same severe punishment is also meted out for temporary love affairs which have not resulted in childbirth, the assumption of other motives, perhaps of a practical nature, becomes improbable.

c) As the totem is hereditary and is not changed by marriage, the results of the prohibition, for instance in the case of maternal heredity, are easily perceived. If, for example, the man belongs to a clan with the totem of the Kangaroo and marries a woman of the Emu totem, the

³ Frazer, l. c., p. 54.

children, both boys and girls, are all Emu. According to the totem law incestuous relations with his mother and his sister, who are Emu like himself, are therefore made impossible for a son of this marriage.⁴

d) But we need only a reminder to realize that the exogamy connected with the totem accomplishes more; that is, aims at more than the prevention of incest with the mother or the sisters. It also makes it impossible for the man to have sexual union with all the women of his own group, with a number of females, therefore, who are not consanguinously related to him, by treating all these women like blood relations. The psychological justification for this extraordinary restriction, which far exceeds anything comparable to it among civilized races, is not, at first, evident. All we seem to understand is that the rôle of the totem (the animal) as ancestor is taken very seriously. Everybody descended from the same totem is consanguinously related to it, of one family; and in this family the most distant grades of relationship are recognized as an absolute obstacle to sexual union.

Thus these savages reveal to us an unusually high grade of incest dread or incest sensitiveness, combined with the peculiarity, which we do not very well understand, of substituting the totem relationship for the real blood relationship. But we must not exaggerate this contradiction too much, and let us bear in mind that the totem prohibitions include real incest as a special case.

It is not surprising that the substitution of the totem group for the actual family has come about remains a riddle, the solution of which is perhaps bound up with the explanation of the totem itself. Of course it must be remembered that with a certain freedom of sexual intercourse, extending beyond the limitations of matrimony, the blood relationship, and with it also the prevention of incest, becomes so uncertain that we cannot dispense with some other basis for the prohibition. It is therefore not superfluous to note that the customs of Australians recognize social conditions and festive occasions at which the exclusive conjugal right of a man to a woman is violated.

The linguistic custom of these tribes, as well as of most totem races

⁴ But the father, who is a Kangaroo, is free—at least under this prohibition—to commit incest with his daughters, who are Emu. In the case of paternal inheritance of the totem the father would be Kangaroo as well as the children; then incest with the daughters would be forbidden to the father and incest with the mother would be left open to the son. These consequences of the totem prohibition seem to indicate that the maternal inheritance is older than the paternal one, for there are grounds for assuming that the totem prohibitions are directed first of all against the incestuous desires of the son.

only these twelve totem groups—assuming the same number of people in each group—every member of a group would have $\frac{1}{12}$ of all the women of the tribe to choose from. The existence of the two phratries reduces this number to $\frac{1}{6}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$; a man of the totem α can only marry a woman from the groups 1 to 6. With the introduction of the two sub-classes the selection sinks to $\frac{1}{12}$ or $\frac{1}{8}$; a man of the totem α must limit his marriage choice to the women of the totems 4, 5, 6.

The historical relations of the marriage classes—of which there are found as many as eight in some tribes—are quite unexplained. We only see that these arrangements seek to attain the same object as the totem exogamy, and even strive for more. But whereas the totem exogamy makes the impression of a sacred statute which sprang into existence, no one knows how and is therefore a custom, the complicated institutions of the marriage classes, with their subdivisions and the conditions attached to them, seem to spring from legislation with a definite aim in view. They have perhaps taken up afresh the task of incest prohibition because the influence of the totem was on the wane. And while the totem system is, as we know, the basis of all other social obligations and moral restrictions of the tribe, the importance of the phratries generally ceases when the regulation of the marriage choice at which they aimed has been accomplished.

In the further development of the classification of the marriage system there seems to be a tendency to go beyond the prevention of natural and group incest, and to prohibit marriage between more distant group relations, in a manner similar to the Catholic church, which extended the marriage prohibitions always in force for brothers and sisters, to cousins, and invented for them the grades of spiritual kinship.⁸

It would hardly serve our purpose to go into the extraordinarily intricate and unsettled discussion concerning the origin and significance of the marriage classes, or to go more deeply into their relation to totemism. It is sufficient for our purposes to point out the great care expended by the Australians as well as by other savage people to prevent incest.⁹ We must say that these savages are even more sensitive to incest than we, perhaps because they are more subject to temptations than we are, and hence require more extensive protection against it. But the incest dread of these races does not content itself with the creation of the institutions described, which, in the main, seem to be

⁸ Andrew Lang, "Totemism," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, 1911.

⁹ Storfer has recently drawn special attention to this point in his monograph: "Parricide as a Special Case," *Papers on Applied Psychic Investigation*, No. 12, Vienna, 1911.

directed against group incest. We must add a series of "customs" which watch over the individual behavior to near relatives in our sense, which are maintained with almost religious severity and of whose object there can hardly be any doubt. These customs or custom prohibitions may be called "avoidances." They spread far beyond the Australian totem races. But here again I must ask the reader to be content with a fragmentary excerpt from the abundant material.

Such restrictive prohibitions are directed in Melanesia against the relations of boys with their mothers and sisters. Thus, for instance, on Lepers Island, one of the New Hebrides, the boy leaves his maternal home at a fixed age and moves to the "clubhouse," where he then regularly sleeps and takes his meals. He may still visit his home to ask for food; but if his sister is at home he must go away before he has eaten; if no sister is about he may sit down to eat near the door. If brother and sister meet by chance in the open, she must run away or turn aside and conceal herself. If the boy recognizes certain footprints in the sand as his sister's he is not to follow them, nor is she to follow his. He will not even mention her name and will guard against using any current word if it forms part of her name. This avoidance, which begins with the ceremony of puberty, is strictly observed for life. The reserve between mother and son increases with age and generally is more obligatory on the mother's side. If she brings him something to eat she does not give it to him herself but puts it down before him, nor does she address him in the familiar manner of mother and son, but uses the formal address. Similar customs obtain in New Caledonia. If brother and sister meet, she flees into the bush and he passes by without turning his head toward her.¹⁰

On the Gazelle Peninsula in New Britain a sister, beginning with her marriage, may no longer speak with her brother, nor does she utter his name but designates him by means of a circumlocution.¹¹

In New Mecklenburg some cousins are subject to such restrictions, which also apply to brothers and sisters. They may neither approach each other, shake hands, nor give each other presents, though they may talk to each other at a distance of several paces. The penalty for incest with a sister is death through hanging.¹²

¹⁰ R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, [see] also Frazer: *Totemism and Exogamy*, Vol. I, p. 77.

¹¹ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 124, according to Kleinschoten: *The Inhabitants of the Coast of the Gazelle Peninsula*.

¹² Frazer, I. c., II, p. 131, according to P. G. Peckel in *Anthropos*, 1908.

These rules of avoidance are especially severe in the Fiji Islands where they concern not only consanguinous sisters but group sisters as well. To hear that these savages hold sacred orgies in which persons of just these forbidden degrees of kinship seek sexual union would seem still more peculiar to us, if we did not prefer to make use of this contradiction to explain the prohibition instead of being astonished at it.¹³

Among the Battas of Sumatra these laws of avoidance affect all near relationships. For instance, it would be most offensive for a Battan to accompany his own sister to an evening party. A brother will feel most uncomfortable in the company of his sister even when other persons are also present. If either comes into the house, the other prefers to leave. Nor will a father remain alone in the house with his daughter any more than the mother with her son. The Dutch missionary who reported these customs added that unfortunately he had to consider them well founded. It is assumed without question by these races that a man and a woman left alone together will indulge in the most extreme intimacy, and as they expect all kinds of punishments and evil consequences from consanguinous intercourse they do quite right to avoid all temptations by means of such prohibitions.¹⁴

Among the Barongos in Delagoa Bay, in Africa, the most rigorous precautions are directed, curiously enough, against the sister-in-law, the wife of the brother of one's own wife. If a man meets this person who is so dangerous to him, he carefully avoids her. He does not dare to eat out of the same dish with her; he speaks only timidly to her, does not dare to enter her hut, and greets her only with a trembling voice.¹⁵

Among the Akamba (or Wakamba) in British East Africa, a law of avoidance is in force which one would have expected to encounter more frequently. A girl must carefully avoid her own father between the time of her puberty and her marriage. She hides herself if she meets him on the street and never attempts to sit down next to him, behaving in this way right up to her engagement. But after her marriage no further obstacle is put in the way of her social intercourse with her father.¹⁶

The most widespread and strictest avoidance, which is perhaps the most interesting one for civilized races, is that which restricts the social relations between a man and his mother-in-law. It is quite general in

Australia, but it is also in force among the Melanesian, Polynesian and Negro races of Africa as far as the traces of totemism and group relationship reach, and probably further still. Among some of these races similar prohibitions exist against the harmless social intercourse of a wife with her father-in-law, but these are by far not so constant or so serious. In a few cases both parents-in-law become objects of avoidance.

As we are less interested in the ethnographic dissemination than in the substance and the purpose of the mother-in-law avoidance, I will here also limit myself to a few examples.

On the Banks Island these prohibitions are very severe and painfully exact. A man will avoid the proximity of his mother-in-law as she avoids his. If they meet by chance on a path, the woman steps aside and turns her back until he is passed, or he does the same.

In Vanna Lava (Port Patterson) a man will not even walk behind his mother-in-law along the beach until the rising tide has washed away the trace of her foot-steps. But they may talk to each other at a certain distance. It is quite out of the question that he should ever pronounce the name of his mother-in-law, or she his.¹⁷

On the Solomon Islands, beginning with his marriage, a man must neither see nor speak with his mother-in-law. If he meets her he acts as if he did not know her and runs away as fast as he can in order to hide himself.¹⁸

Among the Zulu Kaffirs custom demands that a man should be ashamed of his mother-in-law and that he should do everything to avoid her company. He does not enter a hut in which she is, and when they meet he or she goes aside, she perhaps hiding behind a bush while he holds his shield before his face. If they cannot avoid each other and the woman has nothing with which to cover herself, she at least binds a bunch of grass around her head in order to satisfy the ceremonial requirements. Communication between them must either be made through a third person or else they may shout at each other at a considerable distance if they have some barrier between them as, for instance, the enclosure of a kraal. Neither may utter the other's name.¹⁹

Among the Basogas, a negro tribe living in the region of the Nile sources, a man may talk to his mother-in-law only if she is in another

¹³ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 147, according to the Rev. L. Fison.

¹⁴ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 189.

¹⁵ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 388, according to Junod.

¹⁶ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 424.

¹⁷ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 76.

¹⁸ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 113, according to C. Ribbe: *Two Years among the Cannibals of the Solomon Islands*, 1905.

¹⁹ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 385.

room of the house and is not visible to him. Moreover, this race abominates incest to such an extent as not to let it go unpunished even among domestic animals.²⁰

Whereas all observers have interpreted the purpose and meaning of the avoidances between near relatives as protective measures against incest, different interpretations have been given for those prohibitions which concern the relationship with the mother-in-law. It was quite incomprehensible why all these races should manifest such great fear of temptation on the part of the man for an elderly woman, old enough to be his mother.²¹

The same objection was also raised against the conception of Fison who called attention to the fact that certain marriage class systems show a gap in that they make marriage between a man and his mother-in-law theoretically not impossible and that a special guarantee was therefore necessary to guard against this possibility.

Sir J. Lubbock, in his book *The Origin of Civilization*, traces back the behavior of the mother-in-law toward the son-in-law to the former "marriage by capture." "As long as the capture of women actually took place, the indignation of the parents was probably serious enough. When nothing but symbols of this form of marriage survived, the indignation of the parents was also symbolized and this custom continued after its origin had been forgotten." Crawley has found it easy to show how little this tentative explanation agrees with the details of actual observation.

E. B. Tylor thinks that the treatment of the son-in-law on the part of the mother-in-law is nothing more than a form of "cutting" on the part of the woman's family. The man counts as a stranger, and this continues until the first child is born. But even if no account is taken of cases in which this last condition does not remove the prohibition, this explanation is subject to the objection that it does not throw any light on the custom dealing with the relation between mother-in-law and son-in-law, thus overlooking the sexual factor, and that it does not take into account the almost sacred loathing which finds expression in the laws of avoidance.²²

A Zulu woman who was asked about the basis for this prohibition showed great delicacy of feeling in her answer: "It is not right that he should see the breasts which nursed his wife."²³

²⁰ Frazer, I. c., II, p. 461.

²¹ V. Crawley: *The Mystic Rose*, London, 1902, p. 405.

²² Crawley, I. c., p. 407.

²³ Crawley, I. c., p. 401, according to Leslie: *Among the Zulus and Amantongas*, 1875.

It is known that also among civilized races the relation of son-in-law and mother-in-law belongs to one of the most difficult sides of family organization. Although laws of avoidance no longer exist in the society of the white races of Europe and America, much quarreling and displeasure would often be avoided if they did exist and did not have to be reestablished by individuals. Many a European will see an act of high wisdom in the laws of avoidance which savage races have established to preclude any understanding between two persons who have become so closely related. There is hardly any doubt that there is something in the psychological situation of mother-in-law and son-in-law which furthers hostilities between them and renders living together difficult. The fact that the witticisms of civilized races show such a preference for this very mother-in-law theme seems to me to point to the fact that the emotional relations between mother-in-law and son-in-law are controlled by components which stand in sharp contrast to each other. I mean that the relation is really "ambivalent," that is, it is composed of conflicting feelings of tenderness and hostility.

A certain part of these feelings is evident. The mother-in-law is unwilling to give up the possession of her daughter; she distrusts the stranger to whom her daughter has been delivered, and shows a tendency to maintain the dominating position, to which she became accustomed at home. On the part of the man, there is the determination not to subject himself any longer to any foreign will, his jealousy of all persons who preceded him in the possession of his wife's tenderness, and, last but not least, his aversion to being disturbed in his illusion of sexual overvaluation. As a rule such a disturbance emanates for the most part from his mother-in-law who reminds him of her daughter through so many common traits but who lacks all the charm of youth, such as beauty and that psychic spontaneity which makes his wife precious to him.

The knowledge of hidden psychic feelings which psychoanalytic investigation of individuals has given us, makes it possible to add other motives to the above. Where the psychosexual needs of the woman are to be satisfied in marriage and family life, there is always the danger of dissatisfaction through the premature termination of the conjugal relation, and the monotony in the wife's emotional life. The ageing mother protects herself against this by living through the lives of her children by identifying herself with them and making their emotional experiences her own. Parents are said to remain young with their children, and this is, in fact, one of the most valuable psychic benefits which parents derive from their children. Childlessness thus eliminates one of

the best means to endure the necessary resignation imposed upon the individual through marriage. This emotional identification with the daughter may easily go so far with the mother that she also falls in love with the man her daughter loves, which leads, in extreme cases, to severe forms of neurotic ailments on account of the violent psychic resistance against this emotional predisposition. At all events the tendency to such infatuation is very frequent with the mother-in-law, and either this infatuation itself or the tendency opposed to it joins the conflict of contending forces in the psyche of the mother-in-law. Very often it is just this harsh and sadistic component of the love emotion which is turned against the son-in-law in order better to suppress the forbidden tender feelings.

The relation of the husband to his mother-in-law is complicated through similar feelings which, however, spring from other sources. The path of object selection has normally led him to his love object through the image of his mother and perhaps of his sister; in consequence of the incest barriers his preference for these two beloved persons of his childhood has been deflected and he is then able to find their image in strange objects. He now sees the mother-in-law taking the place of his own mother and of his sister's mother, and there develops a tendency to return to the primitive selection, against which everything in him resists. His incest dread demands that he should not be reminded of the genealogy of his love selection; the actuality of his mother-in-law, whom he had not known all his life like his mother so that her picture can be preserved unchanged in his unconscious, facilitates this rejection. An added mixture of irritability and animosity in his feelings leads us to suspect that the mother-in-law actually represents an incest temptation for the son-in-law, just as it not infrequently happens that a man falls in love with his subsequent mother-in-law before his inclination is transferred to her daughter.

I see no objection to the assumption that it is just this incestuous factor of the relationship which motivates the avoidance between son- and mother-in-law among savages. Among the explanations for the "avoidances" which these primitive races observe so strictly, we would therefore give preference to the opinion originally expressed by Fison, who sees nothing in these regulations but a protection against possible incest. This would also hold good for all the other avoidances between those related by blood or by marriage. There is only one difference, namely, in the first case the incest is direct, so that the purpose of the prevention might be conscious; in the other case, which includes the

mother-in-law relation, the incest would be a phantasy temptation brought about by unconscious intermediary links.

We have had little opportunity in this exposition to show that the facts of folk psychology can be seen in a new light through the application of the psychoanalytic point of view, for the incest dread of savages has long been known as such, and is in need of no further interpretation. What we can add to the further appreciation of incest dread is the statement that it is a subtle infantile trait and is in striking agreement with the psychic life of the neurotic. Psychoanalysis has taught us that the first object selection of the boy is of an incestuous nature and that it is directed to the forbidden objects, the mother and the sister; psychoanalysis has taught us also the methods through which the maturing individual frees himself from these incestuous attractions. The neurotic, however, regularly presents to us a piece of psychic infantilism; he has either not been able to free himself from the childlike conditions of psychosexuality, or else he has returned to them (inhibited development and regression). Hence the incestuous fixations of the libido still play or again are playing the main rôle in his unconscious psychic life. We have gone so far as to declare that the relation to the parents instigated by incestuous longings, is the central complex of the neurosis. This discovery of the significance of incest for the neurosis naturally meets with the most general incredulity on the part of the grown-up, normal man; a similar rejection will also meet the researches of Otto Rank, which show in even larger scope to what extent the incest theme stands in the center of poetical interest and how it forms the material of poetry in countless variations and distortions. We are forced to believe that such a rejection is above all the product of man's deep aversion to his former incest wishes which have since succumbed to repression. It is therefore of importance to us to be able to show that man's incest wishes, which later are destined to become unconscious, are still felt to be dangerous by savage races who consider them worthy of the most severe defensive measures.

Wundt¹ calls taboo the oldest unwritten code of law of humanity. It is generally assumed that taboo is older than the gods and goes back to the pre-religious age.

As we are in need of an impartial presentation of the subject of taboo before subjecting it to psychoanalytic consideration I shall now cite an excerpt from the article "Taboo" in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* written by the anthropologist Northcote W. Thomas,²

"Properly speaking taboo includes only a) the sacred (or unclean) character of persons or things, b) the kind of prohibition which results from this character, and c) the sanctity (or uncleanness) which results from a violation of the prohibition. The converse of taboo in Polynesia is 'hoa' and allied forms which mean 'general' or 'common' . . .

"Various classes of taboo in the wider sense may be distinguished: 1. natural or direct, the result of 'mana' (mysterious power) inherent in a person or thing; 2. communicated or indirect, equally the result of 'mana' but (a) acquired or (b) imposed by a priest, chief or other person; 3. intermediate, where both factors are present, as in the appropriation of a wife to her husband. The term taboo is also applied to ritual prohibitions of a different nature; but its use in these senses is better avoided. It might be argued that the term should be extended to embrace cases in which the sanction of the prohibition is the creation of a god or spirit, i.e., to religious interdictions as distinguished from magical, but there is neither automatic action nor contagion in such a case, and a better term for it is religious interdiction.

"The objects of taboo are many: 1. direct taboos aim at (a) protection of important persons—chiefs, priests, etc.—and things against harm; (b) safeguarding of the weak—women, children and common people generally—from the powerful mana (magical influence) of chiefs and priests; (c) providing against the dangers incurred by handling or coming in contact with corpses, by eating certain food, etc.; (d) guarding the chief acts of life—births, initiation, marriage and sexual functions—against interference; (e) securing human beings against the wrath or power of gods and spirits;³ (f) securing unborn infants and young children, who stand in a specially sympathetic relation with their parents, from the consequence of certain actions, and more especially from the communication of qualities supposed to be derived from

CHAPTER II

TABOO AND THE AMBIVALENCE OF EMOTIONS

1

TABOO is a Polynesian word, the translation of which provides difficulties for us because we no longer possess the idea which it connotes. It was still current with the ancient Romans: their word "sacer" was the same as the taboo of the Polynesians. The "αἶνος" of the Greeks and the "Kodush" of the Hebrews must also have signified the same thing which the Polynesians express through their word taboo and what many races in America, Africa (Madagascar), North and Central Asia express through analogous designations.

For us the meaning of taboo branches off into two opposite directions. On the one hand it means to us sacred, consecrated: but on the other hand it means, uncanny, dangerous, forbidden, and unclean. The opposite for taboo is designated in Polynesian by the word *noa* and signifies something ordinary and generally accessible. Thus something like the concept of reserve inheres in taboo; taboo expresses itself essentially in prohibitions and restrictions. Our combination of "holy dread" would often express the meaning of taboo.

The taboo restrictions are different from religious or moral prohibitions. They are not traced to a commandment of a god but really they themselves impose their own prohibitions; they are differentiated from moral prohibitions by failing to be included in a system which declares abstinences in general to be necessary and gives reasons for this necessity. The taboo prohibitions lack all justification and are of unknown origin. Though incomprehensible to us they are taken as a matter of course by those who are under their dominance.

¹*Völkerpsychologie*, Vol. II, *Mythus und Religion*, 1906, II p. 308.

²Eleventh Edition, this article also gives the most important references.

³This application of the taboo can be omitted as not originally belonging in this connection.

certain foods. 2. Taboos are imposed in order to secure against thieves the property of an individual, his fields, tools, etc."

Other parts of the article may be summarized as follows. Originally the punishment for the violation of a taboo was probably left to an inner, automatic arrangement. The violated taboo avenged itself. Wherever the taboo was related to ideas of gods and demons an automatic punishment was expected from the power of the godhead. In other cases, probably as a result of a further development of the idea, society took over the punishment of the offender, whose action has endangered his companions. Thus man's first systems of punishment are also connected with taboo.

"The violation of a taboo makes the offender himself taboo." The author goes on to say that certain dangers resulting from the violation of a taboo may be exercised through acts of penance and ceremonies of purification.

A peculiar power inherent in persons and ghosts, which can be transmitted from them to inanimate objects, is regarded as the source of the taboo. This part of the article reads as follows: "Persons or things which are regarded as taboo may be compared to objects charged with electricity; they are the seat of tremendous power which is transmissible by contact, and may be liberated with destructive effect if the organisms which provide its discharge are too weak to resist it; the result of a violation of a taboo depends partly on the strength of the magical influence inherent in the taboo object or person, partly on the strength of the opposing *mana* of the violator of the taboo. Thus, kings and chiefs are possessed of great power, and it is death for their subjects to address them directly; but a minister or other person of greater *mana* than common, can approach them unharmed, and can in turn be approached by their inferiors without risk... So, too, indirect taboos depend for their strength on the *mana* of him who opposes them; if it is a chief or a priest, they are more powerful than those imposed by a common person."

The fact that a taboo is transmissible has surely given rise to the effort of removing it through expiatory ceremonies.

The author states that there are permanent and temporary taboos. The former comprise priest and chiefs as well as the dead and everything that has belonged to them. Temporary taboos attach themselves to certain conditions such as menstruation and child-bed, the status of the warrior before and after the expedition, their activities of fishing and of the chase, and similar activities. A general taboo may also be

imposed upon a large district like an ecclesiastical interdict, and may then last for years.

~~If I judge my readers' impressions correctly, I must say that after hearing all that was said about taboo they are far from knowing what to understand by it and where to store it in their minds. This is surely due to the insufficient information I have given and to the omission of all discussions concerning the relation of taboo to superstition, to belief in the soul, and to religion. On the other hand, I fear that a more detailed description of what is known about taboo would be still more confusing; I can therefore assure the reader that the state of affairs is really far from clear. We may say, however, that we deal with a series of restrictions which these primitive races impose upon themselves; this and that is forbidden without any apparent reason; nor does it occur to them to question this matter, for they subject themselves to these restrictions as a matter of course and are convinced that any transgression will be punished automatically in the most severe manner. There are reliable reports that innocent transgressions of such prohibitions have actually been punished automatically. For instance, the innocent offender who had eaten from a forbidden animal became deeply depressed, expected his death and then actually died. The prohibitions mostly concern matters which are capable of enjoyment such as freedom of movement and unrestrained intercourse; in some cases they appear very ingenious, evidently representing abstinences and renunciations; in other cases their content is quite incomprehensible, they seem to concern themselves with rites and give the impression of being arbitrary. Something like a theory seems to underlie all these prohibitions, it seems as if these prohibitions are necessary because some persons and objects possess a dangerous power which is transmitted by contact with the object so charged, almost like a contagion. The quantity of this dangerous property is also taken into consideration. Some persons or things have more of it than others and the danger is precisely in accordance with the charge. The most peculiar part of it is that any one who has violated such a prohibition assumes the nature of the forbidden object as if he had absorbed the whole dangerous charge. This power is inherent in all persons who are more or less prominent, such as kings, priests and the newly born, in all exceptional physical states such as menstruation, puberty and birth, in everything sinister like illness and death and in everything connected with these conditions by virtue of contagion or dissemination.~~

However, the term "taboo" includes all persons, localities, objects and

temporary conditions which are carriers or sources of this mysterious attribute. The prohibition derived from this attribute is also designated as taboo, and lastly taboo, in the literal sense, includes everything that is sacred, above the ordinary, and at the same time dangerous, unclean and mysterious.

Both this word and the system corresponding to it express a fragment of psychic life which really is not comprehensible to us. And indeed it would seem that no understanding of it could be possible without entering into the study of the belief in spirits and demons which is so characteristic of these low grades of culture.

Now why should we take any interest at all in the riddle of taboo? Not only, I think, because every psychological problem is well worth the effort of investigation for its own sake, but for other reasons as well. It may be surmised that the taboo of Polynesian savages is after all not so remote from us as we were at first inclined to believe; the moral and customary prohibitions which we ourselves obey may have some essential relation to this primitive taboo the explanation of which may in the end throw light upon the dark origin of our own "categorical imperative."

We are inclined to regard the taboo as a relic of a primitive condition, an investigator like W. Wundt gives his interpretation of taboo, especially as he promises to "go back to the very roots of the taboo concepts."⁴

Wundt states that the idea of taboo "includes all customs which express dread of particular objects connected with cultic ideas or of actions having reference to them."

On another occasion he says: "In accordance with the general sense of the word we understand by taboo every prohibition laid down in customs or manners or in expressly formulated laws, not to touch an object or to take it for one's own use, or to make use of certain proscribed words..." According to there would not be a single race or stage of culture which had escaped the injurious effects of taboo.

Wundt then shows why he finds it more practical to study the nature of taboo in the primitive states of Australian savages rather than in the higher culture of the Polynesian races. In the case of the Australians he divides taboo prohibitions into three classes according as they concern animals, persons or other objects. The animal taboo, which consists essentially of the taboo against killing and eating, forms the nucleus of Totemism.⁶ The taboo of the second class, which has human beings for

⁴ *Volkerpsychologie*, Vol. II, *Mythus und Religion*, p. 300.

⁵ l. c., p. 237.

⁶ Cf. Chapter I.

the object is of an essentially different nature. To begin with it is restricted to conditions which bring about an unusual situation in life of the person tabooed. Thus young men at the feast of initiation, women during menstruation and immediately after delivery, newly born children, the diseased and especially the dead, are all taboo. The constantly used property of any person, such as his clothes, tools and weapons, is permanently taboo for everybody else. In Australia the new name which a youth receives at his initiation into manhood becomes part of his most personal property, it is taboo and must be kept secret. The taboos of the third class, which apply to trees, plants, houses and localities, are more variable and seem only to follow the rule that anything which for any reason arouses dread or is mysterious, becomes subject to taboo.

Wundt himself has to acknowledge that the changes which taboo undergoes in the richer culture of the Polynesians and in the Malayan Archipelago are not very profound. The greater social differentiation of these races manifests itself in the fact that chiefs, kings and priests exercise an especially effective taboo and are themselves exposed to the strongest taboo compulsion.

But the real sources of taboo lie deeper than in the interests of the privileged classes: "They begin where the most primitive and at the same time the most enduring human impulses have their origin, namely, in the fear of the effect of demonic powers."⁷ "The taboo, which originally was nothing more than the objectified fear of the demonic power thought to be concealed in the tabooed object, forbids the irritation of this power and demands the placation of the demon whenever the taboo has been knowingly or unknowingly violated."

The taboo then gradually became an autonomous power which has detached itself from demonism. It becomes the compulsion of custom and tradition and finally of the law. "But the commandment concealed behind taboo prohibitions which differ materially according to place and time, had originally the meaning: Beware of the wrath of the demons."

Wundt then goes on to say that the taboo is the expression of the belief of primitive races in demonic powers, and that later taboo has dissociated itself from this origin and has remained a power simply because it was one by virtue of a kind of a psychic persistence and in this manner it became the root of our customs and laws. As little as one can object to the first part of this statement I feel, however, that I am

⁷ l. c., p. 307.

only noticing the impression of many of my readers if I call Wundt's explanation disappointing. Wundt's explanation is far from going back to the sources of taboo concepts or to their deepest roots. For neither fear nor demons can be accepted in psychology as finalities defining any further deduction. It would be different if demons really existed; but we know that, like gods, they are only the product of the psychic powers of man; they have been created from and out of something.

Wundt also expresses a number of important thoughts not altogether clear opinions about the double meaning of taboo. According to him the division between *sacred* and *unclean* does not yet exist in the first primitive stages of taboo. For this reason these conceptions entirely lack the significance which they could only acquire later on when they came to be contrasted. The animal, person, or place on which there is a taboo is demonic; that is not sacred and therefore not yet, in the later sense, unclean. The expression taboo is particularly suitable for this undifferentiated and intermediate meaning of the demonic, in the sense of something which may not be touched, since it emphasizes a characteristic which finally adheres both to what is sacred and to the unclean, namely, the dread of contact. But the fact that this important characteristic is permanently held in common points to the existence of an original agreement here between these two spheres which gave way to a differentiation only as the result of further conditions through which both finally developed into opposites.

The belief associated with the original taboo, according to which a demonic power concealed in the object avenges the touching of it or its forbidden use by bewitching the offender was still an entirely objectified fear. This had not yet separated into the two forms which it assumed at a more developed stage, namely, awe and aversion.

How did this separation come about? According to Wundt, this was done through the transference of taboo prohibitions from the sphere of demons to that of theistic conceptions. The antithesis of sacred and unclean coincides with the succession of two mythological stages the first of which did not entirely disappear when the second was reached but continued in a state of greatly lowered esteem which gradually turned into contempt. It is a general law in mythology that a preceding stage, just because it has been overcome and pushed back by a higher stage, maintains itself next to it in a debased form so that the objects of its veneration become objects of aversion.⁸

⁸ I. c., p. 313.

Wundt's further elucidations refer to the relation of taboo to lustration and sacrifice.

2

He who approaches the problem of taboo from the field of psychoanalysis, which is concerned with the study of the unconscious part of the individual's psychic life, needs but a moment's reflection to realize that these phenomena are by no means foreign to him. He knows people who have individually created such taboo prohibitions for themselves, which they follow as strictly as savages observe the taboos common to their tribe or society. If he were not accustomed to call these individuals "compulsion neurotics" he would find the term "taboo disease" quite appropriate for their malady. Psychoanalytic investigation has taught him the clinical etiology and the essential part of the psychological mechanism of this compulsion disease, so that he cannot resist applying what he has learnt there to explain corresponding manifestations in folk psychology.

There is one warning to which we shall have to give heed in making this attempt. The similarity between taboo and compulsion disease may be purely superficial, holding good only for the manifestations of both without extending into their deeper characteristics. Nature loves to use identical forms in the most widely different biological connections, as, for instance, for coral stems and plants and even for certain crystals or for the formation of certain chemical precipitates. It would certainly be both premature and unprofitable to base conclusions relating to inner relationships upon the correspondence of merely mechanical conditions. We shall hear this warning in mind without, however, giving up our intended comparison on account of the possibility of such confusions.

The first and most striking correspondence between the compulsion prohibitions of neurotics and taboo lies in the fact that the origin of these prohibitions is just as unmotivated and enigmatic. They have appeared at some time or other and must now be retained on account of an unconquerable anxiety. An external threat of punishment is superfluous, because an inner certainty (a conscience) exists that violation will be followed by unbearable disaster. The very motif that compulsion patients can tell us is the vague premonition that some person of their environment will suffer harm if they should violate the prohibition. Of what the harm is to consist is not known, and this inadequate

information is more likely to be obtained during the later discussions of the expiatory and defensive actions than when the prohibitions themselves are being discussed.

As in the case of taboo the nucleus of the neurotic prohibition is the act of touching, whence we derive the name touching phobia, or *déline de toucher*. The prohibition extends not only to direct contact with the body but also to the figurative use of the phrase as "to come into contact," or "be in touch with some one or something." Anything that leads the thoughts to what is prohibited and thus calls forth mental contact is just as much prohibited as immediate bodily contact; this same extension is also found in taboo.

Some prohibitions are easily understood from their purpose but others strike us as incomprehensible, foolish and senseless. We designate such commands as "ceremonials" and we find that taboo customs show the

same relations

Obsessive prohibitions possess an extraordinary capacity for displacement; they make use of almost any form of connection to extend from one object to another and then in turn make this new object "impossible," as one of my patients aptly puts it. This impossibility finally lays an embargo upon the whole world. The compulsion neurotics act as if the "impossible" persons and things were the carriers of a dangerous contagion which is ready to displace itself through contact to all neighboring things. We have already emphasized the same characteristics of contagion and transference in the description of taboo prohibitions. We also know that any one who has violated a taboo by touching something which is taboo becomes taboo himself, and no one may come into contact with him.

I shall put side by side two examples of transference or, to use a better term, displacement, one from the life of the Maori, and the other from my observation of a woman suffering from a compulsion neurosis:

"For a similar reason a Maori chief would not touch on a fire with his mouth; for his sacred breath would communicate its sanctity to the fire, which would pass it on to the meat in the pot, which would pass it on to the man who ate the meat, which was in the pot, which stood on the fire, which was breathed on by the chief, so that the eater, infected by the chief's breath conveyed through these intermediaries, would surely die."⁹ My patient demanded that a utensil which her husband had purchased and brought home should be removed lest it make the place

⁹ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Part II, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, 1911, p. 136.

where she lives impossible. For she has heard that this object was bought in a store which is situated, let us say, in Stag Street. But as the word stag is the name of a friend now in a distant city, whom she has known in her youth under her maiden name and whom she now finds "impossible," that is taboo, the object bought in Vienna is just as taboo as this friend with whom she does not want to come into contact.

Compulsion prohibitions, like taboo prohibitions, entail the most extraordinary renunciations and restrictions of life, but a part of these can be removed by carrying out certain acts which now also must be done because they have acquired a compulsive character (obsessive acts); there is no doubt that these acts are in the nature of penances, expiations, defense reactions, and purifications. The most common of these obsessive acts is washing with water (washing obsession). A part of the taboo prohibitions can also be replaced in this way, that is to say, their violation can be made good through such a "ceremonial," and here too lustration through water is the preferred way.

Let us now summarize the points in which the correspondence between taboo customs and the symptoms of compulsion neurosis are most clearly manifested: 1. In the lack of motivation of the commandments, 2. in their enforcement through an inner need, 3. in their capacity of displacement and in the danger of contagion from what is prohibited, 4. and in the causation of ceremonial actions and commandments which emanate from the forbidden.

However, psychoanalysis has made us familiar with the clinical history as well as the psychic mechanism of compulsion neurosis. Thus the history of a typical case of touching phobia reads as follows: In the very beginning, during the early period of childhood, the person manifested a strong pleasure in touching himself, the object of which was much more specialized than one would be inclined to expect. Presently the carrying out of this very pleasurable act of touching was opposed by a prohibition from without.¹⁰ The prohibition was accepted because it was supported by strong inner forces;¹¹ it proved to be stronger than the impulse which wanted to manifest itself through this act of touching. But due to the primitive psychic constitution of the child this prohibition did not succeed in abolishing the impulse. Its only success lay in repressing the impulse (the pleasure of touching) and banishing it into the unconscious. Both the prohibition and the

¹⁰ Both the pleasure and the prohibition referred to touching one's own genitals.

¹¹ The relation to beloved persons who impose the prohibition.

~~impulse remained~~ the impulse because it had only been repressed and not abolished, the prohibition, because if it had ceased the impulse would have broken through into consciousness and would have been carried out. An unsolved situation, a psychic fixation, had thus been created and now everything else emanated from the continued conflict between prohibition and impulse.

The main characteristic of the psychic constellation which has thus undergone fixation lies in what one might call the ambivalent behavior¹² of the individual to the object, or rather to an action regarding it. The individual constantly wants to carry out this action (the act of touching), he sees in it the highest pleasure, but he may not carry it out, and he even abominates it. The opposition between these two streams cannot be easily adjusted because—there is no other way to express it—they are so localized in the psychic life that they cannot meet. The prohibition becomes fully conscious, while the surviving pleasure of touching remains unconscious, the person knowing nothing about it. If this psychological factor did not exist the ambivalence could neither maintain itself so long nor lead to such subsequent manifestations.

In the clinical history of the case we have emphasized the appearance of the prohibition in early childhood as the determining factor; but for the further elaboration of the neurosis this rôle is played by the repression which appears at this age. On account of the repression which has taken place, which is connected with forgetting (amnesia), the motivation of the prohibition that has become conscious remains unknown, and all attempts to unravel it intellectually must fail, as the point of attack cannot be found. The prohibition owes its strength—its compulsive character—to its association with its unknown counterpart, the hidden and unabated pleasure, that is to say, to an inner need into which conscious insight is lacking. The transferability and reproductive power of the prohibition reflect a process which harmonizes with the unconscious pleasure and is very much facilitated through the psychological determinants of the unconscious. The pleasure of the impulse constantly undergoes displacement in order to escape the blocking which it encounters and seeks to acquire surrogates for the forbidden in the form of substitutive objects and actions. For the same reason the prohibition also wanders and spreads to the new aims of the proscribed impulse. Every new advance of the repressed libido is answered by the

prohibition with a new severity. The mutual inhibition of these two contending forces creates a need for discharge and for lessening the existing tension, in which we may recognize the motivation for the compulsive acts. In the neurosis there are distinctly acts of compromise which on the one hand may be regarded as proofs of remorse and efforts to expiate and similar actions; but on the other hand they are at the same time substitutive actions which recompense the impulse for what has been forbidden. It is a law of neurotic diseases that these obsessive acts serve the impulse more and more and come nearer and nearer to the original forbidden act.

~~We may now make the attempt to study taboo as if it were of the same nature as the compulsive prohibitions of our patients. It must naturally be clearly understood that many of the taboo prohibitions which we shall study are already secondary, displaced and distorted, so that we shall have to be satisfied if we can shed some light upon the earliest and most important taboo prohibitions. We must also remember that the differences in the situation of the savage and of the neurotic may be important enough to exclude complete correspondence and prevent a point by point transfer from one to the other such as would be possible if we were dealing with exact copies.~~

~~First of all it must be said that it is useless to question savages as to the real motivation of their prohibitions or as to the genesis of taboo. According to our assumption they must be incapable of telling us anything about it since this motivation is "unconscious" to them. But following the model of the compulsive prohibition we shall construct the history of taboo as follows: Taboos are very ancient prohibitions which at one time were forced upon a generation of primitive people from without, that is, they probably were forcibly impressed upon them by an earlier generation. These prohibitions concerned actions for which there existed a strong desire. The prohibitions maintained themselves from generation to generation, perhaps only as the result of a tradition set up by paternal and social authority. But in later generations they have perhaps already become "organized" as a piece of inherited psychic property. Whether there are such "innate ideas" or whether these have brought about the fixation of the taboo by themselves or by coöperating with education no one could decide in the particular case in question. The persistence of taboo teaches, however, one thing, namely, that the original pleasure to do the forbidden still continues among taboo races. They therefore assume an *ambivalent attitude* toward their taboo prohibitions; in their unconscious they would like~~

¹²To use an excellent term coined by Bleuler.

nothing better than to transgress them but they are also afraid to do it; they are afraid just because they would like to transgress, and the fear is stronger than the pleasure. But in every individual of the race the desire for it is unconscious, just as in the neurotic.

The oldest and most important taboo prohibitions are the two basic laws of *totemism*: namely not to kill the totem animal and to avoid sexual intercourse with totem companions of the other sex.

It would therefore seem that these must have been the oldest and strongest desires of mankind. We cannot understand this and therefore we cannot use these examples to test our assumptions as long as the meaning and the origin of the totemic system is so wholly unknown to us. But the very wording of these taboos and the fact that they occur together will remind any one who knows the results of the psychoanalytic investigation of individuals, of something quite definite which psychoanalysts call the central point of the infantile wish life and the nucleus of the later neurosis.¹³

All other varieties of taboo phenomena which have led to the attempted classifications noted above become unified if we sum them up in the following sentence: The basis of taboo is a forbidden action for which there exists a strong inclination.

We know, without understanding it, that whoever does what is prohibited and violates the taboo, becomes himself taboo. But how can we connect this fact with the other, namely that the taboo adheres not only to persons who have done what is prohibited but also to persons who are in exceptional circumstances, to these circumstances themselves, and to impersonal things? What can this dangerous attribute be, which always remains the same under all these different conditions? Only one thing, namely, the propensity to arouse the ambivalence of man and to tempt him to violate the prohibition.

An individual who has violated a taboo becomes himself taboo because he has the dangerous property of tempting others to follow his example. He arouses envy; why should he be allowed to do what is prohibited to others? He is therefore really *contagious*, in so far as every example incites to imitation, and therefore he himself must be avoided.

But a person may become permanently or temporarily taboo without having violated any taboos, for the simple reason that he is in a condition which has the property of inciting the forbidden desires of others and of awakening the ambivalent conflict in them. Most of the exceptional

positions and conditions have this character and possess this dangerous power. The king or chieftain rouses envy of his prerogatives; everybody would perhaps like to be king. The dead, the newly born, and women when they are incapacitated, all act as incitements on account of their peculiar helplessness, while the individual who has just reached sexual maturity tempts through the promise of a new pleasure. Therefore all these persons and all these conditions are taboo, for one must not yield to the temptations which they offer.

Now, too, we understand why the forces inherent in the mana of various persons can neutralize one another so that the mana of one individual can partly cancel that of the other. The taboo of a king is too strong for his subject because the social difference between them is too great. But a minister, for example, can become the harmless mediator between them. Translated from the language of taboo into the language of normal psychology this means: the subject who shrinks from the tremendous temptation which contact with the king creates for him can brook the intercourse of an official, whom he does not have to envy so much and whose position perhaps seems attainable to him. The minister, on his part, can moderate his envy of the king by taking into consideration the power that has been granted to him. Thus smaller differences in the magic power that lead to temptation are less to be feared than exceptionally big differences.

It is equally clear how the violation of certain taboo prohibitions becomes a social danger which must be punished or expiated by all the members of society lest it harm them all. This danger really exists if we substitute the known impulses for the unconscious desires. It consists in the possibility of imitation, as a result of which society would soon be dissolved. If the others did not punish the violation they would perforce become aware that they want to imitate the evil doer.

Though the secret meaning of a taboo prohibition cannot possibly be of so special a nature as in the case of a neurosis, we must not be astonished to find that touching plays a similar rôle in taboo prohibition as in the *délire de toucher*. To touch is the beginning of every act of possession, of every attempt to make use of a person or thing.

We have interpreted the power of contagion which inheres in the taboo as the property of leading into temptation, and of inciting to imitation. This does not seem to be in accord with the fact that the contagiousness of the taboo is above all manifested in the transference to objects which thus themselves become carriers of the taboo.

This transferability of the taboo reflects what is found in the neurosis, namely, the constant tendency of the unconscious impulse to become

¹³ Cf. Chapter IV.

displaced through associative channels upon new objects. Our attention is thus drawn to the fact that the dangerous magic power of the "mana" corresponds to two real faculties, the capacity of reminding man of his forbidden wishes, and the apparently more important one of tempting him to violate the prohibition in the service of these wishes. Both functions reunite into one, however, if we assume it to be in accord with a primitive psychic life that with the awakening of a memory of a forbidden action there should also be combined the awakening of the tendency to carry out the action. Memory and temptation then again coincide. We must also admit that if the example of a person who has violated a prohibition leads another to the same action, the disobedience of the prohibition has been transmitted like a contagion, just as the taboo is transferred from a person to an object, and from this to another.

If the violation of a taboo can be condoned through expiation or penance which means, of course, a *renunciation* of a possession or a liberty, we have the proof that the observance of a taboo regulation was itself a renunciation of something really wished for. The omission of one renunciation is cancelled through a renunciation at some other point. This would lead us to conclude that, as far as taboo ceremonies are concerned, *renunciation* is the fundamental principle.

Let us now summarize what understanding we have gained of taboo through its comparison with the compulsive prohibition of the neurotic. Taboo is a very primitive prohibition imposed from without (by an authority) and directed against the strongest desires of man. The desire to violate it continues in the unconscious; persons who obey the taboo have an ambivalent feeling toward what is affected by the taboo. The magic power attributed to taboo goes back to its ability to lead man into temptation; it behaves like a contagion, because the example is contagious, and because the prohibited desire becomes displacing in the unconscious upon something else. The expiation for the violation of a taboo through a renunciation proves that a renunciation is at the basis of the observance of the taboo.

3

We may ask what we have gained from the comparison of taboo with compulsion neurosis and what can be claimed for the interpretation we have given on the basis of this comparison? Our interpretation is evidently of no value unless it offers an advantage not to be had in any other way and unless it affords a better understanding of taboo than was

otherwise possible. We might claim that we have already given proof of its usefulness in what has been said above; but we shall have to try to strengthen our proof by continuing the explanation of taboo prohibitions and customs in detail.

But we can avail ourselves of another method. We can shape our investigation so as to ascertain whether a part of the assumptions which we have transferred from the neurosis to the taboo, or the conclusions at which we have thereby arrived can be demonstrated directly in the phenomena of taboo. We must decide, however, what we want to look for. The assertion concerning the genesis of taboo, namely, that it was derived from a primitive prohibition which was once imposed from without, cannot, of course, be proved. We shall therefore seek to confirm those psychological conditions for taboo with which we have become acquainted in the case of compulsion neurosis. How did we gain our knowledge of these psychological factors in the case of neurosis? Through the analytical study of the symptoms, especially the compulsive actions, the defense reactions and the obsessive commands. These mechanisms gave every indication of having been derived from *ambivalent* impulses or tendencies, they either represented simultaneously the wish and counter-wish or they served preponderantly one of the two contrary tendencies. If we should now succeed in showing that ambivalence, i.e., the sway of contrary tendencies, exists also in the case of taboo regulations or if we should find among the taboo mechanisms some which like neurotic obsessions give simultaneous expression to both currents, we would have established what is practically the most important point in the psychological correspondence between taboo and compulsion neurosis.

We have already mentioned that the two fundamental taboo prohibitions are inaccessible to our analysis because they belong to totemism; another part of the taboo rules is of secondary origin and cannot be used for our purpose. For among these races taboo has become the general form of law giving and has helped to promote social tendencies which are certainly younger than taboo itself, as for instance, the taboos imposed by chiefs and priests to insure their property and privileges. But there still remains a large group of laws which we may undertake to investigate. Among these I lay stress on those taboos which are attached a) to enemies, b) to chiefs, and c) to the dead; the material for our investigation is taken from the excellent collection of J. G. Frazer in his great work, *The Golden Bough*.¹⁴

¹⁴ Third Edition, Part II, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, 1911.

calamity that can overtake man, it is believed that the deceased are very dissatisfied with their lot. Primitive races believe that death comes only through being slain, whether by violence or by magic, and this is considered already sufficient reason for the soul to be vindictive and irritable. The soul presumably envies the living and longs for the company of its former kin; we can therefore understand that the soul should seek to kill them with diseases in order to be re-united with them. . . .

" . . . A further explanation of the malevolence ascribed to souls lies in the instinctive fear of them, which is itself the result of the fear of death.

Our study of psychoneurotic disturbances points to a more comprehensive explanation, which includes that of *ambivalence*.

When a wife loses her husband, or a daughter her mother, it not infrequently happens that the survivor is afflicted with tormenting scruples, called "obsessive reproaches" which raise the question whether she herself has not been guilty, through carelessness or neglect, of the death of the beloved person. No recalling of the care with which she nursed the invalid, or direct refutation of the asserted guilt can put an end to the torture, which is the pathological expression of mourning and which in time slowly subsides. Psychoanalytic investigation of such cases has made us acquainted with the secret main springs of this affliction. We have ascertained that these obsessive reproaches are in a certain sense justified and therefore are immune to refutation or objections. Not that the mourner has really been guilty of the death or that she has really been careless, as the obsessive reproach asserts; but still there was something in her, a wish of which she herself was unaware, which was not displeased with the fact that death came, and which would have brought it about sooner had it been strong enough. The reproach now reacts against this unconscious wish after the death of the beloved person. Such hostility, hidden in the unconscious behind tender love, exists in almost all cases of intensive emotional allegiance to a particular person, indeed it represents the classic case, the prototype of the ambivalence of human emotions. There is always more or less of this ambivalence in everybody's disposition; normally it is not strong enough to give rise to the obsessive reproaches we have described. But where there is abundant predisposition for it, it manifests itself in the relation to those we love most, precisely where you would least expect it. The disposition to compulsion neurosis, which we have so often taken for comparison with taboo problems, is distinguished by a particularly high degree of this original ambivalence of emotion.

We now know how to explain the supposed demonism of recently departed souls and the necessity of being protected against their hostility

through taboo rules. By assuming a similar high degree of ambivalence in the emotional life of primitive races such as psychoanalysis ascribes to persons suffering from compulsion neurosis, it becomes comprehensible that the same kind of reaction against the hostility latent in the unconscious behind the obsessive reproaches of the neurotic should also be necessary here after the painful loss has occurred. But this hostility, which is painfully felt in the unconscious in the form of satisfaction with the demise, experiences a different fate in the case of primitive man: the defense against it is accomplished by displacement upon the object of hostility, namely the dead. We call this defense process, frequent both in normal and diseased psychic life, a *projection*. The survivor will deny that he has ever entertained hostile impulses toward the beloved dead; but now the soul of the deceased entertains them and will try to give vent to them during the entire period of mourning. In spite of the successful defense through projection, the punitive and remorseful character of this emotional reaction manifests itself in being afraid, in self-imposed renunciations and in subjection to restrictions which are partly disguised as protective measures against the hostile demon. Thus we find again that taboo has grown out of the soil of an ambivalent emotional attitude. The taboo of the dead also originates from the opposition between the conscious grief and the unconscious satisfaction at death. If this is the origin of the resentment of spirits it is self-evident that just the nearest and formerly most beloved survivors have to fear it most.

As in many other symptoms, the taboo regulations also evince opposite feelings. Their restrictive character expresses mourning, while they also betray very clearly what they are trying to conceal, namely, the hostility towards the dead, which is now motivated as self-defense. We have learnt to understand part of the taboo regulations as temptation fears. A dead person is defenseless, which must act as an incitement to satisfy hostile desires entertained against him; this temptation has to be opposed by the prohibition.

But Westermarck is right in not admitting any difference in the savage's conception between those who have died by violence and those who have died a natural death. As will be shown later,⁵¹ in the unconscious mode of thinking even a natural death is perceived as murder; the person was killed by evil wishes. Any one interested in the origin and meaning of dreams dealing with the death of dear relatives such as

⁵¹ [See] Chap. III.

parents and brothers and sisters will find that the same feeling of ambivalence is responsible for the fact that the dreamer, the child, and the savage all have the same attitude towards the dead.⁵²

A little while ago we challenged Mundt's conception, who explains the nature of taboo through the fear of demons, and yet we have just agreed with the explanation which traces back the taboo of the dead to a fear of the soul of the dead after it has turned into a demon. This seems like a contradiction, but it will not be difficult for us to explain it. It is true that we have accepted the idea of demons, but we know that this assumption is not something final which psychology cannot resolve into further elements. We have, as it were, exposed the demons by recognizing them as mere projections of hostile feelings which the

The double feeling—tenderness and hostility—against the deceased, which we consider well founded, endeavors to assert itself at the time of bereavement as mourning and satisfaction. A conflict must ensue between these contrary feelings and as one of them, namely the hostility, is altogether or for the greater part unconscious, the conflict cannot result in a conscious difference in the form of hostility or tenderness as, for instance, when we forgive an injury inflicted upon us by some one we love. The process usually adjusts itself through a special psychic mechanism, which is designated in psychoanalysis as *projection*. This unknown hostility, of which we are ignorant and of which we do not wish to know, is projected from our inner perception into the outer world and is thereby detached from our own person and attributed to the other. Not we, the survivors, rejoice because we are rid of the deceased, on the contrary, we mourn for him; but now, curiously enough, he has become an evil demon who would rejoice in our misfortune and who seeks our death. The survivors must now defend themselves against this evil enemy; they are freed from inner oppression, but they have only succeeded in exchanging it for an affliction from without.

It is not to be denied that this process of projection, which turns the dead into malevolent enemies, finds some support in the real hostilities of the dead which the survivors remember and with which they really can reproach the dead. These hostilities are harshness, the desire to dominate, injustice, and whatever else forms the background of even the most tender relations between men. But the process cannot be so simple that this factor alone could explain the origin of demons by

projection. The offenses of the dead certainly motivate in part the hostility of the survivors, but they would have been ineffective if they had not given rise to this hostility and the occasion of death would surely be the least suitable occasion for awakening the memory of the reproaches which justly could have been brought against the deceased. We cannot dispense with the unconscious hostility as the constant and really impelling motive. This hostile tendency towards those nearest and dearest could remain latent during their lifetime, that is to say, it could avoid betraying itself to consciousness either directly or indirectly through any substitutive formation. However, when the person who was simultaneously loved and hated died, this was no longer possible, and the conflict became acute. The mourning originating from the enhanced tenderness, became on the one hand more intolerant of the latent hostility, while on the other hand it could not tolerate that the latter should not give origin to a feeling of pure gratification. Thus there came about the repression of the unconscious hostility through projection, and the formation of the ceremonial in which fear of punishment by demons finds expression. With the termination of the period of mourning, the conflict also loses its acuteness so that the taboo of the dead can be abated or sink into oblivion.

4

Having thus explained the basis on which the very instructive taboo of the dead has grown up, we must not miss the opportunity of adding a few observations which may become important for the understanding of taboo in general.

The projection of unconscious hostility upon demons in the taboo of the dead is only a single example from a whole series of processes to which we must grant the greatest influence in the formation of primitive psychic life. In the foregoing case the mechanism of projection is used to settle an emotional conflict; it serves the same purpose in a large number of psychic situations which lead to neuroses. But projection is not specially created for the purpose of defense, it also comes into being where there are no conflicts. The projection of inner perceptions to the outside is a primitive mechanism which, for instance, also influences our sense perceptions, so that it normally has the greatest share in shaping our outer world. Under conditions that have not yet been sufficiently determined even inner perceptions of ideational and emotional processes are projected outwardly, like sense perceptions,

⁵² [See] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

and are used to shape the outer world, whereas they ought to remain in the inner world. This is perhaps genetically connected with the fact that the function of attention was originally directed not towards the inner world, but to the stimuli streaming in from the outer world, and only received reports of pleasure and pain from the endopsychic processes. Only with the development of the language of abstract thought through the association of sensory remnants of word representations with inner processes, did the latter gradually become capable of perception. Before this took place primitive man had developed a picture of the outer world through the outward projection of inner perceptions, which we, with our reinforced conscious perception, must now translate back into psychology.

The projection of their own evil impulses upon demons is only a part of what has become the world system ("Weltanschauung") of primitive man which we shall discuss later as "animism." We shall then have to ascertain the psychological nature of such a system formation and the points of support which we shall find in the analysis of these system formations will again bring us face to face with the neurosis. For the present we merely wish to suggest that the "secondary elaboration" of the dream content is the prototype of all these system formations.⁵³ And let us not forget that beginning at the stage of system formation there are two origins for every act judged by consciousness, namely the systematic, and the real but unconscious origin.⁵⁴

Wundt⁵⁵ remarks that "among the influences which myth and primitive ascribes to demons the evil ones preponderate, so that according to the traditions of races evil demons are evidently older than good demons." Now it is quite possible that the whole conception of demons was derived from the extremely important relation to the dead. In the further course of human development the ambivalence inherent in this relation then manifested itself by allowing two altogether contrary psychic formations to issue from the same root, namely, the fear of demons and of ghosts, and the reverence for ancestors.⁵⁶ Nothing testifies so much to

⁵³ [See] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

⁵⁴ The projection creations of primitive man resemble the personifications through which the poet projects his warning impulses out of himself, as separated individuals.

⁵⁵ *Mythos und Religion*, p. 129.

⁵⁶ In the psychoanalysis of neurotic persons who suffer, or have suffered, in their childhood from the fear of ghosts, it is often not difficult to expose these ghosts as the parents. Compare also in this connection the communication of P. Haeberlin, "Sexual Ghosts" (*Sexual Problems*, Feb., 1912), where it is a question of another erotically accentuated person, but where the father was dead.

the influence of mourning on the origin of belief in demons as the fact that demons were always taken to be spirits of persons not long dead. Mourning has a very distinct psychic task to perform, namely, to detach the memories and expectations of the survivors from the dead. When this work is accomplished the grief, and with it the remorse and reproach, lessens, and therefore also the fear of the demon. But the very spirits which at first were feared as demons now serve a friendlier purpose; they are revered as ancestors and appealed to for help in times of distress.

If we survey the relation of survivors to the dead through the course of the ages, it is very evident that the ambivalent feeling has extraordinarily abated. We now find it easy to suppress whatever unconscious hostility towards the dead there may still exist without any special psychic effort on our part. Where formerly satisfied hate and painful tenderness struggled with each other, we now find piety, which appears like a cicatrice and demands: *De mortuis nil nisi bene*. Only neurotics still blur the mourning for the loss of their dear ones with attacks of compulsive reproaches which psychoanalysis reveals as the old ambivalent emotional feeling. How this change was brought about, and to what extent constitutional changes and real improvement of familiar relations share in causing the abatement of the ambivalent feeling, need not be discussed here. But this example would lead us to assume that the psychic impulses of primitive man possessed a higher degree of ambivalence than is found at present among civilized human beings. With the decline of this ambivalence the taboo, as the compromise symptom of the ambivalent conflict, also slowly disappeared. Neurotics who are compelled to reproduce this conflict, together with the taboo resulting from it, may be said to have brought with them an atavistic remnant in the form of an archaic constitution the compensation of which in the interest of cultural demands entails the most prodigious psychic efforts on their part.

At this point we may recall the confusing information which Wundt offered us about the double meaning of the word taboo, namely, holy and unclean. (See above.) It was supposed that originally the word taboo did not yet mean holy and unclean but signified something demonic, something which may not be touched, thus emphasizing a characteristic common to both extremes of the later conception; this persistent common trait proves, however, that an original correspondence existed between what was holy and what was unclean, which only later became differentiated.

In contrast to this, our discussions readily show that the double meaning in question belonged to the word taboo from the very beginning and

that it serves to designate a definite ambivalence as well as everything which comes into existence on the basis of this ambivalence. Taboo is itself an ambivalent word and by way of supplement, we may add that the established meaning of this word might of itself have allowed us to guess what we have found as the result of extensive investigation, namely, that the taboo prohibition is to be explained as the result of an emotional ambivalence. A study of the oldest languages has taught us that at one time there were many such words which included their own contrasts so that they were in a certain sense ambivalent, though perhaps not exactly in the same sense as the word taboo.⁵⁷ Slight vocal modifications of this primitive word containing two opposite meanings later served to create a separate linguistic expression for the two opposites originally united in one word.

The word taboo has had a different fate; with the diminished importance of the ambivalence which it connotes it has itself disappeared, or rather, the words analogous to it have vanished from the vocabulary. In a later connection I hope to be able to show that a tangible historic change is probably concealed behind the fate of this conception; that the word at first was associated with definite human relations which were characterized by great emotional ambivalence from which it expanded to other analogous relations.

Unless we are mistaken, the understanding of taboo also throws light upon the nature and origin of *conscience*. Without stretching ideas we can speak of a taboo conscience and a taboo sense of guilt after the violation of a taboo. Taboo conscience is probably the oldest form in which we meet the phenomenon of conscience.

For what is "conscience"? According to linguistic testimony it belongs to what we know most surely; in some languages its meaning is hardly to be distinguished from consciousness.

Conscience is the inner perception of objections to definite wish impulses that exist in us; but the emphasis is put upon the fact that this rejection does not have to depend on anything else, that it is sure of itself. This becomes even plainer in the case of a guilty conscience, where we become aware of the inner condemnation of such acts which realized some of our definite wish impulses. Confirmation seems superfluous here; whoever has a conscience must feel in himself the justification of the condemnation, and the reproach for the accomplished action. But

this same character is evinced by the attitude of savages towards taboo. Taboo is a command of conscience, the violation of which causes a terrible sense of guilt which is as self-evident as its origin is unknown.⁵⁸

It is therefore probable that conscience also originates on the basis of an ambivalent feeling from quite definite human relations which contain this ambivalence. It probably originates under conditions which are in force both for taboo and the compulsion neurosis, that is, one component of the two contrasting feelings is unconscious and is kept repressed by the compulsive domination of the other component. This is confirmed by many things which we have learned from our analysis of neuroses. In the first place the character of compulsion neurotics shows a predominant trait of painful conscientiousness which is a symptom of reaction against the temptation which lurks in the unconscious, and which develops into the highest degrees of guilty conscience as their illness grows worse. Indeed, one may venture the assertion that if the origin of guilty conscience could not be discovered through compulsion neurotic patients, there would be no prospect of ever discovering it. This task is successfully solved in the case of the individual neurotic, and we are confident of finding a similar solution in the case of races.

In the second place we cannot help noticing that the sense of guilt contains much of the nature of anxiety; without hesitation it may be described as "conscience phobia." But fear points to unconscious sources. The psychology of the neuroses taught us that when wish feelings undergo repression their libido becomes transformed into anxiety. In addition we must bear in mind that the sense of guilt also contains something unknown and unconscious, namely the motivation for the rejection. The character of anxiety in the sense of guilt corresponds to this unknown quantity.

If taboo expresses itself mainly in prohibitions it may well be considered self-evident, without remote proof from the analogy with neurosis that it is based on a positive, desirable impulse. For what nobody desires to do does not have to be forbidden, and certainly whatever is expressly forbidden must be an object of desire. If we applied this plausible theory to primitive races we would have to conclude that among their strongest temptations were desires to kill their kings and priests, to commit incest, to abuse their dead and the like. That is not very probable.

⁵⁷ Cf. my article on Abel's "Gegensinn des Urworte" in the *Jahrbuch für Psychoanalytische und Psychopathologische Forschungen*, Vol. II, 1910.

⁵⁸ It is an interesting parallel that the sense of guilt resulting from the violation of a taboo is in no way diminished if the violation took place unwittingly (see examples above), and that even in the Greek myth the guilt of Oedipus is not cancelled by the fact that it was incurred without his knowledge and will and even against them.

And if we should apply the same theory to those cases in which we ourselves seem to hear the voice of conscience most clearly we would arouse the greatest contradiction. For there we would assert with the utmost certainty that we did not feel the slightest temptation to violate any of these commandments, as for example, the commandment: Thou shalt not kill, and that we felt nothing but repugnance at the very idea.

But if we grant the testimony of our conscience the importance it claims, then the prohibition—the taboo as well as our moral prohibitions—becomes superfluous, while the existence of a conscience, in turn, remains unexplained and the connection between conscience, taboo and neurosis disappears. The net result of this would then be our present state of understanding unless we view the problem psychoanalytically.

But if we take into account the following results of psychoanalysis, our understanding of the problem is greatly advanced. The analysis of dreams of normal individuals has shown that our own temptation to kill others is stronger and more frequent than we had suspected and that it produces psychic effects even where it does not reveal itself to our consciousness. And when we have learnt that the obsessive rules of certain neurotics are nothing but measures of self-reassurance and self-punishment erected against the reinforced impulse to commit murder, we can return with fresh appreciation to our previous hypothesis that every prohibition must conceal a desire. We can then assume that this desire to murder actually exists and that the taboo as well as the moral prohibition are psychologically by no means superfluous but are, on the contrary, explained and justified through our ambivalent attitude towards the impulse to slay.

The nature of this ambivalent relation so often emphasized as fundamental, namely, that the positive underlying desire is unconscious, opens the possibility of showing further connections and explaining further problems. The psychic processes in the unconscious are not entirely identical with those known to us from our conscious psychic life, but have the benefit of certain notable liberties of which the latter are deprived. An unconscious impulse need not have originated where we find it expressed, it can spring from an entirely different place and may originally have referred to other persons and relations, but through the mechanism of *displacement*, it reaches the point where it comes to our notice. Thanks to the indestructibility of unconscious processes and their inaccessibility to correction, the impulse may be saved over from earlier times to which it was adapted to later periods and conditions in which its manifestations must necessarily seem foreign. These are all only hints, but a careful elaboration of them would show how

important they may become for the understanding of the development of civilization.

In making these discussions we do not want to neglect to make an observation that will be of use for later investigations. Even if we insist upon the essential similarity between taboo and moral prohibitions we do not dispute that a psychological difference must exist between them. A change in the relations of the fundamental ambivalence can be the only reason why the prohibition no longer appears in the form of a taboo.

In the analytical consideration of taboo phenomena we have hitherto allowed ourselves to be guided by their demonstrable agreements with compulsion neurosis; but as taboo is not a neurosis but a social creation we are also confronted with the task of showing wherein lies the essential difference between the neurosis and a product of culture like the taboo.

Here again I will take a single fact as my starting point. Primitive races fear a punishment for the violation of a taboo, usually a serious disease or death. This punishment threatens only him who has been guilty of the violation. It is different with the compulsion neurosis. If the patient wants to do something that is forbidden to him he does not fear punishment for himself, but for another person. This person is usually indefinite, but, by means of analysis, is easily recognized as some one very near and dear to the patient. The neurotic therefore acts as if he were altruistic, while primitive man seems egotistical. Only if retirement fails to overtake the taboo violator spontaneously does a collective feeling awaken among savages that they are all threatened through the sacrifice, and they hasten to inflict the omitted punishment themselves. It is easy for us to explain the mechanisms of this solidarity. It is a question of fear of the contagious example, the temptation to imitate, that is to say, of the capacity of the taboo to infect. If some one has succeeded in satisfying the repressed desire, the same desire must manifest itself in all his companions; hence, in order to keep down this temptation, this envied individual must be despoiled of the fruit of his daring. Not infrequently the punishment gives the executors themselves an opportunity to commit the same sacrilegious act by justifying it as an expiation. This is really one of the fundamentals of the human code of punishment which rightly presumes the same forbidden impulse in the criminal and in the members of society who avenge his offense.

Psychoanalysis here confirms what the pious were wont to say, that we are all miserable sinners. How then shall we explain the unexpected nobility of the neurosis which fears nothing for itself and everything for the beloved person? Psychoanalytic investigation shows that this

nobility is not primary. Originally, that is to say at the beginning of the disease, the threat of punishment pertained to one's own person; in every case the fear was for one's own life; the fear of death being only later displaced upon another beloved person. The process is somewhat complicated but we have a complete grasp of it. An evil impulse—a death wish—towards the beloved person is always at the basis of the formation of a prohibition. This is repressed through a prohibition, and the prohibition is connected with a certain act which by displacement usually substitutes the hostile for the beloved person, and the execution of this act is threatened with the penalty of death. But the process goes further and the original wish for the death of the beloved other person is then replaced by fear for his death. The tender altruistic trait of the neurosis therefore merely *compensates* for the opposite attitude of brutal egotism which is at the basis of it. If we designate as social those emotional impulses which are determined through regard for another person who is not taken as a sexual object, we can emphasize the withdrawal of these social factors as an essential feature of the neurosis, which is later disguised through over-compensation.

With the passing over to the ego of the social impulses and their relation to other fundamental impulses of man, we will bring out the second main characteristic of the neurosis by means of another example. The form in which taboo manifests itself has the greatest similarity to the touching phobia of neurotics, the *Délicie de toucher*. As a matter of fact this neurosis is regularly concerned with the prohibition of sexual touching and psychoanalysis has quite generally shown that the motive power which is deflected and displaced in the neurosis is of sexual origin. In taboo the forbidden contact has evidently not only sexual significance but rather the more general one of attack, of acquisition and of personal assertion. If it is prohibited to touch the chief or something that was in contact with him it means that an inhibition should be imposed upon the same impulse which on other occasions expresses itself in suspicious surveillance of the chief and even in physical ill-treatment of him before his coronation. (See above.) Thus the *preponderance of sexual components of the impulse over the social components is the determining factor of the neurosis*. But the social impulses themselves came into being through the union of egotistical and erotic components into special entities.

From this single example of a comparison between taboo and compulsion neurosis it is already possible to guess the relation between individual forms of the neurosis and the creations of culture, and in

what respect the study of the psychology of the neurosis is important for the understanding of the development of culture.

In one way the neuroses show a striking and far-reaching correspondence with the great social productions of art, religion and philosophy, while again they seem like distortions of them. We may say that hysteria is a caricature of an artistic creation, a compulsion neurosis, a caricature of a religion, and a paranoid delusion a caricature of a philosophic system. In the last analysis this deviation goes back to the fact that the neuroses are social formations; they seek to accomplish by private means what arose in society through collective labor. In analyzing the impulse of the neuroses one learns that motive powers of sexual origin exercise the determining influence in them, while the corresponding cultural creations rest upon social impulses and on such as have issued from the combination of egotistical and sexual components. It seems that the sexual need is not capable of uniting men in the same way as the demands of self preservation; sexual satisfaction is in the first place the private concern of the individual.

Genetically the a-social nature of the neurosis springs from its original tendency to flee from a dissatisfying reality to a more pleasurable world of phantasy. This real world which neurotics shun is dominated by the society of human beings and by the institutions created by them; the estrangement from reality is at the same time a withdrawal from human companionship.

these to objects of the outer world, his attitude will be judged to be quite natural and in no way mysterious. In view of the fact that animistic conceptions have been shown to be similar among the most varied races and in all periods, Wundt states that these "are the necessary psychological product of the myth forming consciousness, and primitive animism may be looked upon as the spiritual expression of magical thinking." Hume has already justified the animation of the inanimate in his *Natural History of Religions*, where he said: "There is a universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted and of which they are intimately conscious."⁶

Animism is a system of thought, it gives not only the explanation of a single phenomenon, but makes it possible to comprehend the totality of the world from one point, as a continuity. Writers maintain that in the course of time three such systems of thought, three great world systems came into being: the animistic (mythological), the religious, and the scientific. Of these animism, the first system, is perhaps the most consistent and the most exhaustive, and the one which explains the nature of the world in its entirety. This first world system of mankind is now a psychological theory. It would go beyond our scope to show how much of it can still be demonstrated in the life of to-day, either as a worthless survival in the form of superstition, or in living form, as the foundation of our language, our belief, and our philosophy.

It is in reference to the successive stages of the three world systems that we say that animism in itself was not yet a religion but contained the prerequisites from which religions were later formed. It is also evident that myths are based upon animistic foundations, but the detailed relation of myths to animism seem unexplained in some essential points.

Our psychoanalytic work will begin at a different point. It must not be assumed that mankind came to create its first world system through a purely speculative thirst for knowledge. The practical need of mastering the world must have contributed to this effort. We are therefore

not astonished to learn that something else went hand in hand with the animistic system, namely the elaboration of directions for making oneself master of men, animals and things, as well as of their spirits. S. Reinach⁷ wants to call these directions, which are known under the names of "sorcery and magic," the strategy of animism; with Mauss and Hubert, I should prefer to compare them to a technique.⁸

Can the conceptions of sorcery and magic be separated? It can be done if we are willing on our own authority to put ourselves above the vagaries of linguistic usage. Then sorcery is essentially the art of influencing spirits by treating them like people under the same circumstances, that is to say by appeasing them, reconciling them, making them more favorably disposed to one, by intimidating them, by depriving them of their power and by making them subject to one's will, all that is accomplished through the same methods that have been found effective with living people. Magic, however, is something else; it does not essentially concern itself with spirits, and uses special means, not the ordinary psychological method. We can easily guess that magic is the earlier and the more important part of animistic technique, for among the means with which spirits are to be treated there are also found the magic kind,⁹ and magic is also applied where spiritualization of nature has not yet, as it seems to us, been accomplished.

Magic must serve the most varied purposes. It must subject the process of nature to the will of man, protect the individual against enemies and dangers, and give him the power to injure his enemies. But the principles on whose assumptions the magic activity is based, or rather the principle of magic, is so evident that it was recognized by all authors. If we may take the opinion of E. B. Tylor at its face value it can be most tersely expressed in his words: "mistaking an ideal connection for a real one." We shall explain this characteristic in the case of two groups of magic acts.

One of the most widespread magic procedures for injuring an enemy consists of making an effigy of him out of any kind of material. The likeness counts for little, in fact any object may be "named" as his image. Whatever is subsequently done to this image will also happen to the hated prototype, thus if the effigy has been injured in any place

⁷ *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, Vol. II, Introduction, p. XV, 1909.

⁸ *Année Sociologique*, Vol. 7, 1904.

⁹ To frighten away a ghost with noise and cries is a form of pure sorcery, to force him to do something by taking his name is to employ magic against him.

⁵ I. c., p. 154.

⁶ [Quoted in] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. I, p. 477.

In the case of the child which finds itself under analogous psychic conditions, without being as yet capable of motor activity, we have elsewhere advocated the assumption that it at first really satisfied its wishes by means of hallucinations, in that it creates the satisfying situation through centrifugal excitations of its sensory organs.²¹ The adult primitive man knows another way. A motor impulse, the will, clings to his wish and this will which later will change the face of the earth in the service of wish fulfillment is now used to represent the gratification so that one may experience it, as it were, through motor hallucination. Such a *representation* of the gratified wish is altogether comparable to the *play* of children, where it replaces the purely sensory technique of gratification. If play and imitative representation suffice for the child and for primitive man, it must not be taken as a sign of modesty, in our sense, or of resignation due to the realization of their impotence, on the contrary, it is the very obvious result of the excessive valuation of their wish, of the will which depends upon the wish and of the paths the wish takes. In time the psychic accent is displaced from the motives of the magic act to its means, namely to the act itself. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that primitive man does not become aware of the over-valuation of his psychic acts until it becomes evident to him through the means employed, it would also seem as if it were the magic act itself which compels the fulfillment of the wish by virtue of its similarity to the object desired. At the stage of animistic thinking there is as yet no way of demonstrating objectively the true state of affairs, but this becomes possible at later stages when, though such procedures are still practiced, the psychic phenomenon of skepticism already manifests itself as a tendency to repression. At that stage men will acknowledge that the conjuration of spirits avails nothing unless accompanied by belief, and that the magic effect of prayer fails if there is no piety behind it.²²

The possibility of a contagious magic which depends upon contagious association will then show us that the psychic valuation of the wish and the will has been extended to all psychic acts which the will can command. We may say that at present there is a general over-valuation of all psychic processes, that is to say there is an attitude towards the world which according to our understanding of the relation of reality to

²¹ "Formulation of two principles of psychic activity," *Jahrb. für Psychoanalyt. und Psychopath. Forschungen*, Vol. III, 1912, p. 2.

²² The King in Hamlet (Act III, Scene 4):

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below,
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

thought must appear like an over-estimation of the latter. Objects as such are over-shadowed by the ideas representing them; what takes place in the latter must also happen to the former and the relations which exist between ideas are also postulated as to things. As thought does not recognize distances and easily brings together in one act of consciousness things spatially and temporally far removed, the magic world also puts itself above spatial distance by telepathy, and thus a reflection of the inner world must obscure that other picture of the world which we believe we recognize.

Let us also point out that the two principles of association, similarity and contiguity, meet in the higher unity of contact. Association by contiguity is contact in the direct sense, and association by similarity is contact in the transferred sense. Another identity in the psychic process which has not yet been grasped by us is probably concealed in the use of the same word for both kinds of associations. It is the same range of the concept of contact which we have found in the analysis of taboo.²³

In summing up we may say that the principle which controls magic, and the technique of the animistic method of thought, is "Omnipotence of Thought."

3

I have adopted the term "Omnipotence of Thought" from a highly intelligent man, a former sufferer from compulsion neurosis, who, after being cured through psychoanalytic treatment, was able to demonstrate his efficiency and good sense.²⁴ He had coined this phrase to designate all those peculiar and uncanny occurrences which seemed to pursue him just as they pursue others afflicted with his malady. Thus if he happened to think of a person, he was actually connected with this person as if he had conjured him up; if he inquired suddenly about the state of health of an acquaintance whom he had long missed he was sure to hear that this acquaintance had just died, so that he could believe that the deceased had drawn his attention to himself by telepathic means; if he uttered a half meant imprecation against a stranger,

²³ Cf. Chapter II.

²⁴ "Remarks upon a case of Compulsion Neurosis," *Jahrb. für Psychoanalyt. Forschungen*, Vol. I, 1909.

back to its first beginnings in childhood, we at first found an important distinction which is stated in *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*.²⁷ The manifestations of sexual impulses can be recognized from the beginning but at first they are not yet directed to any outer object. Each individual component of the sexual impulse works for a gain in pleasure and finds its gratification in its own body. This stage is called *autoerotism* and is distinguished from the stage of object selection.

In the course of further study it proved to be practical and really necessary to insert a third stage between these two or, if one prefers, to divide the first stage of autoerotism into two. In this intermediary stage, the importance of which increases the more we investigate it, the sexual impulses which formerly were separate, have already formed into a unit and have also found an object; but this object is not external and foreign to the individual, but is his own ego, which is formed at this period. This new stage is called *narcissism*, in view of the pathological fixation of this condition which may be observed later on. This individual acts as if he were in love with himself, for the purposes of our analysis the ego impulses and the libidinous wishes cannot yet be separated from each other.

Although this narcissistic stage, in which the hitherto dissociated sexual impulses combine into a unity and take the ego as their object, cannot as yet be sharply differentiated, we can already surmise that the narcissistic organization is never altogether given up again. To a certain extent man remains narcissistic, even after he has found outer objects for his libido, and the objects upon which he bestows it represent, as it were, emanations of the libido which remain with his ego and which can be withdrawn into it. The state of being in love, so remarkable psychologically, and the normal prototype of the psychoses, corresponds to the highest stage of these emanations, in contrast to the state of self-love.

This high estimation of psychic acts found among primitives and neurotics, which we feel to be an overestimation, may now appropriately be brought into relation to narcissism, and interpreted as an essential part of it. We would say that among primitive people thinking is still highly sexualized and that this accounts for the belief in the omnipotence of thought, the unshaken confidence in the capacity to dominate the world and the inaccessibility to the obvious facts which could enlighten man as to his real place in the world. In the case of neurotics a considerable part of this primitive attitude has remained as a constitutional factor,

while on the other hand the sexual repression occurring in them has brought about a new sexualization of the processes of thought. In both cases, whether we deal with an original libidinous investment of thought or whether the same process has been accomplished regressively, the psychic results are the same, namely, intellectual narcissism and omnipotence of thought.²⁸

~~If we may add, the now established omnipotence of thought among primitive races as a proof of their narcissism, we may venture to compare the various evolutionary stages of man's conception of the universe with the stages of the libidinous evolution of the individual. We find that the narcissistic phase corresponds in time as well as in content with narcissism, the religious phase corresponds to that stage of object finding which is characterized by dependence on the parents, while the scientific stage has its full counterpart in the individual's state of maturity where, having renounced the pleasure principle and having adapted himself to reality, he seeks his object in the outer world.²⁹~~

Only in one field has the omnipotence of thought been retained in our own civilization, namely in art. In art alone it still happens that man, consumed by his wishes, produces something similar to the gratification of these wishes and this playing, thanks to artistic illusion, calls forth affects as if it were something real. We rightly speak of the magic of art and compare the artist with a magician. But this comparison is perhaps more important than it claims to be. Art, which certainly did not begin as art for art's sake, originally served tendencies which to-day have for the greater part ceased to exist. Among these we may suspect various magic intentions.³⁰

²⁸ It is almost an axiom with writers on this subject, that a sort of "Solipsism or Berkeleyanism" (as Professor Sully terms it as he finds it in the child) operates in the savage to make him refuse to recognize death as a fact.—Maret, "Pre-animistic Religion," *Folklore*, Vol. XI, 1900, p. 178.

²⁹ We merely wish to indicate here that the original narcissism of the child is decisive for the interpretation of its character development and that it precludes the assumption of a primitive feeling of inferiority for the child.

³⁰ S. Reinach, "L'art et la Magie," in the collection, *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, Vol. I, p. 125-136. Reinach thinks that the primitive artists who have left us the scratched or painted animal pictures in the caves of France did not want to "arouse" pleasure, but to "conjure things." He explains this by showing that these drawings are in the darkest and most inaccessible part of the caves and that representations of feared beasts of prey are absent. "Les modernes patient souvent, par hypertonie, de la magie du pinceau ou du ciseau d'un grand artiste et, en général, de la magie

4

Animism, the first conception of the world which man succeeded in evolving, was therefore psychological. It did not yet require any science to establish it, for science sets in only after we have realized that we do not know the world and that we must therefore seek means of getting to know it. But animism was natural and self-evident to primitive man; he knew how the things of the world were constituted, and as man conceived himself to be. We are therefore prepared to find that primitive man transferred the structural relations of his own psyche to the outer world,³¹ and on the other hand we may make the attempt to transfer back into the human soul what animism teaches about the nature of things.

~~At last, the technique of animism, clearly and unmistakably shows the tendency of forcing the laws of psychic life upon the reality of things, under conditions where spirits did not yet have to play any rôle, and could still be taken as objects of magic treatment. The assumptions of magic are therefore of older origin than the spirit theory, which forms the nucleus of animism. Our psychoanalytic view here coincides with a theory of R. R. Marett, according to which animism is preceded by a pre-animistic stage the nature of which is best indicated by the name Animatism (the theory of general animation). We have practically no further knowledge of pre-animism, as no race has yet been found without conceptions of spirits.³²~~

~~While magic still retains the full omnipotence of ideas, animism has ceded a part of this omnipotence to spirits and thus has started on the way to form a religion. Now what could have moved primitive man to this first act of renunciation? It could hardly have been an insight into the incorrectness of his assumptions, for he continued to retain the magic technique.~~

As pointed out elsewhere, spirits and demons were nothing but the projection of primitive man's emotional impulses,³³ he personified the

de l'art. Entendu en sens propre, qui est celui d'une contrainte mystique exercée par la volonté de l'homme sur d'autres volontés ou sur les choses, cette expression n'est plus admissible; mais nous avons vu qu'elle était autrefois rigoureusement vraie, du moins dans l'opinion des artistes" (p. 136).

³¹ Recognized through so-called endopsychic perceptions.

³² R. R. Marett, "Pre-animistic Religion," *Folklore*, Vol. XI, No. 2, London, 1900.—Cf. Windt, *Mythos und Religion*, Vol. II, p. 171.

³³ We assume that in this early narcissistic stage feelings from libidinous and other sources of excitement are perhaps still indistinguishably combined with each other.

things he endowed with affects, populated the world with them and then rediscovered his inner psychic processes outside himself, quite like the ingenious paranoiac Schreber, who found the fixations and detachments of his libido reflected in the fates of the "God-rays" which he invented.³⁴

As on a former occasion,³⁵ we want to avoid the problem as to the origin of the tendency to project psychic processes into the outer world. It is fair to assume, however, that this tendency becomes stronger where the projection into the outer world offers psychic relief. Such a state of affairs can with certainty be expected if the impulses struggling for omnipotence have come into conflict with each other, for then they evidently cannot all become omnipotent. The morbid process in paranoia actually uses the mechanisms of projection to solve such conflicts which arise in the psychic life. However, it so happens that the model case of such a conflict between two parts of an antithesis is the ambivalent attitude which we have analyzed in detail in the situation of the mourner at the death of one dear to him. Such a case appeals to us as especially fitted to motivate the creation of projection formations.

~~The animism in agreement with those authors who declare that evil spirits were the first born among spirits, and who find the origin of soul conceptions in the impression which death makes upon the survivors. We differ from them only in not putting the intellectual problem which death imposes upon the living into the foreground, instead of which we transfer the force which stimulates inquiry to the conflict of feelings into which this situation plunges the survivor.~~

The first theoretical accomplishment of man, the creation of spirits, would therefore spring from the same source as the first moral restrictions to which he subjects himself, namely, the rules of taboo. But the fact that they have the same source should not prejudice us in favor of a simultaneous origin. If it really were the situation of the survivor confronted by the dead which first caused primitive man to reflect, so that he was compelled to surrender some of his omnipotence to spirits and to sacrifice a part of the free will of his actions, these cultural creations would be a first recognition of the *äwéykw*, which opposes man's narcissism. Primitive man would bow to the superior power of death with the same gesture with which he seems to deny it.

³⁴ Schreber, "Denwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken," 1903.—Freud, "Psychoanalytische Observations Concerning an Autobiographically Described Case of Paranoia," *Lehrbuch für Psychoanalyt. Forschungen*, Vol. III, 1911.

³⁵ Cf. the latest communication about the Schreber case, [Freud, l.c.,] p. 59.

If we have the courage to follow our assumptions further, we may ask what essential part of our psychological structure is reflected and reviewed in the projection formation of souls and spirits. It is then difficult to dispute that the primitive conception of the soul, though still far removed from the later and wholly immaterial soul, nevertheless shares its nature and therefore looks upon a person or thing as a duality over the two elements of which the known properties and changes of the whole are distributed. This origin duality, we have borrowed the term from Herbert Spencer,³⁶ is already identical with the dualism which manifests itself in our customary separation of spirit from body, and whose indestructible linguistic manifestations we recognize, for instance, in the description of a person who faints or raves as one who is "beside himself."

The thing which we, just like primitive man, project into outer reality, can hardly be anything else than the recognition of a state in which a given thing is present to the senses and to consciousness, next to which another state exists in which the thing is *latent*, but can reappear, that is to say, the co-existence of perception and memory, or, to generalize it, the existence of unconscious psychic processes next to conscious ones.³⁷ It might be said that in the last analysis the "spirit" of a person or a thing is the faculty of remembering and representing the object, after he or it was withdrawn from conscious perception.

Of course we must not expect from either the primitive or the current conception of the "soul" that its line of demarcation from other parts should be as marked as that which contemporary science draws between conscious and unconscious psychic activity. The animistic soul, on the contrary, unites determinants from both sides: its flightiness and mobility, its faculty of leaving the body, of permanently or temporarily taking possession of another body, all these are characteristics which remind us unmistakably of the nature of consciousness. But the way in which it keeps itself concealed behind the personal appearance reminds us of the unconscious; to-day we no longer ascribe its unchangeableness and indestructibility to conscious but to unconscious processes and look upon these as the real bearers of psychic activity.

³⁶ *Principles of Sociology*, Vol. I.

³⁷ Spencer, l. c., p. 179.

³⁸ Cf. my short paper: "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis," in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Part LXVI, Vol. XXVI, London, 1912.

We said before that animism is a system of thought, the first complete theory of the world; we now want to draw certain inferences through psychoanalytic interpretation of such a system. Our everyday experience is capable of constantly showing us the main characteristics of the "system." We dream during the night and have learnt to interpret the dream in the daytime. The dream can, without being untrue to its nature, appear confused and incoherent; but on the other hand it can also imitate the order of impressions of an experience, infer one occurrence from another, and refer one part of its content to another. The dream succeeds more or less in this, but hardly ever succeeds so completely that an absurdity or a gap in the structure does not appear somewhere. If we subject the dream to interpretation we find that this unstable and irregular order of its components is quite unimportant for our understanding of it. The essential part of the dream are the dream thoughts, which have, to be sure, a significant, coherent order. But their order is quite different from that which we remember from the manifest content of the dream. The coherence of the dream thoughts has been abolished and may either remain altogether lost or can be replaced by the new coherence of the dream content. Besides the condensation of the dream elements there is almost regularly a regrouping of the same which is more or less independent of the former order. We say in conclusion, that what the dream-work has made out of the material of the dream thoughts has been subjected to a new influence, the so-called "secondary elaboration," the object of which evidently is to do away with the incoherence and incomprehensibility caused by the dream-work, in favor of a new "meaning." This new meaning which has been brought about by the secondary elaboration is no longer the meaning of the dream thoughts.

The secondary elaboration of the product of the dream-work is an excellent example of the nature and the pretensions of a system. An intellectual function in us demands the unification, coherence and comprehensibility of everything perceived and thought of, and does not hesitate to construct a false connection if, as a result of special circumstances, it cannot grasp the right one. We know such system formations not only from the dream, but also from phobias, from compulsive thinking and from the types of delusions. The system formation is most ingenious in delusional states (paranoia) and dominates the clinical picture, but it also must not be overlooked in other forms of neuropsychoses. In every case we can show that a re-arrangement of the psychic material takes place, which may often be quite violent, provided it seems comprehensible from the point of view of the system.

The best indication that a system has been formed then lies in the fact that each result of it can be shown to have at least two motivations one of which springs from the assumptions of the system and is therefore eventually delusional,—and a hidden one which, however, we must recognize as the real and effective motivation.

An example from animistic magic will illustrate. In the chapter on taboo I mentioned a patient whose compulsive prohibitions correspond very neatly to the taboo of the Maori.³⁹ The neurosis of this woman was directed against her husband and culminated in the defense against the unconscious wish for death. But her manifest systematic phobia concerned the mention of death in general, in which her husband was altogether eliminated and never became the object of conscious solicitude. One day she heard her husband give an order to have his dull razors taken to a certain shop to have them sharpened. Impelled by a peculiar unrest she went to the shop herself and on her return from this reconnoiter she asked her husband to lay the razors aside for good because she had discovered that there was a warehouse of coffins and funeral accessories next to the shop he mentioned. She claimed that he had intentionally brought the razors into permanent relation with the idea of death. This was then the systematic motivation of the prohibition, but we may be sure that the patient would have brought home the prohibition relating to the razors even if she had not discovered this warehouse in the neighborhood. For it would have been sufficient if on her way to the shop she had met a hearse, a person in mourning, or somebody carrying a wreath. The net of determinants was spread out far enough to catch the prey in any case, it was simply a question whether she should pull it in or not. It could be established with certainty that she did not mobilize the determinants of the prohibition in other circumstances. She would then have said that it had been one of her "better days." The real reason for the prohibition of the razor was, of course, as we can easily guess, her resistance against a pleasurably accentuated idea that her husband might cut his throat with the sharpened razors.

In much the same way a motor inhibition, an abasia or an agoraphobia, becomes perfected and detailed if the symptom once succeeds in representing an unconscious wish and of imposing a defense against it. All the patient's remaining unconscious phantasies and effective remini-

³⁹ p. 14.

scences strive for symptomatic expression through this outlet, when once it has been opened, and range themselves appropriately in the new order within the sphere of the disturbance of gain. It would therefore be a futile and really foolish way to begin to try to understand the symptomatic structure and the details of, let us say, an agoraphobia in terms of its basic assumptions. For the whole logic and strictness of connection is only apparent. Sharper observation can reveal, as in the formation of the façade in the dream, the greatest inconsistency and arbitrariness in the symptom formation. The details of such a systematic phobia take their real motivation from concealed determinants which must have nothing to do with the inhibition in gain; it is for this reason that the form of such a phobia varies so and is so contradictory in different people.

If we now attempt to retrace the system of animism with which we are concerned, we may conclude from our insight into other psychological systems that "superstition" need not be the only and actual motivation of such a single rule or custom even among primitive races, and that we are not relieved of the obligations of seeking for concealed motives. Under the dominance of an animistic system it is absolutely essential that each rule and activity should receive a systematic motivation which we to-day call "superstitious." But "superstition," like "anxiety," "dreams," and "demons," is one of the preliminaries of psychology which have been dissipated by psychoanalytic investigation. If we get behind these structures, which like a screen conceal understanding, we realize that the psychic life and the cultural level of savages have hitherto been inadequately appreciated.

If we regard the repression of impulses as a measure of the level of culture attained, we must admit that under the animistic system too, progress and evolution have taken place, which unjustly have been under-estimated on account of their superstitious motivation. If we hear that the warriors of a savage tribe impose the greatest chastity and cleanliness upon themselves as soon as they go upon the war-path,⁴⁰ the obvious explanation is that they dispose of their refuse in order that the enemy may not come into possession of this part of their person in order to harm them by magical means, and we may surmise analogous superstitious motivations for their abstinence. Nevertheless the fact remains that the impulse is renounced and we probably understand the case better if we assume that the savage warrior imposes

⁴⁰ Frazer, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 158.

difficulties and misunderstandings. In contrast to this, many authors have found a way of conceiving exogamy as a necessary consequence of the basic view on totemism. Durkheim⁴⁰ has shown in his writings how the taboo, which is attached to the totem, must have entailed the prohibition against putting a woman of the same totem to sexual uses. The totem is of the same blood as the human being and for this reason the blood bann (in reference to defloration and menstruation) forbids sexual intercourse with a woman of the same totem.⁴¹ Andrew Lang, who here agrees with Durkheim, goes so far as to believe that the blood taboo was not necessary to bring about the prohibition in regard to the women of the same tribe.⁴² The general totem taboo which, for instance, forbids any one to sit in the shadow of the totem tree, would have sufficed. Andrew Lang also contends for another derivation of exogamy (see below) and leaves it in doubt how these two explanations are related to each other.

As regards the temporal relations, the majority of authors subscribe to the opinion that totemism is the older institution and that exogamy came later.⁴³

Among the theories which seek to explain exogamy independently of totemism only a few need be mentioned in so far as they illustrate different attitudes of the authors towards the problem of incest.

MacLennan⁴⁴ had ingeniously guessed that exogamy resulted from the remnants of customs pointing to earlier forms of female rape. He assumed that it was the general custom in ancient times to procure women from strange tribes so that marriage with a woman from the same tribe gradually became "improper because it was unusual." He sought the motive for the exogamous habit in the scarcity of women among these tribes, which had resulted from the custom of killing most female children at birth. We are not concerned here with investigating whether actual conditions corroborate MacLennan's assumptions. We are more interested in the argument that these premises still leave it unexplained why the male members of the tribe should have made these few women of their blood inaccessible to themselves,

as well as in the manner in which the incest problem is here entirely neglected.⁴⁵

Other writers have on the contrary assumed, and evidently with more right, that exogamy is to be interpreted as an institution for the prevention of incest.⁴⁶

If we survey the gradually increasing complication of Australian marriage restrictions we can hardly help agreeing with the opinion of Morgan, Frazer, Hewitt and Baldwin Spencer,⁴⁷ that these institutions bear the stamp of "deliberate design," as Frazer puts it, and that they were meant to do what they have actually accomplished. "In no other way does it seem possible to explain in all its details a system at once so complex and so regular."⁴⁸

It is of interest to point out that the first restrictions which the introduction of marriage classes brought about affected the sexual freedom of the younger generation, in other words, incest between brothers and sisters and between sons and mothers, while incest between father and daughter was only abrogated by more sweeping measures.

However, to trace back exogamous sexual restrictions to legal intentions does not add anything to the understanding of the motive which created these institutions. From what source, in the final analysis, springs the dread of incest which must be recognized as the root of exogamy? It evidently does not suffice to appeal to an instinctive aversion against sexual intercourse with blood relatives, that is to say, to the fact of incest dread, in order to explain the dread of incest, if social experience shows that, in spite of this instinct, incest is not a rare occurrence even in our society, and if the experience of history can acquaint us with cases in which incestuous marriage of privileged persons was made the rule.

Westermarck⁴⁹ advanced the following to explain the dread of incest: "that an innate aversion against sexual intercourse exists between persons who live together from childhood and that this feeling, since such persons are as a rule consanguinous, finds a natural expression in custom and law through the abhorrence of sexual intercourse between those closely related." Though Havelock Ellis disputed the instinctive

⁴⁰ *L'année Sociologique*, 1898-1904.

⁴¹ See Frazer's "Criticism of Durkheim," *Totemism and Exogamy*, p. 101.

⁴² *Secret of the Totem*, p. 125.

⁴³ See Frazer, I. c., IV, p. 75: "The totemic clan is a totally different social organism from the exogamous class, and we have good grounds for thinking that it is far older."

⁴⁴ *Primitive Marriage*, 1865.

⁴⁵ Frazer, I. c., p. 73 to 92.

⁴⁶ Cf. Chapter I.

⁴⁷ Morgan, *Ancient Society*, 1877.—Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, IV, p. 105.

⁴⁸ Frazer, I. c., p. 106.

⁴⁹ *Origin and Development of Moral Conceptions*, Vol. II: *Marriage*, 1909. See also there the author's defense against familiar objections.

character of this aversion in his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, he otherwise supported the same explanation in its essentials by declaring: "The normal absence of the manifestation of the pairing instinct where brothers and sisters or boys and girls living together from childhood are concerned, is a purely negative phenomenon due to the fact that under these circumstances the antecedent conditions for arousing the mating instinct must be entirely lacking. . . . For persons who have grown up together from childhood habit has dulled the sensual attraction of seeing, hearing and touching and has led it into a channel of quiet attachment, robbing it of its power to call forth the necessary erethistic excitement required to produce sexual tumescence."

It seems to me very remarkable that Westernmark looks upon this innate aversion to sexual intercourse with persons with whom we have shared childhood as being at the same time a psychic representative of the biological fact that inbreeding means injury to the species. Such a biological instinct would hardly go so far astray in its psychological manifestation as to affect the companions of home and hearth which in this respect are quite harmless, instead of the blood relatives which alone are injurious to procreation. And I cannot resist citing the excellent criticism which Frazer opposes to Westernmark's assertion. Frazer finds it incomprehensible that sexual sensibility to-day is not at all opposed to sexual intercourse with companions of the hearth and home while the dread of incest, which is said to be nothing but an offshoot of this reluctance, has nowadays grown to be so overpowering. But other remarks of Frazer's go deeper and I set them down here in unabridged form because they are in essential agreement with the arguments developed in my chapter on taboo.

"It is not easy to see why any deep human instinct should need reinforcement through law. There is no law commanding men to eat and drink, or forbidding them to put their hands in the fire. Men eat and drink and keep their hands out of the fire instinctively, for fear of natural, not legal penalties, which would be entailed by violence done to these instincts. The law only forbids men to do what their instincts incline them to do; what nature itself prohibits and punishes it would be superfluous for the law to prohibit and punish. Accordingly we may always safely assume that crimes forbidden by law are crimes which many men have a natural propensity to commit. If there were no such propensity there would be no such crimes, and if no such crimes were committed, what need to forbid them? Instead of assuming therefore, from the legal prohibition of incest, that there is a natural aversion to incest we ought rather to assume that there is a natural instinct in favor

of it, and that if the law represses it, it does so because civilized men have come to the conclusion that the satisfaction of these natural instincts is detrimental to the general interests of society."⁵⁰

To this valuable argument of Frazer's I can add that the experiences of psychoanalysis make the assumption of such an innate aversion to incestuous relations altogether impossible. They have taught, on the contrary, that the first sexual impulses of the young are regularly of an incestuous nature and that such repressed impulses play a rôle which can hardly be overestimated as the motive power of later neuroses.

The interpretation of incest dread as an innate instinct must therefore be abandoned. The same holds true of another derivation of the incest prohibition which counts many supporters, namely, the assumption that the primitive races very soon observed the dangers with which inbreeding threatened their race and that they therefore had decreed the incest prohibition with a conscious purpose. The objections to this attempted explanation crowd upon each other.⁵¹ Not only must the prohibition of incest be older than all breeding of domestic animals from which men could derive experience of the effect of inbreeding upon the characteristics of the breed, but the harmful consequences of inbreeding are not established beyond all doubt even to-day and in man they can be shown only with difficulty. Besides, everything that we know about contemporaneous savages makes it very improbable that the thoughts of their far-removed ancestors should already have been occupied with preventing injury to their later descendants. It sounds almost ridiculous to attribute hygienic and eugenic motives such as have hardly yet found consideration in our culture, to these children of the race who lived without thought of the morrow.⁵²

And finally it must be pointed out that a prohibition against inbreeding as an element weakening to the race, which is imposed from practical hygienic motives, seems quite inadequate to explain the deep abhorrence which our society feels against incest. This dread of incest, as I have shown elsewhere,⁵³ seems to be even more active and stronger among primitive races living to-day than among the civilized.

In inquiring into the origin of incest dread it could be expected that here also there is the choice between possible explanations of a

⁵⁰ I. c., p. 97.

⁵¹ Compare Durkheim, "La prohibition de l'inceste," *L'Année Sociologique*, I, 1896-97.

⁵² Charles Darwin says about savages: "They are not likely to reflect on distant evils to their progeny."

⁵³ See Chapter I.

sociological, biological, and psychological nature in which the psychological motives might have to be considered as representative of biological forces. Still, in the end, one is compelled to subscribe to Frazer's resigned statement, namely, that we do not know the origin of incest dread and do not even know how to guess at it. None of the solutions of the riddle thus far advanced seems satisfactory to us.⁵⁴

I must mention another attempt to explain the origin of incest dread which is of an entirely different nature from those considered up to now. It might be called a historic explanation.

This attempt is associated with a hypothesis of Charles Darwin about the primal social state of man. From the habits of the higher apes Darwin concluded that man, too, lived originally in small hordes in which the jealousy of the oldest and strongest male prevented sexual promiscuity. "We may indeed conclude from what we know of the jealousy of all male quadrupeds, armed, as many of them are, with special weapons for battling with their rivals, that promiscuous intercourse in a state of nature is extremely improbable. . . . If we therefore look back far enough into the stream of time and judging from the social habits of man as he now exists, the most probable view is that he originally lived in small communities, each with a single wife, or if powerful with several, whom he jealously defended against all other men. Or he may not have been a social animal and yet have lived with several wives, like the gorilla; for all the natives agree that only the adult male is seen in a band; when the young male grows up a contest takes place for mastery, and the strongest, by killing and driving out the others, establishes himself as the head of the community" (Dr. Savage in the *Boston Journal of Natural History*, Vol. V, 1845-47). The younger males being thus driven out and wandering about would also, when at last successful in finding a partner, prevent too close inbreeding within the limits of the same family.⁵⁵

Atkinson⁵⁶ seems to have been the first to recognize that these conditions of the Darwinian primal horde would in practice bring about the exogamy of the young men. Each one of those driven away could found a similar horde in which, thanks to jealousy of the chief, the same prohibition as to sexual intercourse obtained, and in the course of time these conditions would have brought about the rule which is

⁵⁴ "Thus the ultimate origin of exogamy and with it the law of incest—since exogamy was devised to prevent incest—remains a problem nearly as dark as ever." *Totemism and Exogamy*, I, p. 165.

⁵⁵ *The Origin of Man*, Vol. II, Chapter 20, pp. 603-604.

⁵⁶ *Primal Law*, London, 1903 (included in Andrew Lang, *Social Origins*).

now known as law: no sexual intercourse with the members of the horde. After the advent of totemism the rule would have changed into a different form: no sexual intercourse within the totem.

Andrew Lang⁵⁷ declared himself in agreement with this explanation of exogamy. But in the same book he advocates the other theory of Durkheim which explains exogamy as a consequence of the totem laws. It is not altogether easy to combine the two interpretations; in the first case exogamy would have existed before totemism; in the second case it would be a consequence of it.⁵⁸

3

Into this darkness psychoanalytic experience throws one single ray of light.

The relation of the child to animals has much in common with that of primitive man. The child does not yet show any trace of the pride which afterwards moves the adult civilized man to set a sharp dividing line between his own nature and that of all other animals. The child unhesitatingly attributes full equality to animals; he probably feels himself more closely related to the animal than to the undoubtedly mysterious adult, in the freedom with which he acknowledges his needs.

Not infrequently a curious disturbance manifests itself in this excellent understanding between child and animal. The child suddenly begins to fear a certain animal species and to protect himself against seeing or touching any individual of this species. There results the clinical picture of an *animal phobia*, which is one of the most frequent

⁵⁷ *Secret of the Totem*, pp. 114, 143.

⁵⁸ "If it be granted that exogamy existed in practice, on the lines of Mr. Darwin's theory, before the totem beliefs lent to the practice a *sanctified* sanction, our task is relatively easy. 'The first practical rule would be that of the jealous sire: 'No males to touch the females in my camp,' with the expulsion of adolescent sons. *In efflux of time that rule, become habitual*, would be, 'No marriages within the local group.' Next let the local groups receive names such as Emus, Crows, Opossums, Snipes, and the rule becomes, 'No marriage within the local group of animal name; no Snipe to marry a Snipe.' But, if the primal groups were not exogamous they would become so as soon as totemic myths and taboos were developed out of the animal, vegetable, and other names of small local groups." *Secret of the Totem*, p. 143. (The italics above are mine.)—In his last expression on the subject (*Folklore*, December, 1911) Andrew Lang states, however, that he has given up the derivation of exogamy out of the "general totemic" taboo.

among the psychoneurotic diseases of this age and perhaps the earliest form of such an ailment. The phobia is as a rule in regard to animals for which the child has until then shown the liveliest interest and has nothing to do with the individual animal. In cites the choice of animals which can become the object of phobia is not great. They are horses, dogs, cats, more seldom birds, and strikingly often very small animals like bugs and butterflies. Sometimes animals which are known to the child only from picture books and fairy stories become objects of the senseless and inordinate anxiety which is manifested with these phobias; it is seldom possible to learn the manner in which such an unusual choice of anxiety has been brought about.

~~In a case in which the child itself explained its fear of wasps by saying that the color and the stripes of the body of the wasp had made it think of the tiger of which, from all that it had heard, it might well be afraid.~~

~~The animal phobias have not yet been made the object of careful analytical investigation, although they very much merit it. The difficulties of analyzing children of so tender an age have probably been the motive of such neglect. It cannot therefore be asserted that the general meaning of these illnesses is known, and I myself do not think that it would turn out to be the same in all cases. But a number of such phobias directed against larger animals have proved accessible to analysis and have thus betrayed their secret to the investigator. In every case it was the same: the fear at bottom was of the father, if the children examined were boys, and was merely displaced upon the animal.~~

~~Every one of any experience in psychoanalysis has undoubtedly seen such cases and has received the same impression from them. But I can refer to only a few detailed reports on the subject. This is an accident of the literature of such cases, from which the conclusion should not be drawn that our general assertion is based on merely scattered observation. For instance I mention an author, M. Wulff of Odessa, who has written a telling study occupied himself with the neuroses of childhood. He tells, in relating the history of an illness, that a nine year old boy suffered from a dog phobia at the age of four. "When he saw a dog running by on the street he wept and cried: 'Dear dog, don't touch me, I will be good.'" By "being good" he meant "not to play violin any more" (to practice onanism).⁵⁸~~

The same author later sums up as follows: "His dog phobia is really

his fear of the father displaced upon the dog, for his peculiar expression: 'Dog, I will be good'—that is to say, I will not masturbate—really refers to the father, who has forbidden masturbation." He then adds something in a note which fully agrees with my experience and at the same time bears witness to the abundance of such experiences: "such phobias (of horses, dogs, cats, chickens and other domestic animals) are, I think, at least as prevalent as *parvor nocturnus* in childhood, and usually reveal themselves in the analysis as a displacement of fear from one of the parents to animals. I am not prepared to assert that the wide-spread mouse and rat phobia has the same mechanism."

I reported the "Analysis of the Phobia of a Five-Year-Old Boy"⁵⁹ which the father of the little patient had put at my disposal. It was a fear of horses as a result of which the boy refused to go on the street. He expressed his apprehension that the horse would come into the room and bite him. It proved that this was meant to be the punishment for his wish that the horse should fall over (die). After assurances had relieved the boy of his fear of his father, it proved that he was fighting against wishes whose content was the absence (departure or death) of the father. He indicated only too plainly that he felt the father to be his rival for the favor of the mother, upon whom his budding sexual wishes were by dark premonitions directed. He therefore had the typical attitude of the male child to its parents which we call the "Oedipus complex" in which we recognize the central complex of the neuroses in general. Through the analysis of "Little John" we have learnt a fact which is very valuable in relation to totemism, namely, that under such conditions the child displaces a part of its feelings from the father upon some animal.

Analysis showed the paths of association, both significant and accidental in content, along which such a displacement took place. It also allowed one to guess the motives for the displacement. The hate which resulted from the rivalry for the mother could not permeate the boy's psychic life without being inhibited; he had to contend with the tenderness and admiration which he had felt for his father from the beginning, so that the child assumed a double or ambivalent emotional attitude towards the father and relieved himself of this ambivalent conflict by displacing his hostile and anxious feelings upon a substitute for the father. The displacement could not, however, relieve the conflict by bringing about a smooth division between the tender and the hostile

⁵⁸ M. Wulff, "Contributions to Infantile Sexuality," *Zentralbl. f. Psychoanalyse*, 1912, II, Nr. 1, p. 15.

⁵⁹ "Little Hans," translated by A. A. Brill, Moffat, Yard & Co. [Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. 3, London, 1924-50.]

feelings. On the contrary, the conflict was continued in reference to the object to which displacement has been made and to which also the ambivalence spreads. There was no doubt that little John had not only fear, but respect and interest for horses. As soon as his fear was moderated he identified himself with the feared animal, he jumped around like a horse, and now it was he who bit the father.⁶⁰ In another stage of solution of the phobia he did not scruple to identify his parents with other large animals.⁶¹

~~We may venture the hypothesis that certain basis of totemism returns as a negative expression in these animal phobias of children. But we are indebted to S. Ferenczi for a beautiful individual observation of what must be called a case of positive totemism in the child.⁶² It is true that with the little Arpád, whom Ferenczi reports, the totemic interests do not awaken in direct connection with the Oedipus complex, but on the basis of a narcissistic premise, namely, the fear of castration. But whoever looks attentively through the history of little John, will also find there abundant proof that the father was admired as the possessor of large genitals and was feared as threatening the child's own genitals. In the Oedipus as well as in the castration complex the father plays the same rôle of feared opponent to the infantile sexual interests. Castration and~~

~~castration through identifying the father with the totemic animal.~~

When little Arpád was two and a half years old he once tried, while at a summer resort, to urinate into the chicken coop, and on this occasion a chicken bit his penis or snapped at it. When he returned to the same place a year later he became a chicken himself, was interested only in the chicken coop and in everything that occurred there, and gave up human speech for cackling and crowing. During the period of observation, at the age of five, he spoke again, but his speech was exclusively about chickens and other fowl. He played with no other toy and sang only songs in which there was something about poultry. His behavior towards his totem animal was subtly ambivalent, expressing itself in immoderate hating and loving. He loved best to play killing chickens. "The slaughtering of poultry was quite a festival for him. He could dance around the

animals' bodies for hours at a time in a state of intense excitement."⁶⁴ But then he kissed and stroked the slaughtered animal, and cleaned and caressed the chicken effigies which he himself had ill-used.

Arpád himself saw to it that the meaning of his curious activity could not remain hidden. At times he translated his wishes from the totemic method of expression back into that of everyday life. "Now I am small, now I am a chicken. When I get bigger I shall be a fowl. When I am bigger still, I shall be a cock." On another occasion he suddenly expressed the wish to eat a "potted mother" (by analogy, potted fowl). He was very free with open threats of castration against others, just as he himself had received them on account of onanistic preoccupation with his penis.

According to Ferenczi there was no doubt as to the source of his interest in the activities of the chicken yard: "The continual sexual activity between cock and hen, the laying of eggs and the creeping out of the young brood"⁶⁵ satisfied his sexual curiosity which really was directed towards human family life. His object wishes have been formed on the model of chicken life when we find him saying to a woman neighbor: "I am going to marry you and your sister and my three cousins and the cook; no, instead of the cook I'll marry my mother."

We shall be able to complete our consideration of these observations later; at present we will only point out two traits that show a valuable correspondence with totemism: the complete identification with the totem animal,⁶⁶ and the ambivalent affective attitude towards it. In view of these observations we consider ourselves justified in substituting the father for the totem animal in the male's formula of totemism. We then notice that in doing so we have taken no new or especially daring step. For primitive men say it themselves and, as far as the totemic system is still in effect to-day, the totem is called ancestor and primal father. We have only taken literally an expression of these races which ethnologists did not know what to do with and were therefore inclined to put it into the background. Psychoanalysis warns us, on the contrary, to emphasize this very point and to connect it with the attempt to explain totemism.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ I. c., p. 41.

⁶¹ "The Phantasy of the Giraffe," I. c., p. 30.

⁶² S. Ferenczi, *Contributions to Psychoanalysis*, p. 204, translated by Ernest Jones, R. G. Badger, Boston, 1916.

⁶³ Compare the communications of Reitter, Ferenczi, Rank and Eder about the substitution of blindness in the Oedipus myth for castration. *Intern. Zeitschrift f. arzte. Psychoanalyse*, 1913, I, No. 2.

⁶⁴ Ferenczi, I. c., p. 209.

⁶⁵ Ferenczi, I. c., p. 212.

⁶⁶ Frazer finds that the essence of totemism is in this identification: "Totemism is an identification of a man with his totem." *Totemism and Exogamy*, IV, p. 5.

⁶⁷ I am indebted to Otto Rank for the report of a case of dog phobia in an intelligent young man whose explanation of how he acquired his ailment sounds remarkably like

The first result of our substitution is very remarkable. If the totem animal is the father, then the two main commandments of totemism, the two taboo rules which constitute its nucleus,—not to kill the totem animal and not to use a woman belonging to the same totem for sexual purposes,—agree in content with the two crimes of Oedipus, who slew his father and took his mother to wife, and also with the child's two primal wishes whose insufficient repression or whose re-awakening forms the nucleus of perhaps all neuroses. If this similarity is more than a deceptive play of accident it would perforce make it possible for us to shed light upon the origin of totemism in prehistoric times. In other words, we should succeed in making it probable that the totemic system resulted from the conditions underlying the Oedipus complex, just as the animal phobia of "little John" and the poultry perversion of "little Arpad" resulted from it. In order to trace this possibility we shall in what follows study a peculiarity of the totemic system or, as we may say, of the totemic religion, which until now could hardly be brought into the discussion.

4

W. Robertson Smith, who died in 1894, was a physicist, philologist, Bible critic, and archaeologist, a many-sided as well as keen and free thinking man, expressed the assumption in his work on the "Religion of the Semites,"⁶⁸ published in 1889, that a peculiar ceremony, the so-called *totem feast*, had, from the very beginning, formed an integral part of the totemic system. For the support of this supposition he had at his disposal at that time only a single description of such an act from the year 500 A.D.; he knew, however, how to give a high degree of probability to his assumption through his analysis of the nature of sacrifice among the old Semites. As sacrifice assumes a godlike person we are dealing here with an inference from a higher phase of religious rite to its lowest phase in totemism.

I shall now cite from Robertson Smith's excellent book⁶⁹ those statements about the origin and meaning of the sacrificial rite which are of great interest to us; I shall omit the only too numerous tempting details

the totem theory of the Aruntas mentioned above. He had heard from his father that his mother at one time during her pregnancy had been frightened by a dog.

⁶⁸ W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, Second Edition, London, 1907.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

as well as the parts dealing with all later developments. In such an excerpt it is quite impossible to give the reader any sense of the lucidity or of the argumentative force of the original.

Robertson Smith shows that sacrifice at the altar was the essential part of the rite of old religions. It plays the same rôle in all religions, so that its origin must be traced back to very general causes whose effects were everywhere the same.

But the sacrifice—the holy action *κατέστρον* (sacrificium *εργον*)—originally meant something different from what later times understood by it: the offering to the deity in order to reconcile him or to incline him to be favorable. The profane use of the word was afterwards derived from the secondary sense of self-denial. As is demonstrated the first sacrifice was nothing else than "an act of social fellowship between the deity and his worshippers."

Things to eat and drink were brought as sacrifice; man offered to his god the same things on which he himself lived, flesh, cereals, fruits, wine and oil. Only in regard to the sacrificial flesh did there exist restrictions and exceptions. The god partakes of the animal sacrifices with his worshippers while the vegetable sacrifices are left to him alone. There is no doubt that animal sacrifices are older and at one time were the only forms of sacrifice. The vegetable sacrifices resulted from the offering of the first-fruits and correspond to a tribute to the lord of the soil and the land. But animal sacrifice is older than agriculture.

Linguistic survivals make it certain that the part of the sacrifice destined for the god was looked upon as his real food. This conception became offensive with the progressive dematerialization of the deity, and was avoided by offering the deity only the liquid part of the meal. Later the use of fire, which made the sacrificial flesh ascend in smoke from the altar, made it possible to prepare human food in such a way that it was more suitable for the deity. The drink sacrifice was originally the blood of the sacrificed animals; wine was used later as a substitute for the blood. Primitive man looked upon wine as the "blood of the grape," as our poets still call it.

The oldest form of sacrifice, older than the use of fire and the knowledge of agriculture, was therefore the sacrifice of animals, whose flesh and blood the god and his worshippers ate together. It was essential that both participants should receive their share of the meal.

Such a sacrifice was a public ceremony, the celebration of a whole clan. As a matter of fact all religion was a public affair, religious duty was a part of the social obligation. Sacrifice and festival go together among all races, each sacrifice entails a holiday and no holiday can be

celebrated without a sacrifice. The sacrificial festival was an occasion for joyously transcending one's own interests and emphasizing social community and community with god.

The ethical power of the public sacrificial feast was based upon primal conceptions of the meaning of eating and drinking in common. To eat and drink with some one was at the same time a symbol and a confirmation of social community and of the assumption of mutual obligations; the sacrificial eating gave direct expression to the fact that the god and his worshippers are communicants, thus confirming all their other relations. Customs that to-day still are in force among the Arabs of the desert prove that the binding force resulting from the common meal is not a religious factor but that the subsequent mutual obligations are due to the act of eating itself. Whoever has shared the smallest bite with such a Beduin, or has taken a swallow of his milk, need not fear him any longer as an enemy, but may be sure of his protection and help. Not indeed, forever, strictly speaking this lasts only while it may be assumed that the food partaken remains in the body. So realistically is the bond of union conceived; it requires repetition to strengthen it and make it endure.

But why is this binding power ascribed to eating and drinking in common? In the most primitive societies there is only one unconditional and never failing bond, that of kinship. The members of a community stand by each other jointly and severally, a kin is a group of persons whose life is so bound into a physical unity that they can be considered as parts of a common life. In case of the murder of one of this kin they therefore do not say: the blood of so and so has been spilt, but our blood has been spilt. The Hebraic phrase by which the tribal relation is acknowledged is: "Thou art my bone and my flesh." Kinship therefore signifies having part in a general substance. It is natural then that it is based not only upon the fact that we are a part of the substance of our mother who has borne us, and whose milk nourished us, but also that the food eaten later through which the body is renewed, can acquire and strengthen kinship. If one shared a meal with one's god the conviction was thus expressed that one was of the same substance as he, no meal was therefore partaken with any one recognized as a stranger.

The sacrificial repast was therefore originally a feast of the kin, following the rule that only those of kin could eat together. In our society the meal unites the members of the family; but the sacrificial repast has nothing to do with the family. Kinship is older than family life; the oldest families known to us regularly comprised persons who belonged to various bonds of kinship. The men married women of strange clans

and the children inherited the clan of the mother: there was no kinship between the man and the rest of the members of the family. In such a family there was no common meal. Even to-day savages eat apart and alone, and the religious prohibitions of totemism as to eating often make it impossible for them to eat with their wives and children.

Let us now turn to the sacrificial animal. There was, as we have heard, no meeting of the kin without animal sacrifice, but, and this is significant, no animal was slaughtered except for such a solemn occasion. Without any hesitation the people ate fruits, game and the milk of domestic animals, but religious scruples made it impossible for the individual to kill a domestic animal for his own use. There is not the least doubt, says Robertson Smith, that every sacrifice was originally a clan sacrifice, and that the *killing of a sacrificial animal* originally belonged to those acts which were *forbidden to the individual and were only justified if the whole kin assumed the responsibility*. Primitive men had only one class of actions which were thus characterized, namely, actions which touched the holiness of the kin's common blood. A life which no individual might take and which could be sacrificed only through the consent and participation of all the members of the clan was on the same plane as the life of a member of the kin. The rule that every guest of the sacrificial repast must partake of the flesh of the sacrificial animal, had the same meaning as the rule that the execution of a guilty member of the kin must be performed by the whole kin. In other words: the sacrificial animal was treated like one of kin; *the sacrificing community, its god, and the sacrificial animal were of the same blood*, and the members of a clan.

On the basis of much evidence Robertson Smith identifies the sacrificial animal with the old totem animal. In a later age there were two kinds of sacrifices, those of domestic animals which usually were also eaten, and the unusual sacrifice of animals which were forbidden as being unclean. Further investigation then shows that these unclean animals were holy and that they were sacrificed to the gods to whom they were holy, that these animals were originally identified with the gods themselves and that at the sacrifice the worshippers in some way emphasized their blood relationship to the god and to the animal. But this difference between usual and "mystic" sacrifices does not hold good for still earlier times. Originally all animals were holy, their meat was forbidden and might be eaten only on solemn occasions, with the participation of the whole kin. The slaughter of the animal amounted to the spilling of the kin's blood and had to be done with the same precautions and assurances against reproach.

The taming of domestic animals and the rise of cattle-breeding seems everywhere to have put an end to the pure and rigorous totemism of earliest times.⁷⁰ But such holiness as still clung to domestic animals in what was now a "pastoral" religion, is sufficiently distinct for us to recognize its totemic character. Even in late classical times the rite in several localities prescribed flight for the sacrificer after the sacrifice, as if to escape revenge. In Greece the idea must once have been general that the killing of an ox was really a crime. At the Athenian festival of the Bouphonia a formal trial to which all the participants were summoned, was instituted after the sacrifice. Finally it was agreed to put the blame for the murder upon the knife, which was then cast into the sea.

In spite of the dread which protects the life of the animal as being of kin, it became necessary to kill it from time to time in solemn conclave, and to divide its flesh and blood among the members of the clan. The motive which commands this act reveals the deepest meaning of the essence of sacrifice. We have heard that in later times every eating in common, the participation in the same substance which entered into their bodies, established a holy bond between the communicants; in oldest times this meaning seemed to be attached only to participation in the substance of a holy sacrifice. *The holy mystery of the sacrificial death was justified in that only in this way could the holy bond be established which united the participants with each other and with their god.*⁷¹

This bond was nothing else than the life of the sacrificial animal which lived on its flesh and blood and was shared by all the participants by means of the sacrificial feast. Such an idea was the basis of all the blood bonds through which men in still later times became pledged to each other. The thoroughly realistic conception of consanguinity as an identity of substance makes comprehensible the necessity of renewing it from time to time through the physical process of the sacrificial repast.

We will now stop quoting from Robertson Smith's train of thought in order to give a condensed summary of what is essential in it. When the idea of private property came into existence sacrifice was conceived as a gift to the deity, as a transfer from the property of man to that of the god. But this interpretation left all the peculiarities of the sacrificial

ritual unexplained. In oldest times the sacrificial animal itself had been holy and its life inviolate; it could be taken only in the presence of the god, with the whole tribe taking part and sharing the guilt in order to furnish the holy substance through the eating of which the members of the clan assured themselves of their material identity with each other and with the deity. The sacrifice was a sacrament, and the sacrificial animal itself was one of the kin. In reality it was the old totem animal, the primitive god himself through the slaying and eating of whom the members of the clan revived and assured their similarity with the god.

From this analysis of the nature of sacrifice Robertson Smith drew the conclusion that the periodic killing and eating of the totem before the period when the *anthropomorphic deities were venerated* was an important part of totem religion. The ceremonial of such a totem feast was preserved for us, he thought, in the description of a sacrifice in later times. Saint Nilus tells of a sacrificial custom of the Beduins in the desert of Sinai towards the end of the fourth century A.D. The victim, a camel, was bound and laid upon a rough altar of stones; the leader of the tribe made the participants walk three times around the altar to the accompaniment of song, inflicted the first wound upon the animal and greedily drank the spurring blood; then the whole community threw itself upon the sacrifice, cut off pieces of the palpitating flesh with their swords and ate them raw in such haste that in a short interval between the rise of the morning star, for whom this sacrifice was meant, and its fading before the rays of the sun, the whole sacrificial animal, flesh, skin, bones, and entrails, were devoured. According to every testimony this barbarous rite, which speaks of great antiquity, was not a rare custom but the general original form of the totem sacrifice, which in later times underwent the most varied modifications.

~~Man and his culture refused to grant any weight to this conception of the totem feast because it could not be strengthened by direct observation at the stage of totemism. Robertson Smith himself has referred to examples in which the sacramental meaning of sacrifices seems certain, such as the human sacrifices of the Aztecs and others which recall the conditions of the totem feast, the bear sacrifices of the bear tribe of the *Oudakoids* in America, and the bear festival of the Ainu in Japan. Frazer has given a full account of these and similar cases in the two divisions of his great work that have last appeared.⁷² An Indian tribe in California which reveres the~~

⁷⁰ "The inference is that the domestication to which totemism leads (when there are any animals capable of domestication) is fatal to totemism." Jevons, *An Introduction to the History of Religion*, 1911, fifth edition, p. 120.

⁷¹ l. c., p. 313.

⁷² *The Golden Bough*, Part V, *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, 1912, [chapters X, XIII, and XIV.]

buzzard, a large bird of prey, kills it once a year with solemn ceremony, whereupon the bird is mourned and its skin and feathers preserved. The Zuni Indians in New Mexico do the same thing with their holy turtle.

In the *Intichiuma* ceremonies of Central Australian tribes a trait has been observed which fits in excellently with the assumptions of Robertson Smith. Every tribe that practices magic for the increase of its totem, which it cannot eat itself, is bound to eat a part of its totem at the ceremony before it can be touched by the other tribes. According to Frazer the best example of the sacramental consumption of the otherwise forbidden totem is to be found among the Rini in West Africa, in connection with the burial ceremony of this tribe.

But we shall follow Robertson Smith in the assumption that the sacramental killing and the common consumption of the otherwise forbidden totem animal was an important part of the totem religion.⁷⁴

5

Let us now envisage the scene of such a totem meal and let us embellish it further with a few probable features which could not be adequately considered before. Thus we have the clan, which on a solemn occasion kills its totem in a cruel manner and eats it raw, blood, flesh, and bones. At the same time the members of the clan, disguised in imitation of the totem, mimic it in sound and movement as if they wanted to emphasize their common identity. There is also the conscious realization that an action is being carried out which is forbidden to each individual and which can only be justified through the participation of all, so that no one is allowed to exclude himself from the killing and the feast. After the act is accomplished the murdered animal is bewailed and lamented. The death lamentation is compulsive, being enforced by the fear of a threatening retribution, and its main purpose is, as Robertson Smith remarks on an analogous occasion, to exculpate oneself from responsibility for the slaying.⁷⁵

But after this mourning there follows loud festival gaiety accompanied by the unchaining of every impulse and the permission of every gratification. Here we find an easy insight into the nature of the *holiday*.

⁷³ Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, Vol. II, p. 590.

⁷⁴ I am not ignorant of the objections to this theory of sacrifice as expressed by Maillier, Hubert, Mauss and others, but they have not essentially impaired the theories of Robertson Smith.

⁷⁵ *Religion of the Semites*, 2nd Edition, 1907, p. 124.

A holiday is a permitted, or rather a prescribed excess, a solemn violation of a prohibition. People do not commit the excesses which at all times have characterized holidays, as a result of an order to be in a holiday mood, but because in the very nature of a holiday there is excess; the holiday mood is brought about by the release of what is otherwise forbidden.

But what has mourning over the death of the totem animal to do with the introduction of this holiday spirit? If men are happy over the slaying of the totem, which is otherwise forbidden to them, why do they also mourn it?

We have heard that members of a clan become holy through the consumption of the totem and thereby also strengthen their identification with it and with each other. The fact that they have absorbed the holy life with which the substance of the totem is charged may explain the holiday mood and everything that results from it.

Psychoanalysis has revealed to us that the totem animal is really a substitute for the father, and this really explains the contradiction that it is usually forbidden to kill the totem animal, that the killing of it results in a holiday and that the animal is killed and yet mourned. The ambivalent emotional attitude which to-day still marks the father complex in our children and so often continues into adult life also extended to the father substitute of the totem animal.

But if we associate the translation of the totem as given by psychoanalysis, with the totem feast and the Darwinian hypothesis about the primal state of human society, a deeper understanding becomes possible and a hypothesis is offered which may seem phantastic but which has the advantage of establishing an unexpected unity among a series of hitherto separated phenomena.

The Darwinian conception of the primal horde does not, of course, allow for the beginnings of totemism. There is only a violent, jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away the growing sons. This primal state of society has nowhere been observed. The most primitive organization we know, which today is still in force with certain tribes, is *associations of men* consisting of members with equal rights, subject to the restrictions of the totemic system, and founded on matrilarchy, or descent through the mother.⁷⁶ Can the one have resulted from the other, and how was this possible?

⁷⁶ For a recent contribution see, "The Whole House of The Chilkat," by G. T. Emmons, *American Museum Journal*, Vol. XVI, No. 7. (Translator.)

By basing our argument upon the celebration of the totem we are in a position to give an answer: One day⁷⁷ the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde. Together they dared and accomplished what would have remained impossible for them singly. Perhaps some advance in culture, like the use of a new weapon, had given them the feeling of superiority. Of course these cannibalistic savages ate their victim. This violent primal father had surely been the envied and feared model for each of the brothers. Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired a part of his strength. The totem feast, which is perhaps mankind's first celebration, would be the repetition and commemoration of this memorable, criminal act with which so many things began, social organization, moral restrictions and religion.⁷⁸

In order to find these results acceptable, quite aside from our supposition, we need only assume that the group of brothers banded together were dominated by the same contradictory feelings towards the father which we can demonstrate as the content of ambivalence of the father complex in all our children and in neurotics. They hated the father who stood so powerfully in the way of their sexual demands and their desire for power, but they also loved and admired him. After they had satisfied their hate by his removal and had carried out their wish

⁷⁷The reader will avoid the erroneous impression which this exposition may call forth by taking into consideration the concluding sentence of the subsequent chapter.

⁷⁸The seemingly monstrous assumption that the tyrannical father was overcome and slain by a combination of the expelled sons has also been accepted by Atkinson as a direct result of the conditions of the Darwinian primal horde. "A youthful band of brothers living together in forced celibacy, or at most in polyandrous relation with some single female captive. A horde as yet weak in their impubescence they are, but they would, when strength was gained with time, inevitably wrench by combined attacks renewed again and again, both wife and life from the paternal tyrant" (*Primal Law*, pp. 220-221). Atkinson, who spent his life in New Caledonia and had unusual opportunities to study the natives, also refers to the fact that the conditions of the primal horde which Darwin assumes can easily be observed among herds of wild cattle and horses and regularly lead to the killing of the father animal. He then assumes further that a disintegration of the horde took place after the removal of the father through embittered fighting among the victorious sons, which thus precluded the origin of a new organization of society: "An ever recurring violent succession to the solitary paternal tyrant by sons, whose partial hands were so soon again clenched in fratricidal strife" (p. 228). Atkinson, who did not have the suggestions of psychoanalysis at his command and did not know the studies of Robertson Smith, finds a less violent transition from the primal horde to the next social stage in which many men live together in peaceful accord. He attributes it to maternal love that at first only the youngest sons and later others too remain in the horde, who in return

for identification with him, the suppressed tender impulses had to assert themselves.⁷⁹ This took place in the form of remorse, a sense of guilt was formed which coincided here with the remorse generally felt. The dead now became stronger than the living had been, even as we observe it to-day in the destinies of men. What the father's presence had formerly prevented they themselves now prohibited in the psychic situation of "subsequent obedience" which we know so well from psychoanalysis. They undid their deed by declaring that the killing of the father substitute, the totem, was not allowed, and renounced the fruits of their deed by denying themselves the liberated women. Thus they created the two fundamental taboos of totemism out of the *sense of guilt of the son*, and for this very reason these had to correspond with the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex. Whoever disobeyed became guilty of the two only crimes which troubled primitive society.⁸⁰

The two taboos of totemism with which the morality of man begins are psychologically not of equal value. One of them, the sparing of the totem animal, rests entirely upon emotional motives; the father had been removed and nothing in reality could make up for this. But the other, the incest prohibition, had, besides, a strong practical foundation. Sexual need does not unite men, it separates them. Though the brothers had joined forces in order to overcome the father, each was the other's rival among the women. Each one wanted to have them all to himself like the father, and in the fight of each against the other the new organization would have perished. For there was no longer any one stronger than all the rest who could have successfully assumed the rôle

for this toleration acknowledge the sexual prerogative of the father by the restraint which they practice towards the mother and towards their sisters.

So much for the very remarkable theory of Atkinson, its essential correspondence with theory here expounded, and its point of departure which makes it necessary to relinquish so much else.

I must ascribe the indefiniteness, the disregard of time interval, and the crowding of the material in the above exposition to a restraint of the nature of the subject demands. It would be just as meaningless to strive for exactness in this material as it would be unfair to demand certainty here.

⁷⁹This new emotional attitude must also have been responsible for the fact that the deed could not bring full satisfaction to any of the perpetrators. In a certain sense it had been in vain. For none of the sons could carry out his original wish of taking the place of the father. But failure is, as we know, much more favorable to moral reaction than success.

⁸⁰"Murder and incest, or offences of like kind against the sacred law of blood are in primitive society the only crimes of which the community as such takes cognizance . . ." *Religion of the Semites*, p. 419.

of the father. Thus there was nothing left for the brothers, if they wanted to live together, but to erect the incest prohibition—perhaps after many difficult experiences—through which they all equally renounced the women whom they desired, and on account of whom they had removed the father in the first place. Thus they saved the organization which had made them strong and which could be based upon the homosexual feelings and activities which probably manifested themselves among them during the time of their banishment. Perhaps this situation also formed the germ of the institution of the mother right discovered by Bachofen, which was then abrogated by the patriarchal family arrangement.

On the other hand the claim of totemism to be considered the first attempt at a religion is connected with the other taboo which protects the life of the totem animal. The feelings of the sons found a natural and appropriate substitute for the father in the animal, but their compulsory treatment of it expressed more than the need of showing remorse. The surrogate for the father was perhaps used in the attempt to assuage the burning sense of guilt, and to bring about a kind of reconciliation with the father. The totemic system was a kind of agreement with the father in which the latter granted everything that the child's phantasy could expect from him, protection, care, and forbearance, in return for which the pledge was given to honor his life, that is to say, not to repeat the act against the totem through which the real father had perished. Totemism also contained an attempt at justification. "If the father had treated us like the totem we should never have been tempted to kill him." Thus totemism helped to gloss over the real state of affairs and to make one forget the event to which it owed its origin.

In this connection some features were formed which henceforth determined the character of every religion. The totem religion had issued from the sense of guilt of the sons as an attempt to palliate this feeling and to conciliate the injured father through subsequent obedience. All later religions prove to be attempts to solve the same problem, varying only in accordance with the stage of culture in which they are attempted and according to the paths which they take; they are all, however, reactions aiming at the same great event with which culture began and which ever since has not let mankind come to rest.

There is still another characteristic feature preserved in religion which already appeared in totemism at this time. The ambivalent strain was probably too great to be adjusted by any arrangement, or else the psychological conditions are entirely unfavorable to any kind of settlement of these contradictory feelings. It is certainly noticeable that the ambivalence attached to the father complex also continues in totemism and in religions in general. The religion of totemism included not only

manifestations of remorse and attempts at reconciliation, but also served to commemorate the triumph over the father. The gratification obtained thereby creates the commemorative celebration of the totem feast at which the restrictions of subsequent obedience are suspended, and makes it a duty to repeat the crime of parricide through the sacrifice of the totem animal as often as the benefits of this deed, namely, the appropriation of the father's properties, threaten to disappear as a result of the changed influences of life. We shall not be surprised to find that a part of the son's defiance also reappears, often in the most remarkable disguises and inversions, in the formation of later religions.

If thus far we have followed, in religion and moral precepts—but little differentiated in totemism—the consequences of the tender impulses towards the father as they are changed into remorse, we must not overlook the fact that for the most part the tendencies which have impelled to parricide have retained the victory. The social and fraternal feelings on which this great change is based, henceforth for long periods exercises the greatest influence upon the development of society. They find expression in the sanctification of the common blood and in the emphasis upon the solidarity of life within the clan. In thus ensuring each other's lives the brothers express the fact that no one of them is to be treated by the other as they all treated the father. They preclude a repetition of the fate of the father. The socially established prohibition against fratricide is now added to the prohibition against killing the totem, which is based on religious grounds. It will still be a long time before the commandment discards the restriction to members of the tribe and assumes the simple phraseology: Thou shalt not kill. At first the *brother clan* has taken the place of the *father horde* and was guaranteed by the blood bond. Society is now based on complicity in the common crime, religion on the sense of guilt and the consequent remorse, while morality is based partly on the necessities of society and partly on the expiation which this sense of guilt demands.

Thus psychoanalysis, contrary to the newer concepts of the totemic system and more in accord with older conceptions, bids us argue for an intimate connection between totemism and exogamy as well as for their simultaneous origin.

I am under the influence of many strong motives which restrain me from the attempt to discuss the further development of religions from their beginning in totemism up to their present state. I shall follow out

world was destroyed by a primordial crime and everything that issued from it must carry on the punishment for this crime.⁸⁹ Although the features of banding together, killing, and dismembering as expressed in the deed of the Titans very clearly recall the totem sacrifice described by St Nilus—as also many other myths of antiquity, for example, the death of Orpheus himself—we are nevertheless disturbed here by the variation according to which a youthful god was murdered.

In the Christian myth man's original sin is undoubtedly an offense against God the Father, and if Christ redeems mankind from the weight of original sin by sacrificing his own life, he forces us to the conclusion that this sin was murder. According to the law of retaliation which is deeply rooted in human feeling, a murder can be atoned only by the sacrifice of another life; the self-sacrifice points to a blood-guilt.⁹⁰ And if this sacrifice of one's own life brings about a reconciliation with God, the father, then the crime which must be expiated can only have been the murder of the father.

Thus in the Christian doctrine mankind most unreservedly acknowledges the guilty deed of primordial times because it now has found the most complete expiation for this deed in the sacrificial death of the son. The reconciliation with the father is the more thorough because simultaneously with this sacrifice there follows the complete renunciation of woman, for whose sake mankind rebelled against the father. But now also the psychological fatality of ambivalence demands its rights. In the same deed which offers the greatest possible expiation to the father, the son also attains the goal of his wishes against the father. He becomes a god himself beside or rather in place of his father. The religion of the son succeeds the religion of the father. As a sign of this substitution the old totem feast is revived again in the form of communion in which the band of brothers now eats the flesh and blood of the son and no longer that of the father; the sons thereby identifying themselves with him and becoming holy themselves. Thus through the ages we see the identity of the totem feast with the animal sacrifice, the theanthropic human sacrifice, and the Christian eucharist, and in all these solemn occasions we recognize the after-effects of that crime which so oppressed men but of which they must have been so proud. At bottom, however, the Christian communion is a new setting aside of the father, a repetition

of the crime that must be expiated. We see how well justified is Frazer's dictum that "the Christian communion has absorbed within itself a sacrament which is doubtless far older than Christianity."⁹¹

7

A process like the removal of the primal father by the band of brothers must have left ineradicable traces in the history of mankind and must have expressed itself the more frequently in numerous substitutive formations the less it itself was to be remembered.⁹² I am avoiding the temptation of pointing out these traces in mythology, where they are not hard to find, and am turning to another field in following a hint of S. Reinach in his suggestive treatment of the death of Orpheus.⁹³

There is a situation in the history of Greek art which is strikingly familiar even if profoundly divergent, to the scene of a totem feast discovered by Robertson Smith. It is the situation of the oldest Greek tragedy. A group of persons, all of the same name and dressed in the same way, surround a single figure upon whose words and actions they are dependent, to represent the chorus and the original single impersonator of the hero. Later developments created a second and a third actor in order to represent opponents in playing, and off-shoots of the hero, but the character of the hero as well as his relation to the chorus remains unchanged. The hero of the tragedy had to suffer, this is to-day still the essential content of a tragedy. He had taken upon himself the so-called "tragic guilt," which is not always easy to explain; it is often not a guilt in the ordinary sense. Almost always it consisted of a rebellion against a divine or human authority and the chorus accompanied the hero with their sympathies, trying to restrain and warn him, and lamented his fate after he had met with what was considered fitting punishment for his daring attempt.

⁸⁹ *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, Vol. II, p. 51. Nobody familiar with the literature on this subject will assume that the tracing back of the Christian communion to the totem feast is an idea of the author of this book.

⁹⁰ Ariel in *The Tempest*:

Full fathom five thy father lies:

Of his bones are coral made;

Those are pearls that were his eyes;

Nothing of him that doth fade

But doth suffer a sea-change

Into something rich and strange. . . .

⁹³ "La Mort d'Orphée," *Cultes, Mythes, et Religions*, Vol. II, p. 100.

⁸⁹ "Une sorte de péché proethnique," l. c., p. 76.

⁹⁰ The suicidal impulses of our neurotics regularly prove to be self-punishments for death wishes directed against others.

But why did the hero of the tragedy have to suffer, and what was the meaning of his "tragic" guilt? We will cut short the discussion by a prompt answer. He had to suffer because he was the primal father, the hero of that primordial tragedy the repetition of which here serves a certain tendency, and the tragic guilt is the guilt which he had to take upon himself in order to free the chorus of theirs. The scene upon the stage came into being through purposive distortion of the historical scene or, one is tempted to say, it was the result of refined hypocrisy. Actually, in the old situation, it was the members of the chorus themselves who had caused the suffering of the hero; here, on the other hand, they exhaust themselves in sympathy and regret, and the hero himself is to blame for his suffering. The crime foisted upon him, namely presumption and rebellion against a great authority, is the same as that which in the past oppressed the colleagues of the chorus, namely, the band of brothers. Thus the tragic hero, though still against his will, is made the redeemer of the chorus.

When one bears in mind the suffering of the divine goat Dionysos in the performance of the Greek tragedy and the lament of the retinue of goats who identified themselves with him, one can easily understand how the almost extinct drama was reviewed in the Middle Ages in the Passion of Christ.

In closing this study, which has been carried out in extremely condensed form, I want to state the conclusion that the beginnings of religion, ethics, society, and art meet in the Oedipus complex. This is in entire accord with the findings of psychoanalysis, namely, that the nucleus of all neuroses as far as our present knowledge of them goes is the Oedipus complex. It comes as a great surprise to me that these problems of racial psychology can also be solved through a single concrete instance, such as the relation to the father. Perhaps another psychological problem must be included here. We have so frequently had occasion to show the ambivalence of emotions in its real sense, that is to say the coincidence of love and hate towards the same object, at the root of important cultural formations. We know nothing about the origin of this ambivalence. It may be assumed to be a fundamental phenomenon of our emotional life. But the other possibility seems to me also worthy of consideration: that ambivalence, originally foreign to our emotional life, was acquired by mankind from the father complex,⁹⁴ where psychoanalytic

⁹⁴ That is to say, the parent complex.

investigation of the individual to-day still reveals the strongest expression of it.⁹⁵

Before closing we must take into account that the remarkable convergence reached in these illustrations, pointing to a single inclusive relation, ought not to blind us to the uncertainties of our assumptions and to the difficulties of our conclusions. Of these difficulties I will point out only two which must have forced themselves upon many readers.

In the first place it can hardly have escaped any one that we base everything upon the assumption of a psyche of the mass in which psychic processes occur as in the psychic life of the individual. Moreover, we let the sense of guilt for a deed survive for thousands of years, remaining effective in generations which could not have known anything of this deed. We allow an emotional process such as might have arisen among generations of sons that had been ill-treated by their fathers, to continue to new generations which had escaped such treatment by the very removal of the father. These seem indeed to be weighty objections and any other explanation which can avoid such assumptions would seem to merit preference.

But further consideration shows that we ourselves do not have to carry the whole responsibility for such daring. Without the assumption of a mass psyche, or a continuity in the emotional life of mankind which permits us to disregard the interruptions of psychic acts through the transgression of individuals, social psychology could not exist at all. If psychic processes of one generation did not continue in the next, if each had to acquire its attitude towards life afresh, there would be no progress in this field and almost no development. We are now confronted by two new questions: how much can be attributed to this psychic continuity within the series of generations, and what ways and means does a generation use to transfer its psychic states to the next generation? I do not claim that these problems have been sufficiently explained or that direct communication and tradition, of which one immediately thinks, are adequate for the task. Social psychology is in general

⁹⁵ I am used to being misunderstood and therefore do not think it superfluous to state clearly that in giving these deductions I am by no means oblivious of the complex nature of the phenomena which give rise to them; the only claim made is that a new factor has been added to the already known or still unrecognized origins of religion, morality, and society, which was furnished through psychoanalytic experience. The synthesis of the whole explanation must be left to another. But it is in the nature of this new contribution that it could play none other than the central rôle in such a synthesis, although it will be necessary to overcome great affective resistances before such importance will be conceded to it.

little concerned with the manner in which the required continuity in the psychic life of succeeding generations is established. A part of the task seems to be performed by the inheritance of psychic dispositions which, however, need certain incentives in the individual life in order to become effective. This may be the meaning of the poet's words: Strive to possess yourself of what you have inherited from your ancestors. The problem would appear more difficult if we could admit that there are psychic impulses which can be so completely suppressed that they leave no traces whatsoever behind them. But that does not exist. The greatest suppression must leave room for distorted substitutions and their resulting reactions. But in that case we may assume that no generation is capable of concealing its more important psychic processes from the next. For psychoanalysis has taught us that in his unconscious psychic activity every person possesses an apparatus which enables him to interpret the reactions of others, that is to say, to straighten out the distortions which the other person has effected in the expression of his feelings. By this method of unconscious understanding of all customs, ceremonies, and laws which the original relation to the primal father had left behind, later generations may also have succeeded in taking over this legacy of feelings.

There is another objection which the analytic method of thought itself might raise.

We have interpreted the first rules of morality and moral restrictions of primitive society as reactions to a deed which gave the authors of it the conception of crime. They regretted this deed and decided that it should not be repeated and that its execution must bring no gain. This creative sense of guilt has not become extinct with us. We find its asocial effects in neurotics producing new rules of morality and continued restrictions, in expiation for misdeeds committed, or as precautions against misdeeds to be committed.⁹⁶ But when we examine these neurotics for the deeds which have called forth such reactions, we are disappointed. We do not find deeds, but only impulses and feelings which sought evil but which were restrained from carrying it out. Only psychic realities and not actual ones are at the basis of the neurotics' sense of guilt. It is characteristic of the neurosis to put a psychic reality above an actual one and to react as seriously to thoughts as the normal person reacts only towards realities.

May it not be true that the case was somewhat the same with primitive men? We are justified in ascribing to them an extraordinary overvaluation of their psychic acts as a partial manifestation of their narcissistic

organization.⁹⁷ According to this the mere impulses of hostility towards the father and the existence of the wish phantasy to kill and devour him may have sufficed to bring about the moral reaction which has created totemism and taboo. We should thus escape the necessity of tracing back the beginning of our cultural possession, of which we rightly are so proud, to a horrible crime which wounds all our feelings. The causal connection, which stretches from that beginning to the present time, would not be impaired, for the psychic reality would be of sufficient importance to account for all these consequences. It may be agreed that a change has really taken place in the form of society from the father horde to the brother clan. This is a strong argument, but it is not conclusive. The change might have been accomplished in a less violent manner and still have conditioned the appearance of the moral reaction. As long as the pressure of the primal father was felt the hostile feelings against him were justified and repentance at these feelings had to wait for another opportunity. Of as little validity is the second objection, that everything derived from the ambivalent relation to the father, namely, taboos, and rules of sacrifice, is characterized by the highest seriousness and by complete reality. The ceremonies and inhibitions of compulsion neurotics exhibit this characteristic too and yet they go back to merely psychic reality, to resolution and not to execution. We must beware of introducing the contempt for what is merely thought or wished which characterizes our sober world where there are only material values, into the world of primitive man and the neurotic, which is full of inner riches only.

We face a decision here which is really not easy. But let us begin by acknowledging that the difference which may seem fundamental to others does not, in our judgment, touch the most important part of the subject. If wishes and impulses have the full value of fact for primitive man, it is for us to follow such a conception intelligently instead of correcting it according to our standard. But in that case we must scrutinize more closely the prototype of the neurosis itself which is responsible for having raised this doubt. It is not true that compulsion neurotics, who to-day are under the pressure of over-morality, defend themselves only against the psychic reality of temptations and punish themselves for impulses which they have only felt. A piece of historic reality is also involved; in their childhood these persons had nothing but evil impulses and as far as their childish impotence permitted they put them into

⁹⁶ Cf. Chapter II.

⁹⁷ See Chapter III.

action. Each of these over-good persons had a period of badness in his childhood, and a perverse phase as a fore-runner and a premise of the later over-morality. The analogy between primitive men and neurotics is therefore much more fundamentally established if we assume that with the former, too, the psychic reality, concerning whose structure there is no doubt, originally coincided with the actual reality, and that primitive men really did what according to all testimony they intended to do.

But we must not let our judgment about primitive men be influenced too far by the analogy with neurotics. Differences must also be taken into account. Of course the sharp division between thinking and doing as we draw it does not exist either with savages or with neurotics. But the neurotic is above all inhibited in his actions, with him the thought is a complete substitute for the deed. Primitive man is not inhibited, the thought is directly converted into the deed, the deed is for him so to speak rather a substitute for the thought, and for that reason I think we may well assume in the case we are discussing, though without vouching for the absolute certainty of the decision, that, "In the beginning was the deed."

THE END