felt of explaining them. The concept of mana is applied only to those that are important enough to cause reflection, and to awaken a minimum of interest and curiosity; but they are not marvellous for all that. And what is true of the mana as well as the orenda and wakan, may be said equally well of the totemic principle. It is through this that the life of the men of the clan and the animals or plants of the totemic species, as well as all the things which are classified under the totem and partake of its nature, is manifested.

So the idea of force is of religious origin. It is from religion that it has been borrowed, first by philosophy, then by the sciences. This has already been foreseen by Comte and this is why he made metaphysics the heir of "theology." But he concluded from this that the idea of force is destined to disappear from science; for, owing to its mystic origins, he refused it all objective value. But we are going to show that, on the contrary, religious forces are real, howsoever imperfect the symbols may be, by the aid of which they are thought of. From this it will follow that the same is true of the concept of force in general.

Chapter 7

Origins of These Beliefs—end

Origin of the Idea of the Totemic Principle or Mana

THE PROPOSITION ESTABLISHED in the preceding chapter determines the terms in which the problem of the origins of totemism should be posed. Since totemism is everywhere dominated by the idea of a quasi-divine principle, imminent in certain categories of men and things and thought of under the form of an animal or vegetable, the explanation of this religion is essentially the explanation of this belief; to arrive at this, we must seek to learn how men have been led to construct this idea and out of what materials they have constructed it.

1

It is obviously not out of the sensations which the things serving as totems are able to arouse in the mind; we have shown that these things are frequently insignificant. The lizard, the caterpillar, the rat, the ant, the frog, the turkey, the bream-fish, the plum-tree, the cockatoo, etc., to cite only those names which appear frequently in the lists of Australian totems, are not of a nature to produce upon men these great and strong impressions which in a way resemble religious emotions and which impress a sacred character upon the objects they create. It is true that this is not the case with the stars and the great atmospheric phenomena, which have, on the contrary, all that is necessary to strike the imagination

forcibly; but as a matter of fact, these serve only very exceptionally as totems. It is even probable that they were very slow in taking this office.[1] So it is not the intrinsic nature of the thing whose name the clan bears that marked it out to become the object of a cult. Also, if the sentiments which it inspired were really the determining cause of the totemic rites and beliefs, it would be the pre-eminently sacred thing; the animals or plants employed as totems would play an eminent part in the religious life. But we know that the centre of the cult is actually elsewhere. It is the figurative representations of this plant or animal and the totemic emblems and symbols of every sort, which have the greatest sanctity; so it is in them that is found the source of that religious nature, of which the real objects represented by these emblems receive only a reflection.

Thus the totem is before all a symbol, a material expression of something else.[2] But of what?

From the analysis to which we have been giving our attention, it is evident that it expresses and symbolizes two different sorts of things. In the first place, it is the outward and visible form of what we have called the totemic principle or god. But it is also the symbol of the determined society called the clan. It is its flag; it is the sign by which each clan distinguishes itself from the others, the visible mark of its personality, a mark borne by everything which is a part of the clan under any title whatsoever, men, beasts or things. So if it is at once the symbol of the god and of the society, is that not because the god and the society are only one? How could the emblem of the group have been able to become the figure of this quasi-divinity, if the group and the divinity were two distinct realities? The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem.

But how has this apotheosis been possible, and how did it happen to take place in this fashion?

2

In a general way, it is unquestionable that a society has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the divine in minds,

[1] See above, p. 124.

[2] Pickler, in the little work above mentioned, had already expressed, in a slightly dialectical manner, the sentiment that this is what the totem essentially is.

merely by the power that it has over them; for to its members it is what a god is to his worshippers. In fact, a god is, first of all, a being whom men think of as superior to themselves, and upon whom they feel that they depend. Whether it be a conscious personality, such as Zeus or Jahveh, or merely abstract forces such as those in play in totemism, the worshipper, in the one case as in the other, believes himself held to certain manners of acting which are imposed upon him by the nature of the sacred principle with which he feels that he is in communion. Now society also gives us the sensation of a perpetual dependence. Since it has a nature which is peculiar to itself and different from our individual nature, it pursues ends which are likewise special to it; but, as it cannot attain them except through our intermediacy, it imperiously demands our aid. It requires that, forgetful of our own interest, we make ourselves its servitors, and it submits us to every sort of inconvenience, privation and sacrifice, without which social life would be impossible. It is because of this that at every instant we are obliged to submit ourselves to rules of conduct and of thought which we have neither made nor desired, and which are sometimes even contrary to our most fundamental inclinations and instincts.

Even if society were unable to obtain these concessions and sacrifices from us except by a material constraint, it might awaken in us only the idea of a physical force to which we must give way of necessity, instead of that of a moral power such as religions adore. But as a matter of fact, the empire which it holds over consciences is due much less to the physical supremacy of which it has the privilege than to the moral authority with which it is invested. If we yield to its orders, it is not merely because it is strong enough to triumph over our resistance; it is primarily because it is the object of a venerable respect.

We say that an object, whether individual or collective, inspires respect when the representation expresing it in the mind is gifted with such a force that it automatically causes or inhibits actions, *without regard for any consideration relative to their useful or injurious effects.* When we obey somebody because of the moral authority which we recognize in him, we follow out his opinions, not because they seem wise, but because a certain sort of physical energy is imminent in the idea that we form of this person, which conquers our will and inclines it in the indicated direction. Respect is the emotion

which we experience when we feel this interior and wholly spiritual pressure operating upon us. Then we are not determined by the advantages or inconveniences of the attitude which is prescribed or recommended to us; it is by the way in which we represent to ourselves the person recommending or prescribing it. This is why commands generally take a short, peremptory form leaving no place for hesitation; it is because, in so far as it is a command and goes by its own force, it excludes all idea of deliberation or calculation; it gets its efficacy from the intensity of the mental state in which it is placed. It is this intensity which creates what is called a moral ascendancy.

Now the ways of action to which society is strongly enough attached to impose them upon its members, are, by that very fact, marked with a distinctive sign provocative of respect. Since they are elaborated in common, the vigour with which they have been thought of by each particular mind is retained in all the other minds, and reciprocally. The representations which express them within each of us have an intensity which no purely private states of consciousness could ever attain; for they have the strength of the innumerable individual representations which have served to form each of them. It is society who speaks through the mouths of those who affirm them in our presence; it is society whom we hear in hearing them; and the voice of all has an accent which that of one alone could never have.[3] The very violence with which society reacts, by way of blame or material suppression, against every attempted dissidence, contributes to strengthening its empire by manifesting the common conviction through this burst of ardour.[4] In a word, when something is the object of such a state of opinion, the representation which each individual has of it gains a power of action from its origins and the conditions in which it was born, which even those feel who do not submit themselves to it. It tends to repel the representations which contradict it, and it keeps them at a distance; on the other hand, it commands those acts which will realize it, and it does so, not by a material coercion or by the perspective of something of this sort, but by the simple radiation of the mental energy which it contains. It has an efficacy coming solely from its psychical properties, and it is by just this sign that moral authority is recognized. So opinion, primarily a

[3] See our *Division du travail social*, 3rd ed., pp. 64 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

social thing, is a source of authority, and it might even be asked whether all authority is not the daughter of opinion.[5] It may be objected that science is often the antagonist of opinion, whose errors it combats and rectifies. But it cannot succeed in this task if it does not have sufficient authority, and it can obtain this authority only from opinion itself. If a people did not have faith in science, all the scientific demonstrations in the world would be without any influence whatsoever over their minds. Even to-day, if science happened to resist a very strong current of public opinion, it would risk losing its credit there.[6]

Since it is in spiritual ways that social pressure exercises itself, it could not fail to give men the idea that outside themselves there exist one or several powers, both moral and, at the same time, efficacious, upon which they depend. They must think of these powers, at least in part, as outside themselves, for these address them in a tone of command and sometimes even order them to do violence to their most natural inclinations. It is undoubtedly true that if they were able to see that these influences which they feel emanate from society, then the mythological system of interpretations would never be born. But social action follows ways that are too circuitous and obscure, and employs psychical mechanisms that are too complex to allow the ordinary observer to see when it comes. As long as scientific analysis does not come to teach it to them, men know well that they are acted upon, but they do not know by whom. So they must invent by themselves the idea

[5] This is the case at least with all moral authority recognized as such by the group as a whole.

[6] We hope that this analysis and those which follow will put an end to an inexact interpretation of our thought, from which more than one misunderstanding has resulted. Since we have made constraint the *outward sign* by which social facts can be the most easily recognized and distinguished from the facts of individual psychology, it has been assumed that according to our opinion, physical constraint is the essential thing for social life. As a matter of fact, we have never considered it more than the material and apparent expression of an interior and profound fact which is wholly ideal: this is *moral authority*. The problem of sociology—if we can speak of *a* sociological problem—consists in seeking, among the different forms of external constraint, the different sorts of moral authority corresponding to them and in discovering the causes which have determined these latter. The particular question which we are treating in this present work has as its principal object, the discovery of the form under which that particular variety of moral authority which is inherent in all that is religious has been born, and out of what elements it is made. It will be seen presently that even if we do make social pressure one of the distinctive characteristics of sociological phenomena, we do not mean to say that it is the only one. We shall show another aspect of the collective life, nearly opposite to the preceding one, but none the less real (see p. 243).

of these powers with which they feel themselves in connection, and from that, we are able to catch a glimpse of the way by which they were led to represent them under forms that are really foreign to their nature and to transfigure them by thought.

But a god is not merely an authority upon whom we depend; it is a force upon which our strength relies. The man who has obeyed his god and who for this reason, believes the god is with him, approaches the world with confidence and with the feeling of an increased energy. Likewise, social action does not confine itself to demanding sacrifices, privations and efforts from us. For the collective force is not entirely outside of us; it does not act upon us wholly from without; but rather, since society cannot exist except in and through individual consciousness,[7] this force must also penetrate us and organize itself within us; it thus becomes an integral part of our being and by that very fact this is elevated and magnified.

There are occasions when this strengthening and vivifying action of society is especially apparent. In the midst of an assembly animated by a common passion, we become susceptible of acts and sentiments of which we are incapable when reduced to our own forces; and when the assembly is dissolved and when, finding ourselves alone again, we fall back to our ordinary level, we are then able to measure the height to which we have been raised above ourselves. History abounds in examples of this sort. It is enough to think of the night of the Fourth of August, 1789, when an assembly was suddenly led to an act of sacrifice and abnegation which each of its members had refused the day before, and at which they were all surprised the day after.[8] This is why all parties political, economic or confessional, are careful to have periodical reunions where their members may revivify their common faith by manifesting it in common. To strengthen those sentiments which, if left to themselves, would soon weaken, it is sufficient to bring those who hold them together and to put them into closer and more active relations with one another. This is the explanation of the particular attitude of a man speaking to a crowd, at least if he has succeeded in entering into communion with it. His language has a grandiloquence that would be ridiculous in ordinary circumstances; his gestures show a certain domination; his very thought is impatient of all rules, and easily falls into all sorts of excesses. It is because he feels within him an abnormal over-supply of force which overflows and tries to burst out from him; sometimes he even has the feeling that he is dominated by a moral force which is greater than he and of which he is only the interpreter. It is by this trait that we are able to recognize what has often been called the demon of oratorical inspiration. Now this exceptional increase of force is something very real; it comes to him from the very group which he addresses. The sentiments provoked by his words come back to him, but enlarged and amplified, and to this degree they strengthen his own sentiment. The passionate energies he arouses re-echo within him and quicken his vital tone. It is no longer a simple individual who speaks; it is a group incarnate and personified.

Besides these passing and intermittent states, there are other more durable ones, where this strengthening influence of society makes itself felt with greater consequences and frequently even with greater brilliancy. There are periods in history when, under the influence of some great collective shock, social interactions have become much more frequent and active. Men look for each other and assemble together more than ever. That general effervescence results which is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs. Now this greater activity results in a general stimulation of individual forces. Men see more and differently now than in normal times. Changes are not merely of shades and degrees; men become different. The passions moving them are of such an intensity that they cannot be satisfied except by violent and unrestrained actions, actions of superhuman heroism or of bloody barbarism. This is what explains the Crusades,[9] for example, or many of the scenes, either sublime or savage, of the French Revolution.[10] Under the influence of the general exaltation, we see the most mediocre and inoffensive bourgeois

[7] Of course this does not mean to say that the collective consciousness does not have distinctive characteristics of its own (on this point, see *Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives*, in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1898, pp. 273 ff.).

[8] This is proved by the length and passionate character of the debates where a legal form was given to the resolutions made in a moment of collective enthusiasm. In the clergy as in the nobility, more than one person called this celebrated night the dupe's night, or, with Rivarol, the St. Bartholomew of the estates (see Stoll, *Suggestion und Hypnotismus in de Völkerpsychologie*, 2nd ed., p. 618, n. 2).

[9] See Stoll, *op. cit.*, pp. 353 ff.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 619, 635.

become either a hero or a butcher.[11] And so clearly are all these mental processes the ones that are also at the root of religion that the individuals themselves have often pictured the pressure before which they thus gave way in a distinctly religious form. The Crusaders believed that they felt God present in the midst of them, enjoining them to go to the conquest of the Holy Land; Joan of Arc believed that she obeyed celestial voices.[12]

But it is not only in exceptional circumstances that this stimulating action of society makes itself felt; there is not, so to speak, a moment in our lives when some current of energy does not come to us from without. The man who has done his duty finds, in the manifestations of every sort expressing the sympathy, esteem or affection which his fellows have for him, a feeling of comfort, of which he does not ordinarily take account, but which sustains him, none the less. The sentiments which society has for him raise the sentiments which he has for himself. Because he is in moral harmony with his comrades, he has more confidence, courage and boldness in action, just like the believer who thinks that he feels the regard of his god turned graciously towards him. It thus produces, as it were, a perpetual sustenance of our moral nature. Since this varies with a multitude of external circumstances, as our relations with the groups about us are more or less active and as these groups themselves vary, we cannot fail to feel that this moral support depends upon an external cause; but we do not perceive where this cause is nor what it is. So we ordinarily think of it under the form of a moral power which, though immanent in us, represents within us something not ourselves: this is the moral conscience, of which, by the way, men have never made even a slightly distinct representation except by the aid of religious symbols.

In addition to these free forces which are constantly coming to renew our own, there are others which are fixed in the methods and traditions which we employ. We speak a language that we did not make; we use instruments that we did not invent; we invoke rights that we did not found; a treasury of knowledge is transmitted to each generation that it did not gather itself, etc. It is to society that we owe these varied benefits of civilization, and if we do not ordinarily see the source

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 622 ff.

[12] The emotions of fear and sorrow are able to develop similarly and to become intensified under these same conditions. As we shall see, they correspond to quite another aspect of the religious life (Bk. III, ch. v).

from which we get them, we at least know that they are not our own work. Now it is these things that give man his own place among things; a man is a man only because he is civilized. So he could not escape the feeling that outside of him there are active causes from which he gets the characteristic attributes of his nature and which, as benevolent powers, assist him, protect him and assure him of a privileged fate. And of course he must attribute to these powers a dignity corresponding to the great value of the good things he attributes to them.[13]

Thus the environment in which we live seems to us to be peopled with forces that are at once imperious and helpful, august and gracious, and with which we have relations. Since they exercise over us a pressure of which we are conscious, we are forced to localize them outside ourselves, just as we do for the objective causes of our sensations. But the sentiments which they inspire in us differ in nature from those which we have for simple visible objects. As long as these latter are reduced to their empirical characteristics as shown in ordinary experience, and as long as the religious imagination has not metamorphosed them, we entertain for them no feeling which resembles respect, and they contain within them nothing that is able to raise us outside ourselves. Therefore, the representations which express them appear to us to be very different from those aroused in us by collective influences. The two form two distinct and separate mental states in our consciousness, just as do the two forms of life to which they correspond. Consequently, we get the impression that we are in relations with two distinct sorts of reality and that a sharply drawn line of demarcation separates them from each other: on the one hand is the world of profane things, on the other, that of sacred things.

Also, in the present day just as much as in the past, we see society constantly creating sacred things out of ordinary ones. If it happens to fall in love with a man and if it thinks it has found in him the principal aspirations that move it, as well as the means of satisfying them, this man will be raised above the others and, as it were, deified. Opinion will invest him with a

[13] This is the other aspect of society which, while being imperative, appears at the same time to be good and gracious. It dominates us and assists us. If we have defined the social fact by the first of these characteristics rather than the second, it is because it is more readily observable, for it is translated into outward and visible signs; but we have never thought of denying the second (see our *Règles de la Méthode Sociologique*, preface to the second edition, p. xx, n. 1).

majesty exactly analogous to that protecting the gods. This is what has happened to so many sovereigns in whom their age had faith: if they were not made gods, they were at least regarded as direct representatives of the deity. And the fact that it is society alone which is the author of these varieties of apotheosis, is evident since it frequently chances to consecrate men thus who have no right to it from their own merit. The simple deference inspired by men invested with high social functions is not different in nature from religious respect. It is expressed by the same movements: a man keeps at a distance from a high personage; he approaches him only with precautions; in conversing with him, he uses other gestures and language than those used with ordinary mortals. The sentiment felt on these occasions is so closely related to the religious sentiment that many peoples have confounded the two. In order to explain the consideration accorded to princes, nobles and political chiefs, a sacred character has been attributed to them. In Melanesia and Polynesia, for example, it is said that an influential man has *mana*, and that his influence is due to this *mana*.[14] However, it is evident that his situation is due solely to the importance attributed to him by public opinion. Thus the moral power conferred by opinion and that with which sacred beings are invested are at bottom of a single origin and made up of the same elements. That is why a single word is able to designate the two.

In addition to men, society also consecrates things, especially ideas. If a belief is unanimously shared by a people, then, for the reason which we pointed out above, it is forbidden to touch it, that is to say, to deny it or to contest it. Now the prohibition of criticism is an interdiction like the others and proves the presence of something sacred. Even to-day, howsoever great may be the liberty which we accord to others, a man who should totally deny progress or ridicule the human ideal to which modern societies are attached, would produce the effect of a sacrilege. There is at least one principle which those the most devoted to the free examination of everything tend to place above discussion and to regard as untouchable, that is to say, as sacred: this is the very principle of free examination.

This aptitude of society for setting itself up as a god or for creating gods was never more apparent than during the first

[14] Codrington, *The Melanesians*, pp. 50, 103, 120. It is also generally thought that in the Polynesian languages, the word *mana* primitively had the sense of authority (see Tregear, *Maori Comparative Dictionary*, s.v.).

years of the French Revolution. At this time, in fact, under the influence of the general enthusiasm, things purely laïcal by nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred things: these were the Fatherland, Liberty, Reason.[15] A religion tended to become established which had its dogmas,[16] symbols,[17] altars[18] and feasts.[19] It was to these spontaneous aspirations that the cult of Reason and the Supreme Being attempted to give a sort of official satisfaction. It is true that this religious renovation had only an ephemeral duration. But that was because the patriotic enthusiasm which at first transported the masses soon relaxed.[20] The cause being gone, the effect could not remain. But this experiment, though short-lived, keeps all its sociological interest. It remains true that in one determined case we have seen society and its essential ideas become, directly and with no transfiguration of any sort, the object of a veritable cult.

All these facts allow us to catch glimpses of how the clan was able to awaken within its members the idea that outside of them there exist forces which dominate them and at the same time sustain them, that is to say in fine, religious forces: it is because there is no society with which the primitive is more directly and closely connected. The bonds uniting him to the tribe are much more lax and more feebly felt. Although this is not at all strange or foreign to him, it is with the people of his own clan that he has the greatest number of things in common; it is the action of this group that he feels the most directly; so it is this also which, in preference to all others, should express itself in religious symbols.

But this first explanation has been too general, for it is applicable to every sort of society indifferently, and consequently to every sort of religion. Let us attempt to determine exactly what form this collective action takes in the clan and how it arouses the sensation of sacredness there. For there is no place where it is more easily observable or more apparent in its results.

3

The life of the Australian societies passes alternately

[15] See Albert Mathiez, *Les origines des cultes révolutionnaires* (1789-1792).
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 32.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[20] See Mathiez, *La Théophilanthropie et la Culte décadaire*, p. 36.

through two distinct phases.[21] Sometimes the population is broken up into little groups who wander about independently of one another, in their various occupations; each family lives by itself, hunting and fishing, and in a word, trying to procure its indispensable food by all the means in its power. Sometimes, on the contrary, the population concentrates and gathers at determined points for a length of time varying from several days to several months. This concentration takes place when a clan or a part of the tribe[22] is summoned to the gathering, and on this occasion they celebrate a religious ceremony, or else hold what is called a corrobbori[23] in the usual ethnological language.

These two phases are contrasted with each other in the sharpest way. In the first, economic activity is the preponderating one, and it is generally of a very mediocre intensity. Gathering the grains or herbs that are necessary for food, or hunting and fishing are not occupations to awaken very lively passions.[24] The dispersed condition in which the society finds itself results in making its life uniform, languishing and dull.[25] But when a corrobbori takes place, everything changes. Since the emotional and passional faculties of the primitive are only imperfectly placed under the control of his reason and will, he easily loses control of himself. Any event of some importance puts him quite outside himself. Does he receive good news? There are at once transports of enthusiasm. In the contrary conditions, he is to be seen running here and there like a madman, giving himself up to all sorts of immoderate movements, crying, shrieking, rolling in the dust, throwing it in every direction, biting himself, brandishing his arms in a furious manner, etc.[26] The very fact of the concentration acts as an ex-

[21] See Spencer and Gillen, *Nor. Tr.*, p. 33.

[22] There are even ceremonies, for example, those which take place in connection with the initiation, to which members of foreign tribes are invited. A whole system of messages and messengers is organized for these convocations, without which the great solemnities could not take place (see Howitt, *Notes on Australian Message-Sticks and Messengers*, in *J.A.I.*, 1889; *Nat. Tr.*, pp. 83, 678-691; Spencer and Gillen, *Nat. Tr.*, p. 159; *Nor. Tr.*, p. 551).

[23] The corrobbori is distinguished from the real religious ceremonies by the fact that it is open to women and uninitiated persons. But if these two sorts of collective manifestations are to be distinguished, they are, none the less, closely related. We shall have occasion elsewhere to come back to this relationship and to explain it.

[24] Except, of course, in the case of the great bush-beating hunts.

[25] "The peaceful monotony of this part of his life," say Spencer and Gillen (*Nor. Tr.*, p. 33).

[26] Howitt, *Nat. Tr.*, p. 683. He is speaking of the demonstrations which take place when an ambassador sent to a group of foreigners returns to camp with news of a favourable result. Cf. Brough Smyth, I, p. 138; Schulze, *loc. cit.*, p. 222.

ceptionally powerful stimulant. When they are once come together, a sort of electricity is formed by their collecting which quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation. Every sentiment expressed finds a place without resistance in all the minds, which are very open to outside impressions; each re-echoes the others, and is re-echoed by the others. The initial impulse thus proceeds, growing as it goes, as an avalanche grows in its advance. And as such active passions so free from all control could not fail to burst out, on every side one sees nothing but violent gestures, cries, veritable howls, and deafening noises of every sort, which aid in intensifying still more the state of mind which they manifest. And since a collective sentiment cannot express itself collectively except on the condition of observing a certain order permitting co-operation and movements in unison, these gestures and cries naturally tend to become rhythmic and regular; hence come songs and dances. But in taking a more regular form, they lose nothing of their natural violence; a regulated tumult remains tumult. The human voice is not sufficient for the task; it is reinforced by means of artificial processes: boomerangs are beaten against each other; bull-roarers are whirled. It is probable that these instruments, the use of which is so general in the Australian religious ceremonies, are used primarily to express in a more adequate fashion the agitation felt. But while they express it, they also strengthen it. This effervescence often reaches such a point that it causes unheard-of actions. The passions released are of such an impetuosity that they can be restrained by nothing. They are so far removed from their ordinary conditions of life, and they are so thoroughly conscious of it, that they feel that they must set themselves outside of and above their ordinary morals. The sexes unit contrarily to the rules governing sexual relations. Men exchange wives with each other. Sometimes even incestuous unions, which in normal times are thought abominable and are severely punished, are now contracted openly and with impunity.[27] If we add to all this that the ceremonies

[27] See Spencer and Gillen, *Nat. Tr.*, pp. 96 f.; *Nor. Tr.*, p. 137; Brough Smyth, II, p. 319.—This ritual promiscuity is found especially in the initiation ceremonies (Spencer and Gillen, *Nat. Tr.*, pp. 267, 381; Howitt, *Nat. Tr.*, p. 657), and in the totemic ceremonies (*Nor. Tr.*, pp. 214, 298, 237). In these latter, the ordinary exogamic rules are violated. Sometimes among the Arunta, unions between father and daughter, mother and son, and brothers and sisters (that is in every case, relationship by blood) remain forbidden (*Nat. Tr.*, pp. 96 f.).

generally take place at night in a darkness pierced here and there by the light of fires, we can easily imagine what effect such scenes ought to produce on the minds of those who participate. They produce such a violent super-excitation of the whole physical and mental life that it cannot be supported very long: the actor taking the principal part finally falls exhausted on the ground.[28]

To illustrate and make specific this necessarily schematic picture, let us describe certain scenes taken from Spencer and Gillen.

One of the most important religious ceremonies among the Warramunga is the one concerning the snake Wollunqua. It consists in a series of ceremonies lasting through several days. On the fourth day comes the following scene.

According to the ceremonial used among the Warramunga, representatives of the two phratries take part, one as officiants, the other as preparers and assistants. Only the members of the Uluuru phratry are qualified to celebrate the rite, but the members of the Kingilli phratry must decorate the actors, make ready the place and the instruments, and play the part of an audience. In this capacity, they were charged with making a sort of mound in advance out of wet sand, upon which a design is marked with red down which represents the snake Wollunqua. The real ceremony only commenced after nightfall. Towards ten or eleven o'clock, the Uluuru and Kingilli men arrived on the ground, sat down on the mound and commenced to sing. Everyone was evidently very excited. A little later in the evening, the Uluuru brought up their wives and gave them over to the Kingilli,[29] who had intercourse with them. Then the recently initiated young men were brought in and the whole ceremony was explained to them in detail, and until three o'clock in the morning singing went on without a pause. Then followed a scene of the wildest excitement. While fires were lighted on all sides, making the whiteness of the gum-trees stand out sharply against the surrounding darkness, the Uluuru knelt down one behind another beside the mound, then rising from the ground they went around it, with a movement in unison, their two hands resting upon their thighs, then a little farther on they knelt down again, and so on. At the same time they swayed their bodies, now to the right and

[28] Howitt, *Nat. Tr.*, pp. 535, 545. This is extremely common.

[29] These women were Kingilli themselves, so these unions violated the exogamic rules.

now to the left, while uttering at each movement a piercing cry, a veritable yell, *"Yrrsh! Yrrsh! Yrrsh!"* In the meantime the Kingilli, in a state of great excitement, clanged their boomerangs and their chief was even more agitated than his companions. When the procession of the Uluuru had twice gone around the mound, quitting the kneeling position, they sat down and commenced to sing again; at moments the singing died away, then suddenly took up again. When day commenced to dawn, all leaped to their feet; the fires that had gone out were relighted and the Uluuru, urged on by the Kingilli, attacked the mound furiously with boomerangs, lances and clubs; in a few minutes it was torn to pieces. The fires died away and profound silence reigned again.[30]

A still more violent scene at which these same observers assisted was in connection with the fire ceremonies among the Warramunga.

Commencing at nightfall, all sorts of processions, dances and songs had taken place by torchlight; the general effervescence was constantly increasing. At a given moment, twelve assistants each took a great lighted torch in their hands, and one of them holding his like a bayonet, charged into a group of natives. Blows were warded off with clubs and spears. A general mêlée followed. The men leaped and pranced about, uttering savage yells all the time; the burning torches continually came crashing down on the heads and bodies of the men, scattering lighted sparks in every direction. "The smoke, the blazing torches, the showers of sparks falling in all directions and the masses of dancing, yelling men," say Spencer and Gillen, "formed altogether a genuinely wild and savage scene of which it is impossible to convey any adequate idea in words."[31]

One can readily conceive how, when arrived at this state of exaltation, a man does not recognize himself any longer. Feeling himself dominated and carried away by some sort of an external power which makes him think and act differently than in normal times, he naturally has the impression of being himself no longer. It seems to him that he has become a new being: the decorations he puts on and the masks that cover his

[30] *Nor. Tr.*, p. 237.

[31] *Nor. Tr.*, p. 391. Other examples of this collective effervescence during the religious ceremonies will be found in *Nat. Tr.*, pp. 244-246, 365-366, 374, 509-510 (this latter in connection with a funeral rite). Cf. *Nor. Tr.*, pp. 213, 351.

face and figure materially in this interior transformation, and to a still greater extent, they aid in determining its nature. And as at the same time all his companions feel themselves transformed in the same way and express this sentiment by their cries, their gestures and their general attitude, everything is just as though he really were transported into a special world, entirely different from the one where he ordinarily lives, and into an environment filled with exceptionally intense forces that take hold of him and metamorphose him. How could such experiences as these, especially when they are repeated every day for weeks, fail to leave in him the conviction that there really exist two heterogeneous and mutually incomparable worlds? One is that where his daily life drags wearily along; but he cannot penetrate into the other without at once entering into relations with extraordinary powers that excite him to the point of frenzy. The first is the profane world, the second, that of sacred things.

So it is in the midst of these effervescent social environments and out of this effervescence itself that the religious idea seems to be born. The theory that this is really its origin is confirmed by the fact that in Australia the really religious activity is almost entirely confined to the moments when these assemblies are held. To be sure, there is no people among whom the great solemnities of the cult are not more or less periodic; but in the more advanced societies, there is not, so to speak, a day when some prayer or offering is not addressed to the gods and some ritual act is not performed. But in Australia, on the contrary, apart from the celebrations of the clan and tribe, the time is nearly all filled with lay and profane occupations. Of course there are prohibitions that should be and are preserved even during these periods of temporal activity; it is never permissible to kill or eat freely of the totemic animal, at least in those parts where the interdiction has retained its original vigour; but almost no positive rites are then celebrated, and there are no ceremonies of any importance. These take place only in the midst of assembled groups. The religious life of the Australian passes through successive phases of complete lull and of superexcitation, and social life oscillates in the same rhythm. This puts clearly into evidence the bond uniting them to one another, but among the peoples called civilized, the relative continuity of the two blurs their relations. It might even be asked whether the violence of this

contrast was not necessary to disengage the feeling of sacredness in its first form. By concentrating itself almost entirely in certain determined moments, the collective life has been able to attain its greatest intensity and efficacy, and consequently to give men a more active sentiment of the double existence they lead and of the double nature in which they participate.

But the explanation is still incomplete. We have shown how the clan, by the manner in which it acts upon its members, awakens within them the idea of external forces which dominate them and exalt them; but we must still demand how it happens that these forces are thought of under the form of totems, that is to say, in the shape of an animal or plant.

It is because this animal or plant has given its name to the clan and serves it as emblem. In fact, it is a well-known law that the sentiments aroused in us by something spontaneously attach themselves to the symbol which represents them. For us, black is a sign of mourning; it also suggests sad impressions and ideas. This transference of sentiments comes simply from the fact that the idea of a thing and the idea of its symbol are closely united in our minds; the result is that the emotions provoked by the one extend contagiously to the other. But this contagion, which takes place in every case to a certain degree, is much more complete and more marked when the symbol is something simple, definite and easily representable, while the thing itself, owing to its dimensions, the number of its parts and the complexity of their arrangement, is difficult to hold in the mind. For we are unable to consider an abstract entity, which we can represent only laboriously and confusedly, the source of the strong sentiments which we feel. We cannot explain them to ourselves except by connecting them to some concrete object of whose reality we are vividly aware. Then if the thing itself does not fulfil this condition, it cannot serve as the accepted basis of the sentiments felt, even though it may be what really aroused them. Then some sign takes it place; it is to this that we connect the emotions it excites. It is this which is loved, feared, respected; it is to this that we are grateful; it is for this that we sacrifice ourselves. The soldier who dies for his flag, dies for his country; but as a matter of fact, in his own consciousness, it is the flag that has the first place. It sometimes happens that this even directly determines action. Whether one isolated standard remains in the hands of the enemy or not does not determine the fate of the country, yet the soldier al-

lows himself to be killed to regain it. He loses sight of the fact that the flag is only a sign, and that it has no value in itself, but only brings to mind the reality that it represents; it is treated as if it were this reality itself.

Now the totem is the flag of the clan. It is therefore natural that the impressions aroused by the clan in individual minds—impressions of dependence and of increased vitality—should fix themselves to the idea of the totem rather than that of the clan: for the clan is too complex a reality to be represented clearly in all its complex unity by such rudimentary intelligences. More than that, the primitive does not even see that these impressions come to him from the group. He does not know that the coming together of a number of men associated in the same life results in disengaging new energies, which transform each of them. All that he knows is that he is raised above himself and that he sees a different life from the one he ordinarily leads. However, he must connect these sensations to some external object as their cause. Now what does he see about him? On every side those things which appeal to his senses and strike his imagination are the numerous images of the totem. They are the waninga and the nurtunja, which are symbols of the sacred being. They are churinga and bull-roarers, upon which are generally carved combinations of lines having the same significance. They are the decorations covering the different parts of his body, which are totemic marks. How could this image, repeated everywhere and in all sorts of forms, fail to stand out with exceptional relief in his mind? Placed thus in the centre of the scene, it becomes representative. The sentiments experienced fix themselves upon it, for it is the only concrete object upon which they can fix themselves. It continues to bring them to mind and to evoke them even after the assembly has dissolved, for it survives the assembly, being carved upon the instruments of the cult, upon the sides of rocks, upon bucklers, etc. By it, the emotions experienced are perpetually sustained and revived. Everything happens just as if they inspired them directly. It is still more natural to attribute them to it for, since they are common to the group, they can be associated only with something that is equally common to all. Now the totemic emblem is the only thing satisfying this condition. By definition, it is common to all. During the ceremony, it is the centre of all regards. While generations change, it remains the same; it is the permanent element of the social life. So it is from it that those mysterious

forces seem to emanate with which men feel that they are related, and thus they have been led to represent these forces under the form of the animate or inanimate being whose name the clan bears.

When this point is once established, we are in a position to understand all that is essential in the totemic beliefs.

Since religious force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous force of the clan, and since this can be represented in the mind only in the form of the totem, the totemic emblem is like the visible body of the god. Therefore, it is from it that those kindly and dreadful actions seem to emanate, which the cult seeks to provoke or prevent; consequently, it is to it that the cult is addressed. This is the explanation of why it holds the first place in the series of sacred things.

But the clan, like every other sort of society, can live only in and through the individual consciousnesses that compose it. So if religious force, in so far as it is conceived as incorporated in the totemic emblem, appears to be outside of the individuals and to be endowed with a sort of transcendence over them, it, like the clan of which it is the symbol, can be realized only in and through them; in this sense, it is imminent in them and they necessarily represent it as such. They feel it present and active within them, for it is this which raises them to a superior life. This is why men have believed that they contain within them a principle comparable to the one residing in the totem, and consequently, why they have attributed a sacred character to themselves, but one less marked than that of the emblem. It is because the emblem is the pre-eminent source of the religious life; the man participates in it only indirectly, as he is well aware; he takes into account the fact that the force that transports him into the world of sacred things is not inherent in him, but comes to him from the outside.

But for still another reason, the animals or vegetables of the totemic species should have the same character and even to a higher degree. If the totemic principle is nothing else than the clan, it is the clan thought of under the material form of the totemic emblem; now this form is also that of the concrete beings whose name the clan bears. Owing to this resemblance, they could not fail to evoke sentiments analogous to those aroused by the emblem itself. Since the latter is the object of a religious respect, they too should inspire respect of the same sort and appear to be sacred. Having external forms so nearly identical, it would be impossible for the native not to attribute

to them forces of the same nature. It is therefore forbidden to kill or eat the totemic animal, since its flesh is believed to have the positive virtues resulting from the rites; it is because it resembles the emblem of the clan, that is to say, it is in its own image. And since the animal naturally resembles the emblem more than the man does, it is placed on a superior rank in the hierarchy of sacred things. Between these two beings there is undoubtedly a close relationship, for they both partake of the same essence: both incarnate something of the totemic principle. However, since the principle itself is conceived under an animal form, the animal seems to incarnate it more fully than the man. Therefore, if men consider it and treat it as a brother, it is at least as an elder brother.[32]

But even if the totemic principle has its preferred seat in a determined species of animal or vegetable, it cannot remain localized there. A sacred character is to a high degree contagious;[33] it therefore spreads out from the totemic being to everything that is closely or remotely connected with it. The religious sentiments inspired by the animal are communicated to the substances upon which it is nourished and which serve to make or remake its flesh and blood, to the things that resemble it, and to the different beings with which it has constant relations. Thus, little by little, sub-totems are attached to the totems and from the cosmological systems expressed by the primitive classifications. At last, the whole world is divided up among the totemic principles of each tribe.

We are now able to explain the origin of the ambiguity of religious forces as they appear in history, and how they are physical as well as human, moral as well as material. They are moral powers because they are made up entirely of the impressions this moral being, the group, arouses in those other moral beings, its individual members; they do not translate the manner in which physical things affect our senses, but the way in which the collective consciousness acts upon individual consciousnesses. Their authority is only one form of the moral ascendancy of society over its members. But, on the other hand, since they are conceived of under material forms, they

[32] Thus we see that this fraternity is the logical consequence of totemism, rather than its basis. Men have not imagined their duties towards the animals of the totemic species because they regarded them as kindred, but have imagined the kinship to explain the nature of the beliefs and rites of which they were the object. The animal was considered a relative of the man because it was a sacred being like the man, but it was not treated as a sacred being because it was regarded as a relative.

[33] See below, Bk. III, ch. i, § 3.

could not fail to be regarded as closely related to material things.[34] Therefore they dominate the two worlds. Their residence is in men, but at the same time they are the vital principles of things. They animate minds and discipline them, but it is also they who make plants grow and animals reproduce. It is this double nature which has enabled religion to be like the womb from which come all the leading germs of human civilization. Since it has been made to embrace all of reality, the physical world as well as the moral one, the forces that move bodies as well as those that move minds have been conceived in a religious form. That is how the most diverse methods and practices, both those that make possible the continuation of the moral life (law, morals, beaux-arts) and those serving the material life (the natural, technical and practical sciences), are either directly or indirectly derived from religion.[35]

4

The first religious conceptions have often been attributed to feelings of weakness and dependence, of fear and anguish which seized men when they came into contact with the world. Being the victims of nightmares of which they were themselves the creators, they believed themselves surrounded by hostile and redoubtable powers which their rites sought to appease. We have now shown that the first religions were of a wholly different origin. The famous formula *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor* is in no way justified by the facts. The primitive does not regard his gods as foreigners, enemies or thoroughly and necessarily malevolent beings whose favours he must acquire at any price; quite on the contrary, they are rather friends, kindred or natural protectors for him. Are these not the names he gives to the beings of the totemic species? The power to which the cult is addressed is not represented as soaring high above him and overwhelming him by its superiority; on the

[34] At the bottom of this conception there is a well-founded and persistent sentiment. Modern science also tends more and more to admit that the duality of man and nature does not exclude their unity, and that physical and moral forces, though distinct, are closely related. We undoubtedly have a different conception of this unity and relationship than the primitive, but beneath these different symbols, the truth affirmed by the two is the same.

[35] We say that this derivation is sometimes indirect on account of the industrial methods which, in a large number of cases, seem to be derived from religion through the intermediacy of magic (see Hubert and Mauss, *Théorie générale de la Magie, Année Sociol.*, VII, pp. 144 ff.); for, as we believe, magic forces are only a special form of religious forces. We shall have occasion to return to this point several times.

contrary, it is very near to him and confers upon him very useful powers which he could never acquire by himself. Perhaps the deity has never been nearer to men than at this period of history, when it is present in the things filling their immediate environment and is, in part, imminent in himself. In fine, the sentiments at the root of totemism are those of happy confidence rather than of terror and compression. If we set aside the funeral rites—the sober side of every religion—we find the totemic cult celebrated in the midst of songs, dances and dramatic representations. As we shall see, cruel expiations are relatively rare; even the painful and obligatory mutilations of the initiations are not of this character. The terrible and jealous gods appear but slowly in the religious evolution. This is because primitive societies are not those huge Leviathans which overwhelm a man by the enormity of their power and place him under a severe discipline;[36] he gives himself up to them spontaneously and without resistance. As the social soul is then made up of only a small number of ideas and sentiments, it easily becomes wholly incarnate in each individual consciousness. The individual carries it all inside of him; it is a part of him and consequently, when he gives himself up to the impulses inspired by it, he does not feel that he is giving way before compulsion, but that he is going where his nature calls him.[37]

This way of understanding the origins of religious thought escapes the objections raised against the most accredited classical theories.

We have seen how the naturists and animists pretend to construct the idea of sacred beings out of the sensations evoked in us by different phenomena of the physical or biological order, and we have shown how this enterprise is impossible and even self-contradictory. Nothing is worth nothing. The impressions produced in us by the physical world can, by definition, contain nothing that surpasses this world. Out of the visible, only the visible can be made; out of that which is heard, we cannot make something not heard. Then to explain how the idea of sacredness has been able to take form under these conditions, the majority of the theorists have been obliged to admit that men have superimposed upon reality, such as it is given by observation, an unreal world, constructed entirely out of the

[36] At least after he is once adult and fully initiated, for the initiation rites, introducing the young man to the social life, are a severe discipline in themselves.

[37] Upon this particular aspect of primitive societies, see our *Division du travail social*, 3rd ed., pp. 123, 149, 173 ff.

fantastic images which agitate his mind during a dream, or else out of the frequently monstrous aberrations produced by the mythological imagination under the bewitching but deceiving influence of language. But it remained incomprehensible that humanity should have remained obstinate in these errors through the ages, for experience should have very quickly proven them false.

But from our point of view, these difficulties disappear. Religion ceases to be an inexplicable hallucination and takes a foothold in reality. In fact, we can say that the believer is not deceived when he believes in the existence of a moral power upon which he depends and from which he receives all that is best in himself: this power exists, it is society. When the Australian is carried outside himself and feels a new life flowing within him whose intensity surprises him, he is not the dupe of an illusion; this exaltation is real and is really the effect of forces outside of and superior to the individual. It is true that he is wrong in thinking that this increase of vitality is the work of a power in the form of some animal or plant. But this error is merely in regard to the letter of the symbol by which this being is represented to the mind and the external appearance which the imagination has given it, and not in regard to the fact of its existence. Behind these figures and metaphors, be they gross or refined, there is a concrete and living reality. Thus religion acquires a meaning and a reasonableness that the most intransigent rationalist cannot misunderstand. Its primary object is not to give men a representation of the physical world; for if that were its essential task, we could not understand how it has been able to survive, for, on this side, it is scarcely more than a fabric of errors. Before all, it is a system of ideas with which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members, and the obscure but intimate relations which they have with it. This is its primary function; and though metaphorical and symbolic, this representation is not unfaithful. Quite on the contrary, it translates everything essential in the relations which are to be explained: for it is an eternal truth that outside of us there exists something greater than us, with which we enter into communion.

That is why we can rest assured in advance that the practices of the cult, whatever they may be, are something more than movements without importance and gestures without efficacy. By the mere fact that their apparent function is to strengthen the bonds attaching the believer to his god, they at

the same time really strengthen the bonds attaching the individual to the society of which he is a member, since the god is only a figurative expression of the society. We are even able to understand how the fundamental truth thus contained in religion has been able to compensate for the secondary errors which it almost necessarily implies, and how believers have consequently been restrained from tearing themselves off from it, in spite of the misunderstandings which must result from these errors. It is undeniably true that the recipes which it recommends that men use to act upon things are generally found to be ineffective. But these checks can have no profound influence, for they do not touch religion in its fundamentals.[38]

However, it may be objected that even according to this hypothesis, religion remains the object of a certain delirium. What other name can we give to that state when, after a collective effervescence, men believe themselves transported into an entirely different world from the one they have before their eyes?

It is certainly true that religious life cannot attain a certain degree of intensity without implying a psychical exaltation not far removed from delirium. That is why the prophets, the founders of religions, the great saints, in a word, the men whose religious consciousness is exceptionally sensitive, very frequently gives signs of an excessive nervousness that is even pathological: these physiological defects predestined them to great religious rôles. The ritual use of intoxicating liquors is to be explained in the same way.[39] Of course this does not mean that an ardent religious faith is necessarily the fruit of the drunkenness and mental derangement which accompany it; but as experience soon informed people of the similarities between the mentality of a delirious person and that of a seer, they sought to open a way to the second by artificially exciting the first. But if, for this reason, it may be said that religion is not without a certain delirium, it must be added that this delirium, if it has the causes which we have attributed to it, *is well-founded*. The images out of which it is made are not pure illusions like those the naturists and animists put at the basis of religion; they correspond to something in reality. Of course it is only natural that the moral forces they express should be unable to affect the human mind powerfully without

[38] We provisionally limit ourselves to this general indication: we shall return to this idea and give more explicit proof, when we speak of the rites (Bk. III).

[39] On this point, see Achelis, *Die Ekstase*, Berlin, 1902, especially ch. i.

pulling it outside itself and without plunging it into a state that may be called *ecstatic*, provided that the word be taken in its etymological sense (ἔκστασις); but it does not follow that they are imaginary. Quite on the contrary, the mental agitation they cause bears witness to their reality. It is merely one more proof that a very intense social life always does a sort of violence to the organism, as well as to the individual consciousness, which interferes with its normal functioning. Therefore it can last only a limited length of time.[40]

Moreover, if we give the name delirious to every state in which the mind adds to the immediate data given by the senses and projects its own sentiments and feelings into things, then nearly every collective representation is in a sense delirious; religious beliefs are only one particular case of a very general law. Our whole social environment seems to us to be filled with forces which really exist only in our own minds. We know what the flag is for the soldier; in itself, it is only a piece of cloth. Human blood is only an organic liquid, but even to-day we cannot see it flowing without feeling a violent emotion which its physio-chemical properties cannot explain. From the physical point of view, a man is nothing more than a system of cells, or from the mental point of view, than a system of representations; in either case, he differs only in degree from animals. Yet society conceives him, and obliges us to conceive him, as invested with a character *sui generis* that isolates him, holds at a distance all rash encroachments and, in a word, imposes respect. This dignity which puts him into a class by himself appears to us as one of his distinctive attributes, although we can find nothing in the empirical nature of man which justifies it. A cancelled postage stamp may be worth a fortune; but surely this value is in no way implied in its natural properties. In a sense, our representation of the external world is undoubtedly a mere fabric of hallucinations, for the odours, tastes and colours that we put into bodies are not really there, or at least, they are not such as we perceive them. However, our olfactory, gustatory and visual sensations continue to correspond to certain objective states of the things represented; they express in their way the properties, either of material particles or of ether waves, which certainly have their origin in the bodies which we perceive as fragrant, sapid, or coloured. But collective representations very frequently attribute to the things to which they are attached qualities which

[40] Cf. Mauss, *Essai sur les variations saisonnières des sociétés eskimos*, in *Année Sociol.*, IX, p. 127.

do not exist under any form or to any degree. Out of the commonest object, they can make a most powerful sacred being.

Yet the powers which are thus conferred, though purely ideal, act as though they were real; they determine the conduct of men with the same degree of necessity as physical forces. The Arunta who has been rubbed with his churinga feels himself stronger; he is stronger. If he has eaten the flesh of an animal which, though perfectly healthy, is forbidden to him, he will feel himself sick, and may die of it. Surely the soldier who falls while defending his flag does not believe that he sacrifices himself for a bit of cloth. This is all because social thought, owing to the imperative authority that is in it, has an efficacy that individual thought could never have; by the power which it has over our minds, it can make us see things in whatever light it pleases; it adds to reality or deducts from it according to the circumstances. Thus there is one division of nature where the formula of idealism is applicable almost to the letter: this is the social kingdom. Here more than anywhere else, the idea is the reality. Even in this case, of course, idealism is not true without modification. We can never escape the duality of our nature and free ourselves completely from physical necessities: in order to express our own ideas to ourselves, it is necessary, as has been shown above, that we fix them upon material things which symbolize them. But here the part of matter is reduced to a minimum. The object serving as support for the idea is not much in comparison with the ideal superstructure, beneath which it disappears, and also, it counts for nothing in the superstructure. This is what that pseudo-delirium consists in, which we find at the bottom of so many collective representations: it is only a form of this essential idealism.[41] So it is not properly called a delirium, for the ideas thus objectified are well founded, not in the nature of the material things upon which they settle themselves, but in the nature of society.

[41] Thus we see how erroneous those theories are which, like the geographical materialism of Ratzel (see especially his *Politische Geographie*), seek to derive all social life from its material foundation (either economic or territorial). They commit an error precisely similar to the one committed by Maudsley in individual psychology. Just as this latter reduced all the psychical life of the individual to a mere epiphenomenon of his physiological basis, they seek to reduce the whole psychical life of the group to its physical basis. But they forget that ideas are realities and forces, and that collective representations are forces even more powerful and active than individual representations. On this point, see our *Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives*, in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, May, 1898.

We are now able to understand how the totemic principle, and in general, every religious force, comes to be outside of the object in which it resides.[42] It is because the idea of it is in no way made up of the impressions directly produced by this thing upon our senses or minds. Religious force is only the sentiment inspired by the group in its members, but projected outside of the consciousnesses that experience them, and objectified. To be objectified, they are fixed upon some object which thus becomes sacred; but any object might fulfil this function. In principle, there are none whose nature predestines them to it to the exclusion of all others; but also there are none that are necessarily impossible.[43] Everything depends upon the circumstances which lead the sentiment creating religious ideas to establish itself here or there, upon this point or upon that one. Therefore, the sacred character assumed by an object is not implied in the intrinsic properties of this latter: *it is added to them*. The world of religious things is not one particular aspect of empirical nature; *it is superimposed upon it*.

This conception of the religious, finally, allows us to explain an important principle found at the bottom of a multitude of myths and rites, and which may be stated thus: when a sacred thing is subdivided, each of its parts remains equal to the thing itself. In other words, as far as religious thought is concerned, the part is equal to the whole; it has the same powers, the same efficacy. The debris of a relic has the same virtue as a relic in good condition. The smallest drop of blood contains the same active principle as the whole thing. The soul, as we shall see, may be broken up into nearly as many pieces as there are organs or tissues in the organism; each of these partial souls is worth a whole soul. This conception would be inexplicable if the sacredness of something were due to the constituent properties of the thing itself; for in that case, it should vary with this thing, increasing and decreasing with it. But if the virtues it is believed to possess are not intrinsic in it, and if they come from certain sentiments which it brings to mind and symbolizes, though these originate outside of it, then, since it has no need of determined dimensions to play this rôle of reminder, it will have the same value whether it is entire or not. Since the part makes us think of the whole, it evokes the same

[42] See above, pp. 216 and 222.

[43] Even the *excreta* have a religious character. See Preuss, *Der Ursprung der Religion und Kunst*, especially ch. ii, entitled *Der Zauber der Defäkation* (*Globus*, LXXXVI, pp. 325 ff.).

they may well be painful, but they are not depressing; on the contrary, they denote a state of effervescence which implies a mobilization of all our active forces, and even a supply of external energies. It matters little that this exaltation was provoked by a sad event, for it is real, notwithstanding, and does not differ specifically from what is observed in the happy feasts. Sometimes it is even made manifest by movements of the same nature: there is the same frenzy which seizes the worshippers and the same tendency towards sexual debauches, a sure sign of great nervous overexcitement. Robertson Smith had already noticed this curious influence of sad rites in the Semitic cults: "in evil times," he says, "when men's thoughts were habitually sombre, they betook themselves to the physical excitement of religion as men now take refuge in wine. . . . And so in general when an act of Semitic worship began with sorrow and lamentation—as in the mourning for Adonis, or the great atoning ceremonies which became common in later times—a swift revulsion of feeling followed, and the gloomy part of the service was presently succeeded by a burst of hilarious revelry."[56] In a word, even when religious ceremonies have a disquieting or saddening event as their point of departure, they retain their stimulating power over the affective state of the group and individuals. By the mere fact that they are collective, they raise the vital tone. When one feels life within him—whether it be in the form of painful irritation or happy enthusiasm—he does not believe in death; so he becomes reassured and takes courage again, and subjectively, everything goes on as if the rite had really driven off the danger which was dreaded. This is how curing or preventive virtues come to be attributed to the movements which one makes, to the cries uttered, to the blood shed and to the wounds inflicted upon one's self or others; and as these different tortures necessarily make one suffer, suffering by itself is finally regarded as a means of conjuring evil or curing sickness.[57] Later, when the majority of the religious forces had taken the form of moral personalities, the efficacy of these practices was explained by imagining that their object was to appease an evil-working or irritated god. But these conceptions only reflect the rite and the sentiments it arouses; they are an interpretation of it, not its determining cause.

[56] *Op. cit.*, p. 262.

[57] It is also possible that the belief in the morally tempering virtues of suffering (see above, p. 351) has added something here. Since sorrow sanctifies and raises the religious level of the worshipper, it may also raise him up again when he falls lower than usual.

A negligence of the ritual acts in the same way. It, too, is a menace for the group; it touches it in its moral existence for it touches it in its beliefs. But if the anger which it causes is affirmed ostensibly and energetically, it compensates the evil which it has caused. For if it is acutely felt by all, it is because the infraction committed is an exception and the common faith remains entire. So the moral unity of the group is not endangered. Now the penalty inflicted as an expiation is only a manifestation of the public anger, the material proof of its unanimity. So it really does have the healing effect attributed to it. At bottom, the sentiment which is at the root of the real expiatory rites does not differ in nature from that which we have found at the basis of the other piacular rites: it is a sort of irritated sorrow which tends to manifest itself by acts of destruction. Sometimes it is assuaged to the detriment of him who feels it; sometimes it is at the expense of some foreign third party. But in either case, the psychic mechanism is essentially the same.[58]

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One of the greatest services which Robertson Smith has rendered to the science of religions is to have pointed out the ambiguity of the notion of sacredness.

Religious forces are of two sorts. Some are beneficent, guardians of the physical and moral order, dispensers of life and health and all the qualities which men esteem: this is the case with the totemic principle, spread out in the whole species, the mythical ancestor, the animal-protector, the civilizing heroes and the tutelar gods of every kind and degree. It matters little whether they are conceived as distinct personalities or as diffused energies; under either form they fulfil the same function and affect the minds of the believers in the same way: the respect which they inspire is mixed with love and gratitude. The things and the persons which are normally connected with them participate in the same sentiments and the same character: these are holy things and persons. Such are the spots consecrated to the cult, the objects which serve in the regular rites, the priests, the ascetics, etc.—On the other hand, there are evil and impure powers, productive of disorders, causes of death and sickness, instigators of sacrilege. The only sentiments which men have for them are a fear into

[58] Cf. what we have said of expiation in our *Division du travail social*[3], pp. 64 ff.

which horror generally enters. Such are the forces upon which and by which the sorcerer acts, those which arise from corpses or the menstrual blood, those freed by every profanation of sacred things, etc. The spirits of the dead and malign genii of every sort are their personified forms.

Between these two categories of forces and beings, the contrast is as complete as possible and even goes into the most radical antagonism. The good and salutary powers repel to a distance these others which deny and contradict them. Therefore the former are forbidden to the latter: any contact between them is considered the worst of profanations. This is the typical form of those interdicts between sacred things of different species, the existence of which we have already pointed out.[59] Women during menstruation, and especially at its beginning, are impure; so at this moment they are rigorously sequestered; men may have no relations with them.[60] Bull-roarers and churinga never come near a dead man.[61] A sacrilegious person is excluded from the society of the faithful; access to the cult is forbidden him. Thus the whole religious life gravitates about two contrary poles between which there is the same opposition as between the pure and the impure, the saint and the sacrilegious, the divine and the diabolic.

But while these two aspects of the religious life oppose one another, there is a close kinship between them. In the first place, both have the same relation towards profane beings: these must abstain from all contact with impure things just as from the most holy things. The former are no less forbidden than the latter: they are withdrawn from circulation alike. This shows that they too are sacred. Of course the sentiments inspired by the two are not identical: respect is one thing, disgust and horror another. Yet, if the gestures are to be the same in both cases, the sentiments expressed must not differ in nature. And, in fact, there is a horror in religious respect, especially when it is very intense, while the fear inspired by malign powers is generally not without a certain reverential character. The shades by which these two attitudes are differentiated are even so slight sometimes that it is not always easy to say which state of mind the believers actually happen to be

[59] See above, p. 339.

[60] Spencer and Gillen, *Nat. Tr.*, p. 460; *Nor. Tr.*, p. 601; Roth, *North Queensland Ethnography*, Bulletin No. 5, p. 24. It is useless to multiply references for so well-known a fact.

[61] However, Spencer and Gillen cite one case where churinga are placed on the head of the dead man (*Nat. Tr.*, p. 156). But they admit that the fact is unique and abnormal (*ibid.*, p. 157), while Strehlow energetically denies it (II, p. 79).

in. Among certain Semitic peoples, pork was forbidden, but it was not always known exactly whether this was because it was a pure or an impure thing[62] and the same may be said of a very large number of alimentary interdictions.

But there is more to be said; it very frequently happens that an impure thing or an evil power becomes a holy thing or a guardian power, without changing its nature, through a simple modification of external circumstances. We have seen how the soul of a dead man, which is a dreadful principle at first, is transformed into a protecting genius as soon as the mourning is finished. Likewise, the corpse, which begins by inspiring terror and aversion, is later regarded as a venerated relic: funeral anthropophagy, which is frequently practised in the Australian societies, is a proof of this transformation.[63] The totemic animal is the pre-eminently sacred being; but for him who eats its flesh updluly, it is a cause of death. In a general way, the sacrilegious person is merely a profane one who has been infected with a benevolent religious force. This changes its nature in changing its habitat; it defiles rather than sanctifies.[64] The blood issuing from the genital organs of a woman, though it is evidently as impure as that of menstruation, is frequently used as a remedy against sickness.[65] The victim immolated in expiatory sacrifices is charged with impurities, for they have concentrated upon it the sins which were to be expiated. Yet, after it has been slaughtered, its flesh and blood are employed for the most pious uses.[66] On the contrary, though the communion is generally a religious operation whose normal function is to consecrate, it sometimes produces the effects of a sacrilege. In certain cases, the persons who have communicated are forced to flee from one another as from men infected with a plague. One would say that they have become a source of dangerous contamination for one another: the sacred bond which unites them also separates them. Examples of this sort of communion are numerous in Australia. One of the most typical has been observed among the Narrinyeri and the neighbouring tribes. When an infant

[62] Smith, *Rel. of Semites*, p. 153; cf. p. 446, the additional note, *Holiness, Uncleanness and Taboo.*

[63] Howitt, *Nat. Tr.*, pp. 448-450; Brough Smyth, I, pp. 118, 120; Dawson, p. 67; Eyre, II, p. 251; Roth, *North Queensland Ethn.*, Bull. Mo. 9, in *Rec. of the Austral. Museum*, VI, No. 5, p. 367.

[64] See above, p. 360.

[65] *Nor. Tr.*, p. 599; *Nat. Tr.*, p. 464.

[66] Among the Hebrews, for example, they sprinkled the altar with the blood of the expiatory victim (Lev. iv, 5 ff.); they burned the flesh and used products of this combustion to make water of purification (Numb. xix).

arrives in the world, its parents carefully preserve its umbilical cord, which is believed to conceal a part of its soul. Two persons who exchange the cords thus preserved communicate together by the very act of this exchange, for it is as though they exchanged their souls. But, at the same time, they are forbidden to touch or speak to or even to see one another. It is just as though they were each an object of horror for the other.[67]

So the pure and the impure are not two separate classes, but two varieties of the same class, which includes all sacred things. There are two sorts of sacredness, the propitious and the unpropitious, and not only is there no break of continuity between these two opposed forms, but also one object may pass from the one to the other without changing its nature. The pure is made out of the impure, and reciprocally. It is in the possibility of these transmutations that the ambiguity of the sacred consists.

But even if Robertson Smith did have an active sentiment of this ambiguity, he never gave it an express explanation. He confined himself to remarking that, as all religious forces are indistinctly intense and contagious, it is wise not to approach them except with respectful precautions, no matter what direction their action may be exercised in. It seemed to him that he could thus account for the air of kinship which they all present, in spite of the contrasts which oppose them otherwise. But the question was only put off; it still remains to be shown how it comes that the powers of evil have the same intensity and contagiousness as the others. In other words, how does it happen that they, too, are of a religious nature? Also, the energy and force of expansion which they have in common do not enable us to understand how, in spite of the conflict which divides them, they may be transformed into one another or substituted for each other in their respective functions, and how the pure may contaminate while the impure sometimes serves to sanctify.[68]

[67] Taplin, *The Narrinyeri*, pp. 32-34. When two persons who have thus exchanged their umbilical cords belong to different tribes, they are used as inter-tribal messengers. In this case, the exchange of cords took place shortly after birth, through the intermediary of their respective parents.

[68] It is true that Smith did not admit the reality of these substitutions and transformations. According to him, if the expiatory victim served to purify, it was because it had nothing impure in itself. At first, it was a holy thing; it was destined to re-establish, by means of a communion, the bonds of kinship uniting the worshipper to his god, when a ritual fault had strained or broken them. An exceptionally holy animal was chosen for this operation in order that the communion might be as efficacious as possible, and efface the effects of the fault as completely as possible. It was only when they no longer understood the meaning of the rite that the sacrosanct animal was considered impure (*op. cit.*, pp. 347 ff.). But it is inadmissible that beliefs and practices as universal as these, which we find at the foundation of the expiatory sacrifice, should be the product of a mere error of interpretation. In fact, we cannot doubt that the expiatory victim was charged with the impurity of the sin. We have shown, moreover, that these transformations of the pure into the impure, or the contrary, are to be found in the most inferior societies which we know.

The explanation of piacular rites which we have proposed enables us to reply to this double question.

We have seen, in fact, that the evil powers are the product of these rites and symbolize them. When a society is going through circumstances which sadden, perplex or irritate it, it exercises a pressure over its members, to make them bear witness, by significant acts, to their sorrow, perplexity or anger. It imposes upon them the duty of weeping, groaning or inflicting wounds upon themselves or others, for these collective manifestations, and the moral communion which they show and strengthen, restore to the group the energy which circumstances threaten to take away from it, and thus they enable it to become settled. This is the experience which men interpret when they imagine that outside them there are evil beings whose hostility, whether constitutional or temporary, can be appeased only by human suffering. These beings are nothing other than collective states objectified; they are society itself seen under one of its aspects. But we also know that the benevolent powers are constituted in the same way; they, too, result from the collective life and express it; they, too, represent the society, but seen from a very different attitude, to wit, at the moment when it confidently affirms itself and ardently presses on towards the realization of the ends which it pursues. Since these two sorts of forces have a common origin, it is not at all surprising that, though facing in opposite directions, they should have the same nature, that they are equally intense and contagious and consequently forbidden and sacred.

From this we are able to understand how they change into one another. Since they reflect the abjective state in which the group happens to be, it is enough that this state change for their character to change. After the mourning is over, the domestic group is re-calmed by the mourning itself; it regains confidence; the painful pressure which they felt exercised over them is relieved; they feel more at their ease. So it seems to them as though the spirit of the deceased had laid aside its hostile sentiments and become a benevolent protector. The other transmutations, examples of which we have cited, are to

be explained in the same way. As we have already shown, the sanctity of a thing is due to the collective sentiment of which it is the object. If, in violation of the interdicts which isolate it, it comes in contact with a profane person, then this same sentiment will spread contagiously to this latter and imprint a special character upon him. But in spreading, it comes into a very different state from the one it was in at first. Offended and irritated by the profanation implied in this abusive and unnatural extension, it becomes aggressive and inclined to destructive violences: it tends to avenge itself for the offence suffered. Therefore the infected subject seems to be filled with a mighty and harmful force which menaces all that approaches him; it is as though he were marked with a stain or blemish. Yet the cause of this blemish is the same psychic state which, in other circumstances, consecrates and sanctifies. But if the anger thus aroused is satisfied by an expiatory rite, it subsides, alleviated; the offended sentiment is appeased and returns to its original state. So it acts once more as it acted in the beginning; instead of contaminating, it sanctifies. As it continues to infect the object to which it is attached, this could never become profane and religiously indifferent again. But the direction of the religious force with which it seems to be filled is inverted: from being impure, it has become pure and an instrument of purification.

In résumé, the two poles of the religious life correspond to the two opposed states through which all social life passes. Between the propitiously sacred and the unpropitiously sacred there is the same contrast as between the states of collective well-being and ill-being. But since both are equally collective, there is, between the mythological constructions symbolizing them, an intimate kinship of nature. The sentiments held in common vary from extreme dejection to extreme joy, from painful irritation to ecstatic enthusiasm; but, in any case, there is a communion of minds and a mutual comfort resulting from this communion. The fundamental process is always the same; only circumstances colour it differently. So, at bottom, it is the unity and the diversity of social life which make the simultaneous unity and the diversity of sacred beings and things.

This ambiguity, moreover, is not peculiar to the idea of sacredness alone; something of this characteristic has been found in all the rites which we have been studying. Of course it was essential to distinguish them; to confuse them would have been to misunderstand the multiple aspects of the religious life. But, on the other hand, howsoever different they

may be, there is no break of continuity between them. Quite on the contrary, they overlap one another and may even replace each other mutually. We have already shown how the rites of oblation and communion, the imitative rites and the commemorative rites frequently fulfil the same function. One might imagine that the negative cult, at least, would be more sharply separated from the positive cult; yet we have seen that the former may produce positive effects, identical with those produced by the latter. The same results are obtained by fasts, abstinences and self-mutilations as by communions, oblations and commemorations. Inversely, offerings and sacrifices imply privations and renunciations of every sort. The continuity between ascetic and piacular rites is even more apparent: both are made up of sufferings, accepted or undergone, to which an analogous efficacy is attributed. Thus the practices, like the beliefs, are not arranged in two separate classes. Howsoever complex the outward manifestations of the religious life may be, at bottom it is one and simple. It responds everywhere to one and the same need, and is everywhere derived from one and the same mental state. In all its forms, its object is to raise man above himself and to make him lead a life superior to that which he would lead, if he followed only his own individual whims: beliefs express this life in representations; rites organize it and regulate its working.