

**PRIMITIVES
AND THE
SUPERNATURAL**

LUCIEN LEVY-BRUHL

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By

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Author of "Primitive Mentality,"

"The 'Soul' of the Primitive," etc.



AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

BY

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FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH primitives (to use the commonly accepted term) can clearly differentiate things that appear supernatural from those that occur in the ordinary course of nature, they rarely imagine them as separate, for in them the "sense of the impossible" is lacking. What we should call miraculous appears to primitives commonplace, and though it may cause them emotion it does not readily surprise them. The events which strike their imagination do not actually proceed from "secondary causes," but are due to the functioning of unseen powers. The success or the failure of an enterprise, the well-being or the misfortune of the community, the life and the death of its members—all these depend at all times upon powers, "spirits," influences, forces innumerable, which surround the primitive on all sides, and constitute themselves the real masters of his destiny. In short, to judge by what he habitually thinks and fears, it would seem as if the supernatural itself forms part of nature to him.

In my previous works I have more than once had occasion to point out this characteristic attitude and orientation of the primitive's mind. For the matters that I was treating, however, it then sufficed to allude to "supernatural influences" or "unseen powers" in general terms. In this book these will form the main subject of study, and I shall endeavour to specify more exactly how primitives imagine the "supernatural," its constant intervention in all that happens to the individual or to the group of which he forms part, and to show how they behave with regard to the occult powers and influences of all kinds, whose presence and action are to them a source of perpetual dread.

The subject will not be treated in its entirety; far from it, indeed. The whole life of the "primitive," from birth to death, and even beyond death, is saturated, as it were, by the supernatural. How can we grasp all its manifestations, or draw up a complete list of the good or bad influences which may at any moment be exerted upon the individual or upon his group? I have had to confine myself to the study of some important points about which we are fairly well-informed—such ques-

tions, for instance, as the ordinary, almost instinctive reactions of the primitive when faced by supernatural influences and powers which he dreads; how he imagines those which he fears most, especially witchcraft, and how he tries to protect and defend himself against them; the meaning he attaches to "purity," "defilement," "purification," etc. This analysis, although a brief and rapid one, has, I believe, enabled me to account for a certain number of beliefs and institutions which are extremely prevalent among primitives.

Researches such as these inevitably evoke in the mind vast problems, raised long ago and still vehemently discussed, such as: "Have primitives a religion? If so, what? Do they entertain the idea of a Supreme God?" and so forth. These researches seem indeed to border upon such questions, but they never enter into the discussion. Rightly speaking, they cannot do so, for they are upon another plane altogether.

It may possibly be urged that in refusing to pose such problems and, as a consequence, to discuss their solution, I am thereby implicitly rejecting certain among them rather than others, and that I thus eliminate them by omission. Not at all. How can I take sides in a debate that I know nothing about? It is not this or that answer to the question that I am avoiding; it is the question itself that I have no right to treat. I could not treat it without abandoning the conception of primitive mentality which I believe to be in conformity with the facts, the method I have followed from the very beginning of these studies, and finally, the results which this method has enabled me to obtain.

If these be indeed correct, it at once appears that the terms used in the statement of these problems have nothing even remotely corresponding with them in the minds of the primitives. There is therefore no reason to ask ourselves with regard to them questions which are meaningless except for minds accustomed to our way of thinking, which is not theirs. In "The 'Soul' of the Primitive" I tried to demonstrate the illusions under which even the most thoughtful and discreet of observers have laboured, for lack of their attention being alive to the differences which distinguish primitive mentality from our own. Their conceptions of the primitives' ideas relating to the soul have been found irretrievably warped, and what we have thus ascertained about the soul is no less frequently to the fore when we are dealing with the "mystic sphere," the "unseen powers"

—in short, the “supernatural.” In this matter, too, the same causes have produced the same effects. Most of the testimony available also remains unserviceable because the observer, in all good faith and unconsciously, has inserted his own concepts in the primitives’ ideas, and mingled his personal beliefs with those he thought he had gathered. Not content with thus attributing to primitives ideas alien to them, he nearly always establishes a connection between them to which their minds are indifferent, and he interprets these ideas by the light of our logic, our theology, and our metaphysics. It is better not to make use of such documents, except in the somewhat rare cases in which we can succeed in determining the personal equation of the observer, and getting at what is correct in his testimony.

Even language alone renders it almost impossible for the primitives’ ideas of the “supernatural” to be faithfully reproduced. While admitting (and this is true in about one or two cases in a hundred only) that an observer, really gifted from the psychological and linguistic point of view, has a thorough knowledge of the language of the natives among whom he lives, he will be only the more puzzled to find in his own tongue terms which exactly correspond with theirs. For the most part this difficulty is not even perceived by writers. Their interpretation of primitives’ ideas, generally more or less clumsy approximations, can only lead to error in the matters they aim at explaining. But even if we waive these objections, what can be the value of the testimony if the observer is persuaded beforehand, consciously or unconsciously, that these natives have the same natural metaphysics as himself? Might he not find among them, though no doubt distorted, mutilated, vague, yet nevertheless recognizable, the religious beliefs with which his mind has been permeated since his childhood’s days, and which he has been taught to regard as the sacred inheritance of every man born into this world?

I have therefore been obliged, as I was in writing “The ‘Soul’ of the Primitive,” and for similar reasons, to refrain from treating any problems of which the data did not seem admissible to me. I had to confine my attention to the study of well-established ideas among primitives concerning the “supernatural” world, ideas attested by the very customs they practise to protect themselves from the powers and influences they dread; further, I have not concerned myself here about any but those which do inspire fear. The results to which my compara-

tive analysis in this field have led me do not therefore assume the systematic form, more acceptable to the mind, that the solution of the problem as a whole would present. They remain partial and fragmentary, except that a great many of the primitives' ideas examined also arise from what I have called "the affective category of the supernatural." Such as they are, they may possibly be fortunate enough to pave the way to further research.

One final word concerning the documentary evidence, and the use I make of it. In many quarters I have been severely taken to task for placing in juxtaposition facts taken at will, and as if haphazard, from communities most remote from one another and most varied among themselves. Being thus detached from the special group in which they have their origin and their being, institutions, beliefs and customs lose their significance, I am told, and hence any comparison between them cannot be of any real scientific interest. This is true; there would be no use in collecting, in a desultory and uncritical fashion, facts which are more or less similar, taken to some extent from all over the world, and indeed I have never proceeded thus. On the other hand, however different among themselves the communities called "primitive" may be, they nevertheless present, together with the characteristics which are their own, some traits common to them all. It is the traits of this kind that I had to extract and analyze, just as the philologist must do when studying a group of allied languages, or the kinship that may unite several families of language. I therefore was entitled and indeed bound to take my subjects for comparison where they seemed to be most convincing, provided that they were scientifically well established, and interpreted according to their context.

In order to avoid an apparent disparateness and diffusion I have been obliged in nearly every chapter of this book to use facts studied in only a small number of communities always the same. My choice was, as it were, imposed upon me from the start. I was obliged to select from communities whose institutions are most "primitive," and at the same time be guided by the abundance, and above all the quality, of the documents which tell us about them. Thus for most of the matters studied here Spencer and Gillen will take us to Central Australia, Landtman to the Papuans of New Guinea (the island of Kiwai), the Dutch savants, especially A. C. Kruyt, to the Dutch East Indies, Junod and Edwin W. Smith to the Bantus of

South Africa, and Knud Rasmussen to the Eskimo, to quote but a small number of the best sources I have plumbed. But to the data with which they have provided me I have never hesitated, whenever possible, to add others taken, for instance from more remote periods, and furnished by good observers. It has even seemed necessary to bring together, for the purpose of comparison, similar facts observed in other communities than these by witnesses worthy of confidence—for instance, among the Nagas of North East India, in the South Pacific, among the Indians of North and South America, the natives of West Africa, and yet others, according to circumstances. Far from this extension of the ethnological field (with the reserve already indicated) having weakened the conclusions to which comparative analysis led, they are on the contrary corroborated by the almost universal nature of the beliefs and customs whose significance, and in some cases origin, are revealed by such analysis.

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PRIMITIVES
AND THE SUPERNATURAL

INTRODUCTION

THE AFFECTIVE CATEGORY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

THE very general enquiry which we are about to attempt naturally leaves out of account the differences in detail observable in primitive communities, even in those nearest to each other and most closely related. In a limited area, in a single small island, beliefs, customs and ceremonies vary more or less, just as dialect does, between one tribe and the next. In a fairly numerous group even, there are individuals who often display diversity of temperament and characteristics, if they can do so without too much danger. From time to time, as among ourselves, there are to be found natures inclined to criticism, less amenable to accepted conventions than the rest, even in some cases going as far as scepticism and unbelief.¹

This is a fact that cannot be denied, but it is difficult to reconcile it with another, equally well-established—the existence of practices and beliefs which are universally accepted in these communities. Both may legitimately lay claim to be subjects for scientific research. We are not disregarding the almost infinite agglomeration of concepts and customs relating to the unseen powers when we seek for the characteristics which are common to them all, and endeavour to show how these proceed from the primitive's mental constitution and ordinary habits of thought. In so far as we succeed, we shall have attained a twofold end. We shall therefore take into account many of these ideas and customs, if not in all their detail, at least in their essential characteristics, and in doing so our analysis of primitive mentality will find fresh confirmation.

I

One primary consideration must always be present to our

¹ "Among Eskimos of the most primitive type we find, too, men to whom uncritical belief is entirely unknown, and who are born sceptics." Kn. Rasmussen. *Intellectual Culture of the Caribou Eskimos*, p. 59. Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition. VII, pp. 2-3.

minds. With regard to the questions which will engage our attention, as with many others, the primitive mind is oriented in a direction that ours does not take. For instance, from a certain point of view, primitives are metaphysicians, and even more spontaneously and consistently so than most of us. But it does not follow that they are metaphysicians like ourselves. In our relations with the various physical forces that react upon us, and upon which we feel ourselves dependent, it is our inveterate habit to rely first of all upon the most extensive and most correct knowledge obtainable of the laws of nature. "Knowledge, for prevision and for power" is the rule upon which we regulate our conduct, even without thinking about the matter, so accustomed are we by our upbringing to put our confidence in science, and to profit by the advantages applied science procures for us.

The primitives' habitual course of thought and their consequent mental attitude are not like this. Nothing tells them that they would be interested in trying to find out about the laws governing natural phenomena; they have no conception of it. What attracts their attention and becomes their almost entire preoccupation, as soon as some circumstance has aroused it and holds it, is the presence and the action of invisible powers, the more or less definite influences which they feel are being exercised upon them and around them.

For their protection and defence against these they have the traditions transmitted by their ancestors, and their confidence in these appears unassailable. They seek no further, not so much from mental inertia as from a scrupulous respect, and the dread of greater evil. In such matters, and even more so than in any others, any innovation may be fraught with danger; they dare not run the risk. It does not occur to them that a more complete and more exact knowledge of the conditions in which these unseen powers are exercised might possibly suggest more effective methods of defence against them.

Hence in most of these conceptions there is a vagueness and uncertainty which at once proves disturbing. The primitive's mind is obsessed by them, and if during the day they occasionally sink below the level of consciousness they soon reappear. Sometimes they add terrors to his nights, and he dreads leaving his hut after dark. Every time he has an enterprise in hand, whether journey, hunt, warlike attack, sowing his crops, marriage, or whatever it may be, his first thought is for the powers

and influences which will assure him success or failure. And yet if we would ascertain just how he defines them in his own mind, the characteristics and attributes with which he invests them, we can scarcely hope to succeed. Such ideas as we are able to grasp remain vague and indefinite, and it does not seem as if the primitive felt any need to trace their outlines more precisely.

In *The "Soul" of the Primitive* we have already had occasion to remark the same thing with regard to his conception of the dead. When we are dealing with what may be hoped or feared from them, there is an abundance of detailed evidence upon the beliefs, rites, ceremonies, offerings, sacrifices, prayers, etc., of which the dead are the subject or the occasion, but with respect to their condition in itself, outside their relations with the living, our information is meagre, vague, and often contradictory. These conceptions remain blurred and indistinct in outline. The primitive evidently takes a far less lively interest in them.

Now of all the unseen powers there is no doubt that those presenting to his imagination the most clearly defined traits are evidently the dead. The appearance of the others without exception remains still more vague and indefinite, as more than one observer has explicitly noted. For instance, "Anyone," says Schadee, "who remains for some time among the Dayaks of the western division of Borneo, and endeavours to account for their religious feelings, gets an impression that the Dayak lives in perpetual dread of what we call fate. Most frequently he does not think of definite influences, either good or bad: at any rate, he never says so. He contents himself with speaking of bad influences in general, without saying whence they arise; he believes himself to be constantly subjected to malevolent influences, and most of his rites are attempts to neutralize their effect."¹

J. H. Hutton, an excellent ethnologist and the author of noteworthy writings about the Nagas of N. E. India, says, too: "The danger to be avoided in transcribing any Angami ideas upon the supernatural is, above all, the danger of distinguishing what is vague, of giving form to what is void, of defining what is not finite."² And in another passage: "An Angami has

¹ M. C. Schadee. *Bijdrage tot de kennis van den godsdienst der Dajaks van Landak en Tajan. Bijdragen tot de taal-land-en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, LV, p. 321 (1903) henceforth given as T. L. V.

² J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 183.

a very clear idea of how gods should be served, and that whoso serves them otherwise shall die, if not physically, at least socially. And this, although much of the service which he offers seems to be proffered to no god in particular, to no definite personal beings, but is associated merely with such supernatural forces as may influence his destiny or his daily life. At the same time, while he does not, like the civilized man, naturally classify and departmentalize his notions of the supernatural, he does recognize some sort of distinction between, on the one hand, souls of the dead (and perhaps of the living) and on the other, deities, *terhoma*, of a more or less definite nature, ranging from deities with certain functions and individual names to vague spirits of the jungle, stone, and stream.”¹

II

The indefinite nature of these conceptions does not weaken, but rather adds to the emotions which they evoke or, more correctly, which form a substantial part of them. These invisible powers and indefinable influences whose perpetual presence and effect the primitive suspects or perceives are never envisaged by him calmly. At the mere idea that one or other of them is threatening him, fear renders him distraught, unless he believes himself fully able to parry the blow.

An Eskimo shaman named Aua gave Rasmussen an interesting account of his own life. He brought both devotion and intelligence to bear on the effort made by the distinguished explorer to penetrate the depths of Eskimo mentality. To express the predominance of the emotional elements in their conceptions of the unseen powers he made use of a striking expression: “We do not believe: we fear.” And he developed the idea as follows: “All our customs come from life and turn towards life:” (that is, respond to practical needs). “We explain nothing, we believe nothing” (we have no conceptual ideas arising from a need to know or to comprehend) “We fear the weather spirit of earth, that we must fight against to wrest our food from land and sea. We fear Sila” (the Moon God). “We fear dearth and hunger in the cold snow huts. . . . We fear Takanakapsaluk, the Great Woman down at the bottom of the sea, that rules over all the beasts of the sea.

“We fear the sickness that we meet with daily all around us:

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 177-8.

not death, but the suffering. We fear the evil spirits of life, those of the air, of the sea, and the earth, that can help wicked shamans to harm their fellowmen. We fear the souls of dead human beings and of the animals we have killed. Therefore it is that our fathers have inherited from their fathers all the old rules of life that are based on the experience and wisdom of generations. We do not know how, we cannot say why, but we keep those rules in order that we may live untroubled. And so ignorant are we in spite of all our shamans, that we fear everything unfamiliar. We fear what we see about us, and we fear all the invisible things that are likewise about us, all that we have heard of in our forefathers' stories and myths. Therefore we have our customs, which are not the same as those of the white men, the white men who live in another land and have need of other ways." ¹

It was by virtue of the confidence inspired in Aua by Knud Rasmussen, himself half Eskimo by birth, speaking the Eskimo language as Eskimos did, and from earliest infancy familiar with their habit of thought, that such revelations and valuable explanations could be elicited. This document is probably unique, for I do not believe that a "primitive" in any locality whatsoever has up till now given so clear an account of the most intimate sources of his mental life and activity. What we are usually obliged to infer when interpreting the deeds and words of primitives—always a risky proceeding, involving so many chances of error that we can hardly hope to escape them all—has been told without reticence by this Eskimo shaman. He brings it into the light of day, and his language, as simple as it is pertinent, is not ambiguous.

To these Eskimos the visible and the invisible world conceal like terrors. Everywhere there is the menace of suffering, famine, illness and death. Where can they find succour, support, safeguard? Not in a Supreme Deity, whose paternal and protective goodness might be extended to men, for Aua does not seem to have the least idea of a celestial Providence. Nor is it in precise knowledge of the ills and their causes, which would, in certain cases at any rate, allow of preventing and parrying their effects. "We believe nothing; we explain nothing." One single chance of safety appears, and that is a pious adherence to the protective traditions handed down by former generations.

¹ Kn. Rasmussen. *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, p. 56. Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition. VII. I, 1929.

In spite of the dangers menacing them on all hands their ancestors were able to live and to transmit life. With that life their descendants received from them a code of precepts and prohibitions, the faithful observance of which will enable them to survive like their fathers, and to secure the perpetuity of the group. Animals which will permit themselves to be killed are to be found, therefore they need not die of hunger or cold. The storm will not cause the kayak to founder; thus the hunter is free from the peril of the sea, and so on. To each danger prepared for them by the unseen powers, an almost sacred tradition has something effective to oppose.

Herein we see the characteristic mental attitude of these primitives displayed. To our minds the continued existence of human beings depends primarily upon the stability and regularity of natural order. This condition is so universally admitted, as it were, beforehand, that we do not trouble to assert it; it is always taken for granted. But the laws of nature are not conceived of by the Eskimo, even though he does actually take them into account in the various crafts and implements he has produced for his use. The natural order is masked by the incalculable action of a multitude of invisible powers and capricious influences. The possibility of survival, that is, of procuring food for himself and escaping from the thousand and one causes of misfortune or death that lie in wait for him, rests in his mind above all on the scrupulous observance of a code of rules that have been tested in the days of his ancestors. As if by a kind of tacit agreement, the unseen powers will maintain a state of affairs favourable to man, provided he faithfully follows these precepts, positive as well as negative. To this extent the natural order—a feeble one without any guiding principle of its own, according to the Eskimos—does in fact rest upon the observance of rules which we would call moral and social. If these be violated, the natural order is upheaved, nature herself totters, and human life becomes impossible.

Hence the inveterate and almost invincible attachment to traditional precepts and taboos found not only in the Eskimo tribes, but in so many other communities of the same kind, does not proceed solely from a desire either to please the ancestors or to avoid arousing their anger. It has its rise also in another feeling akin to the former; it is born of the fear, or rather, of the accumulated fears that the shaman Aua so well expressed. Whoever violates these laws, either voluntarily or involuntarily,

breaks the compact with the invisible powers, and consequently imperils the very existence of the social group, since it depends upon them alone to let it die at any moment from hunger, malady, cold, or some other cause. As long as such fear thus obsesses and benumbs the human mind, it can make but slight progress in natural lore, for it believes itself to have no other resource than to cling determinedly to the traditional rules which up to the present have been able to guarantee, with some degree of natural order, his possibility of survival.

Many testimonies confirm that of the Eskimo shaman, and lay stress upon the part played by fear in what, if we enlarge the meaning of the word, may be called the primitive's religion. Here are some examples of them, culled from the most ancient as well as the most recent. Formerly, in Tahiti, "it never entered the mind of the most zealous votary of any of Tahiti's gods that the object of his homage and obedience regarded him with affection or goodwill, and he was himself, amidst all his zeal and devotedness, a stranger to any feeling approaching to complacency or love. Fear was the secret cause of all power of the gods, and fear the chief and often the only motive that influenced the most active and persevering of their votaries. If another feeling was at times associated with fear, it was that of selfishness." ¹

In New Zealand, "all Maori ceremonial was influenced not by love for the gods, but by fear of them. . . . Even in the case of the beneficent deity Io, the feeling of the Maori was one of awe, not of love." ² It is the same with the Nagas of N. E. India. "To a Lhota his religion presents itself as a series of ceremonies and observances laid down by custom, any one of which it would be dangerous to omit." ³ Among the Ao Nagas, their neighbours, "religion is a system of ceremonies. . . . A man will not prosper if he omit the sacrifices due to the deities around him who, unappeased, are ever ready to blight his crops and bring illness upon him and his. . . . This does not mean that he is a devil-ridden, terrified wretch. Far from it. . . . The presence around him of potentially malignant spirits no more weighs upon his mind than does the prospect of the wrath to come drive to moody despondency the average Christian. He

¹ *Missionary Records*. "Tahiti and Society Islands," p. 58 (1799).

² Elsdon Best. *The Maori*, I, pp. 262-63.

³ J. P. Mills. *The Lhota Nagas*, p. 121.

cheerfully performs the necessary sacrifices and hopes for the best." ¹

This last remark is of general significance. The feeling of fear with which the idea of the unseen omnipresent powers is nearly always imbued does not, as one might imagine, cast a shadow of sadness and anxiety over the daily life of the primitive. On the contrary, the insecurity of his position does not do away with his good humour or his heedlessness. Spencer and Gillen tell us that when the Australian aborigine is sure of having something to eat, there is no livelier or better-tempered man. Strehlow has noted the extreme versatility of the Arunta's feelings. If he imagines that he has been bewitched, he is literally ready to die of fear, but if he can be persuaded that the bewitching did not really take place, or that it has been "neutralized," his good spirits are regained as if by a miracle.

The primitive knows that at any moment an unforeseen misfortune may overtake him. But it is precisely because the danger may come from so many different quarters and in so many different forms that it is no good thinking about it before it has assumed shape, or is imminent. If he feels anxiety, it remains sub-conscious. It does not hinder him from enjoying life; moreover, he scarcely ever looks ahead. The present is what concerns him wholly, and as to what may happen later he troubles very little.

In South Africa, "like the sacrifices offered to Pagan gods, or to spirits of the dead, the observances of fetichism are simpler and ruder attempts to appease or please the unseen, to ward off evil and to bring good to the devotee. . . . The earnest manner in which the ceremonies are performed, and the satisfaction which is expressed when all has been gone through according to rule, testify to the force of the sanction of that which has been handed down from remote antiquity." ² These remarks of Mackenzie's show a fairly exact South African equivalent of what Aua, the Eskimo shaman, told us. The code of rites and ceremonies bequeathed by the ancestors constitutes the sole effective safeguard against the evil influences of all kinds that are to be feared. So, too, in Gaboon, "fetichism," says Albert Schweitzer, "is born of the feeling of fear in primitive man. He wants to possess a charm against the evil spirits in nature, against those of the dead, and also against the malevo-

¹ *Idem. The Ao Nagas*, p. 215.

² J. Mackenzie. *Ten years north of the Orange River*, pp. 487-8.

lent powers of his fellows. He attributes this protective power to certain objects which he bears about with him. He does not actually worship his fetich, but he desires to make use of the supernatural virtues of the object he owns." ¹

On the Upper Congo, "the religion of the Boloki (Bangala) has its basis in their fear of those numerous invisible spirits which surround them on every side, and are constantly trying to compass their sickness, misfortune, and death; and the Boloki's sole object in practising their religion is to cajole, or appease, cheat, or conquer and kill these spirits that trouble them—hence their *nganga*, their rites, their ceremonies, and their charms." ²

Speaking of a neighbouring district, Father Viaene says of the Bahunde: "These poor negroes live under the rule of *fear*: fear of sickness, misfortune, death, caused either by bad men (*balosi* or sorcerers) or spirits (*bazimu*)." ³

And lastly, among the Bergdamas of South Africa, "if we should ask what is the mainspring of their fundamental religiosity, we get the simple reply: fear, nothing but fear! Gamab (God) who does not inspire fear, is not worshipped. But the ancestors who live with Gamab, and cut off the thread of life prematurely, they are to be feared. The sacred fire which may prevent the success of the hunt is to be feared. The 'spirits' (of the dead) are to be feared, because their appearance causes death. From infancy to old age, the fear of death permeates the life of a heathen Bergdama." ⁴

These few testimonies, which could easily be multiplied, will no doubt suffice to confirm what has just been said, namely, that in the ever emotional idea of the unseen powers, as primitives conceive them, the predominating feature is not their characteristics, but the fear they inspire, and the necessity for protection against them.

III

One characteristic of these conceptions demands our attention for a moment. Since it is closely bound up with the primi-

¹ A. Schweitzer. *A l'orée de la forêt vierge*, pp. 20-21 (1929).

² J. H. Weeks. *Anthropological Notes on the Bangala*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain* (henceforth J. A. I.) XI. 377.

³ L. Viaene (Rev.) *Uit het leven der Bahunde. Congo*, II, 2, p. 281.

⁴ H. Vedder, *Die Bergdama*, I. p. 176.

tive's mental trend and habit of thought, it permits of our understanding a little better what is his attitude to the unseen powers. These powers do not present themselves to the primitive's mind—that is, unless he has directly or indirectly been subjected to the more or less remote influence of organized religious beliefs—as isolated and each, as it were, on its own. They do not form an assembly, or several assemblies of powers, in which certain among them are subordinate to higher ones, who in their turn seem to be dependent upon a "Supreme Being." There is no system or organization or hierarchy in which to group or unite them, and just as these primitives have no idea of an order of nature that is intelligible, they do not feel any need for conceiving an order of supernatural beings, or for considering and accounting for such in its entirety. This was implied in the Eskimo shaman's "We do not believe; we fear." By this he means: "Our conceptions of the unseen powers cannot be compared with the religious beliefs of white men. The emotional nature which is characteristic of them does away with any consideration of these powers and the relations between them as a whole, as well as all dogmatizing about their constitution. These do not form matter for thought among us; all that we know is that we fear them. Every indication that announces a misfortune imbues us with dread, and we try to appease the power which we imagine to be incensed against us. We think only of the rites and ceremonies by means of which we hope for deliverance."

In New Guinea, at almost the other end of the world, Landtman too has noted that the Papuans do not conceive of the unseen powers save as in single order. There are "no systematized ideas as to the supernatural world in which everybody believes. No priests. No public cult; no prayers are said or offerings made, in which a larger or smaller group of the population participates. The conception of spiritual things differs somewhat from one group, or even one individual, to another, and supernatural practices and observances vary still more. . . . There are mythical beings who only appear to certain people. Every man is his own priest, and also sorcerer, guided to a great extent by the directions he receives from the spirits who visit him in dreams. The only religious leaders are the old people who conduct the great ceremonies and various other rites. A marked specialization often appears in the religious and magical powers of different persons: one man for instance may be able to raise

the wind but cannot lay it, another can call forth rain but is unable to stop it. . . .

“Of the higher religious ideas the Kiwais lack any conception of a supreme deity. This was a point on which I tried to gather all available information. . . . Creation as understood in the higher religions is conceived in Kiwai as a series of unconnected occurrences. . . . There is a tale of the origin of each of the principal cultivated plants, but in none of these does a supreme agent occur. . . . It seems to be characteristic of the native way of thinking, in other matters also, that the idea of the entirety of things and phenomena is lacking—Nature is to them composed of independent units.”¹

One of the ideas that missionaries in general find it most difficult to instil into the minds of their native hearers is that God is the common Father of all men. They are quite incapable of disregarding the colour question to attain to a general idea of the human family. They do not refuse to admit that there are characteristics common to black and white, but they forcibly repudiate the notion of all being united in a like destiny, which would bring them before the same divine judge. To the missionary's exhortations they reply, unmoved: “But look at your skin, and then at ours!” This refusal of the primitive to accept a general idea which is so familiar and seems so simple to us, arises, as we already know, from the different orientation of his mind and his lack of conceptual thought. When Landtman shows that in the minds of the Kiwai Papuans the world of supernatural beings is fragmentary and inco-ordinate, he is only illustrating another effect of this same cause.

In a more highly developed community than those under discussion, and one that does possess a real religion, the Ashanti, Captain Rattray has gathered what follows, in which we again note this characteristic feature of the idea of the invisible powers. “I shall never forget the answer of an old priest with whom I remonstrated, chiefly to draw him out and see what he would say, for not trusting to the one spirit of the great God and leaving out all these lesser powers whose help was thus passively and indirectly involved. He replied as follows: ‘We, in Ashanti, dare not worship the Sky God alone, or the Earth Goddess alone, or any one spirit. We have to protect ourselves against, and use when we can, the spirits of all things in the Sky and upon Earth. You go to the forest, see some wild ani-

¹ G. Landtman, *The Kiwai Papuans*, pp. 298-99.

mal, fire at it, kill it, and find you have killed a man. You dismiss your servant, but later find you miss him. You take your cutlass to hack at what you think is a branch, and find you have cut your own arm. There are people who can transform themselves into leopards; the "grass-land people" are specially good at turning into hyenas. . . . There are trees which fall upon you and kill you. There are rivers which drown you. If I see four or five Europeans, I do not make much of one only, and ignore the rest, lest they too have power and hate me.'"¹

This Ashanti priest feels the same anxiety as the Eskimo shaman and the Kiwai Papuans. He feels himself surrounded by innumerable unseen powers. Side by side with the mighty deities there are the spirits of trees, rivers, animals, sorcerers, and all the beings and objects in nature that may be ill-disposed towards him. Each of these powers operates on its own account, without the greater dominating or directing the lesser. The thing that matters to the primitive, then, is not the knowledge of their constitution or the formation of a hierarchy in which each shall have his own rank, but, above all, the ability to protect himself against them, if he fears they are about to do him an injury, by "neutralizing" them or by securing their favour. The Ashanti priest does not understand what is in Captain Rattray's mind, or see whither he is leading him. He has no idea of the subordination of secondary divinities and spirits to the Supreme God. He believes that if he were to reserve his worship and reverence for a single one of the unseen powers, even the highest, and neglect the rest, he would be committing a fatal error. No doubt he does not place them all on the same footing; some are more to be dreaded than others. But he would not dare to offend any of them, for the protection of the mightiest would not safeguard him from the wrath of the most insignificant.

IV

Generally speaking, the intensity of the emotion these ideas excite in the primitive's mind makes up for their lack of clearness. An Arunta, for instance, when under the influence of the rhythmic song and dance, of his fatigue, and the general excitement around him, loses his sense of individuality and feels himself to be in mystic union with the mythic ancestor who was

¹ Captain R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti*, p. 150.

both man and animal. May we say then, that he "imagines" himself as homogeneous in these two natures? Certainly not: yet he has a profound and direct feeling of both. So too, the terror inspired in him by an invisible power which will do him ill or perhaps bring about his death makes that power more vividly present to him, even though he has no clear conception of it.

Moreover, the invisible powers and malign influences which obsess the primitive's mind, whose menace he so often feels around him, are not always presented as individualized; far from it. Schadee has just spoken of "influences" which the Dayaks dread "without knowing whence they come," and Hutton of "vague spirits of the jungle, stone, and stream" known to the Angami Nagas. "All these latter," he adds, "are clothed to his mind with some hazy cloak of unity, but have so much entity as to be capable of propitiation, singly or collectively."¹ In short, it is not here a case of a multitude that can be numbered, although not enumerated, but of a mobile multiplicity whose constituent elements remain ill-defined.

This is thoroughly in accordance with the primitives' way of thinking. They are not accustomed to count, in the arithmetical sense of the word. Their memories retain an image of the number-totals familiar to them, and they know enough not to confuse them with one another. But as soon as it is a question of numbers, properly so-called, they immediately shrink from making the necessary attempt at abstraction. They prefer to say: "many, a crowd, a mass," or to make use of concrete images, like "the hairs of the head, the stars of heaven, the grains of sand on the seashore," and so on. There is no doubt that, to their minds, the multitude of unseen powers and surrounding influences assumes such a form. Accordingly what to us would be a vast number does not weigh on their minds, for since the multitude remains undefined, the individuality of the units composing it also remains indefinite or merely potential. In certain cases, however, unseen powers which are especially dreaded become persons. In the Malay Archipelago, for instance, diseases (smallpox in particular) are often imagined as spirits, persons, and divinities of some kind.

Such being, in the main, the general characteristics of the unseen powers in primitives' minds, do these conceptions of theirs none the less contain some abstract element and, if so, can we define it? Possibly, but only on condition that we do not try to

¹ J. H. Hutton. *The Angami Nagas*, p. 178.

find this element where it is non-existent, and will look for it where it actually is.

Through the traditions of our language, grammar, philosophy, psychology, logic, we are accustomed to consider abstraction as relating to ideas only. It appears in the operations which form and classify concepts, and establish the relations between them. From this point of view, the apprehension and the appreciation of the abstract are a matter for the intellect and that alone. But to a mind differently oriented, and not, like ours, governed by an Aristotelian or conceptual ideal, a mind whose images are often essentially emotional in character, does not abstraction dwell in other realms than ideas? It is not then a matter of cognition, but rather of feeling. The abstract element in such a case will not consist of one permanent feature, the subject of intellectual perception, but rather of a coloration or, if you like, a tone common to certain mental images, which is at once subjectively grasped as belonging to them all.

To denote both the emotional and the abstract nature of this element, which can moreover not be separated from the other elements in these conceptions, may we not say that they are derived from an "affective category"? The term "category" must not be taken here in either the Aristotelian or the Kantian sense, but simply as a uniting element in the mind for conceptions which, even while they differ among themselves in all or in part of their content, yet affect it in the same way. In other words, whatever may be the unseen power or the supernatural influence whose presence and agency the primitive suspects or perceives, he is no sooner aware of it than a wave of emotion, more or less powerful, invades his consciousness, and all his conceptions of this kind are alike imbued with it. Each of them thus assumes a general tone or colour which at once plunges the subject into an emotional state which he has already experienced many times before. He needs no intellectual effort to recognize it, for the affective category of the supernatural has come into play.

Such, it seems, is the deeper significance of the numerous testimonies in which primitives in varying forms declare: "The basis of our conceptions of the unseen powers is the fear they inspire in us."—"We do not believe; we fear." What they are trying to define thus is the fundamental common factor of all their ideas relating to beings of the supernatural world. This

factor is not itself imagined in the strict sense of the word; it is felt, and immediately recognized.

We may undoubtedly enquire whether this affective category is an exclusive appurtenance of primitive mentality, or whether it does not rather correspond with man's usual attitude face to face with the supernatural.¹ Though on account of the considerable and constant part which these emotional ideas play in their lives it is more readily discernible in primitives, it is also to be found in other communities, though less apparent in them. Wherever the system of conceptual thought has been developed and imposed, intellectual factors have assumed an increasingly important place in ideas relating to the supernatural. An efflorescence of beliefs has come about, and this has often borne fruit in dogmas. Yet the affective category of the supernatural still persists, and the emotional basis of these ideas is never entirely eliminated. Hidden, cloaked, transformed, it still remains recognizable, and no religion has been unconscious of it. *Initium sapientiae timor Domini.*

V

The continual presence and the predominance of the affective elements in these conceptions of the invisible powers make it

¹ A noteworthy passage in a work which appeared in Japan defines under the term "uniformity of emotion" what I propose to call the "affective category," and it regards this as the basis of "primitive supernaturalism." Though expressed in different terms, the similarity in ideas is striking. "The unique object of experience, whether sun, moon, storm, wind, thunder, strange tree . . . whatever it may be, induces an unusual emotional response. This is the 'religious thrill.' For the sake of exactness we may perhaps better adopt the old Japanese exclamation or cry, and call it a *ka*-emotion or a *ka*-reaction. This *ka*-emotion lies at the very basis of primitive supernaturalism; or, if 'supernaturalism' seems to imply a distinction that early man never knew, it may be said that this emotional reaction lies at the basis of all primitive philosophy of the super-ordinary. In arriving at this philosophy, primitive man simply makes a generalization of his separate experiences. The *ka*-emotion throws the attention into special activity; a 'watch-out' attitude is induced, the emotion is found to repeat itself in contact with a multitude of diversified objects which externally appear to have no connection whatsoever. Nevertheless, the uniformity of the emotion becomes the ground on which the intelligence posits the existence of a corresponding agency operating as an uniform cause in all the various objects that have stimulated the emotion itself. . . . Precautionary ceremonial handling of such objects becomes all-important, and these precautionary activities become sacred customs and sacred rituals." From the original of *The political history of modern Shinto*, by Holtom. *Transactions of the Japanese Asiatic Society*, XLIX, Part II, p. 175.

very difficult to determine, in our own languages, what the relations between nature and the supernatural world are to the primitive mind. Simply to assert that it does not differentiate between them would be incorrect. On the contrary, the primitive very clearly represents to himself the intervention of the invisible powers in the course of natural phenomena, but he regards it as very frequent or, as it were, continuous. He is always trying either to incite or to combat it, according to circumstances. We might say that he lives in miracles, were it not that it is essential to the definition of a miracle that it shall be something exceptional. To him, miracles are of daily occurrence, and his medicine-man can make almost as many of them as he likes.

It is precisely here that we find a difficulty in following the workings of his mind. Through these continual interventions of the unseen powers, there is a blurring of the difference between natural and supernatural, and it tends to disappear. In many circumstances the primitive's thought and action pass from one to the other of these worlds almost imperceptibly. In this sense we may say that if he does not confuse the two worlds in their essence, it often happens that he does not differentiate between them.

I shall give but a single illustration, and this I take from an excellent work by Father Van Wing. "The Bakongo differentiate two beings in man: the one external and corporeal, which is visible; the other internal and psychic, which is invisible. It is the inner being which acts outwardly. The psychic being itself is twofold. There is a mysterious element which comes and goes, and when it is there, a man is conscious of himself; when it departs, he loses this sense of consciousness. By means of this element (*mfumu kutu*), man comes in contact with another world and can live and act in another sphere, and transform himself into another being. This other world is that of spirits, and this other sphere a magical one. In this way a man can change his form in such a way that he remains a man, as to externals, in the ordinary world, and in his inner being he becomes an animal-man."¹ And the writer adds: "To the Bakongo there is no clear line of demarcation between the possible and the impossible, the real and the unreal, the visible, natural sphere and the suprasensuous, spiritual and magical sphere. Even the dream is not, to him, a pure illusion, for man, through

¹J. Van Wing, S. J. *De geheime sekte van't Kimbasi*, p. 35.

his *mfumu kutu*, is in contact with that other world. When he dies he goes there as a complete entity, and the dead are the living *par excellence*."

It would be impossible to define more clearly than Father Van Wing has done here the ease with which the primitive's mind passes from one of these spheres to the other. However we may try, we cannot succeed in picturing nature to ourselves other than as ordained, nor any abrogation of this order as possible unless by the decree of a supreme wisdom in view of a more complex and more perfect order, as Malebranche has put it. But to minds like those under discussion nothing is absurd or contrary to nature. Anything may happen, provided that the unseen powers intervene. Now the primitive's experience has taught him that their influence is constantly felt. He is therefore not less familiar with suprasensuous reality than we are with the natural world.

This is one of the reasons that so often make it difficult for us to follow his thought. Thus in the matter of this doubling of man's nature which Father Van Wing has just described, we might easily be led into error. The Bakongo, on entering the "magical sphere," changes his form. We might be inclined to think that, while he preserves his psychic identity, he assumes the shape of an animal into which he enters—something like the werewolves we imagine in our forests. But it is just the contrary that happens. The Bakongo retains his human appearance in externals; it is his inner being (on which his consciousness of self depends) that becomes an animal-man. I have elsewhere given instances of the frequency of the cases in which, while the sorcerer is sleeping quietly on his pallet, he is seizing his victim in the guise of a leopard, crocodile, or some other beast of prey. This animal-man is indeed his "inner being." Father Van Wing's expressions may at first occasion surprise, but they are as exact as the difference in mentality and in language permits.

In beginning to study the primitives' idea of the supernatural world and their relations with it, we must therefore never forget that to them it is the subject of continual experience, at all times inseparable from the ordinary experience of life, the only experience at present available to us. They feel themselves to be in perpetual contact with supernatural powers which they greatly dread. These are invisible and often impalpable, but neither deaf nor mute. They cannot be touched, but they can be ad-

dressed, and heard. The cult of the dead, for example, nearly always comprises actual intercourse with them. According to certain legends from New Guinea, there was once a time when the dead and the living were not separated, but lived familiarly together.

As a rule primitives imagine the sky as a dome which rests upon the earth on the horizon, and even at the zenith is not very far removed. Many of the myths tell us that originally the sky touched the earth everywhere, but it was one day separated, and raised to some distance above it. Like their sky, the superstructure of primitives' "religious" ideas is a low one. The world of spirits, of unseen, supernatural beings, has remained close to the world of men.

None the less we have already seen that the predominant feature in their ideas of the unseen powers is an anxious expectation, an ensemble of emotional elements which primitives themselves frequently define as "fear." We believe that we have found in these ideas a special factor common to them all which allows us to refer them to the "affective category of the supernatural." To try to define them more exactly and enclose them within a formal concept would be to follow the wrong road and enter upon a blind alley. It is by a study of the feelings of which the unseen powers form the subject, by considering how these powers react upon human fate, and the varied and often extraordinary methods to which primitives resort in defending themselves against them or, if they deem it possible, in conciliating them to gain their favour and support, that we shall obtain the clearest image of them as well as the least imperfect explanation which can account for them.

CHAPTER I

GOOD AND BAD LUCK

I

THE indefinite number of unseen influences and powers upon which the primitive feels himself at all times dependent, and the vague character of most of them, make any attempt to enumerate and, still more, to classify them a hopeless task. We shall then first of all consider them *en masse*, fixing our attention on those from whom he believes he has something to fear. As for the others, who might even favour him of their own choice, why should he trouble about them? He is content to let them pursue their course.

Among the powers that wish him harm and work him ill, we may distinguish, on the one hand, those who give no warning of the moment of attack, and on the other, those of whom some sign or other announces that they are working against him. How does he endeavour to defend himself against the former? By what methods can he safeguard himself from misfortunes that overtake him unawares from any part of the horizon whatever, thus giving him no chance of preparing beforehand an appropriate and specific counter-thrust? Of this difficulty, which presents itself everywhere, he finds everywhere the same solution, and an imperfect one—he has recourse to amulets, and the communities in which these are unknown are very few in number. The confidence placed in them is greater or less according to individual cases, and their number, too, is variable. As a rule, the primitive who feels himself threatened by a host of evil influences or malign spirits never believes he has enough amulets at his command. Are those he does possess sufficient to parry all the attacks which may jeopardize his health, his life or the lives of his family, their well-being, and the success of his enterprises, etc.? Will he ever be able to cover his person, children, cattle, with enough charms to ensure their complete safety? A Safwa proverb declares: “Even the shrewd-

est are killed by a stone,"¹ which means, as Mme. Kootz-Kretschmer tells us: "The medicine-man or some other, who has hung a number of amulets upon his person, believes himself secure against all misfortunes, for he thinks that no wild beast can attack him and no enemy can injure him, he is quite safe. But illness surprises him, and he dies all the same, and that is why other people say: 'It is no use being cunning, a stone will kill you' (the stone, in this instance, being the unexpected illness)."

Therefore, in addition to the special amulets which protect against a definite danger, such, for instance, as that of being drowned when fishing, or attacked when travelling, the primitive will wear others that are, as it were, a general security against any ill whatsoever. But he knows that this is not an infallible guarantee, and it may suddenly fail.

It may possibly be helpful to our exposition if we separate amulets and talismans, properly so called, whose function is to protect against misfortune or avert a baleful influence, from the medicines and charms that procure either a special advantage, or success and good fortune in general. This is, indeed, a distinction difficult to maintain. Observers, whose writings are our sole source of information, have very frequently not thought about this, or not made any precise observations concerning it. Most of them give the term "amulet," "talisman," "charm" a very elastic interpretation, sometimes a stricter one signifying protection solely, or again, a wide one expressing impartially both defence and definite help in attaining a definite aim, or in the attainment of happiness generally. Moreover, we do not always know how far the words "amulet" and "charm" correspond with those the natives use.

In any case the distinction would only be valid for special amulets and charms, and in such cases it is usually observed; thus, we hear of an amulet for the evil eye, or a charm to fatten pigs. But of an amulet to render the warrior invulnerable, it will also be said that it is a charm. As long as the object to be attained is not strictly defined, the primitive is inclined not to differentiate between "good fortune" and "absence of misfortune." To him, to escape all the evil influences which may possibly be militating against him at the moment, but remain powerless to injure him, is to be lucky. The avoidance of misfortune itself is the enjoyment of positive good. From the

¹ E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *Die Safwa*, II. p. 27.

primitive's point of view, therefore, we must not take the term "amulet" in too narrow a sense, and make it exclusively defensive.

This posited, we find in a very large number of primitive communities there are amulets and "medicines" designed to dispel misfortune in general. Among the Dayaks, for instance, as Hardeland tells us, "the name *pangantoho* is given to talismans or charms by means of which misfortune may be averted from oneself. To this end primitives make use of human heads, vertebrae of fish and bones of animals which have been found dead somewhere, stunted branches, stones, wooden puppets in threes or sevens, etc. These talismans are consecrated by means of magic formulas, and then placed in a small shrine in front of or in the house. With them are put some vessels containing rice, salt, or sirih for the use of the *pangantoho*. Every time that a ceremony takes place in the house, these offerings must be renewed. Moreover, every year a red cock must be sacrificed to the *pangantoho*.—It is believed that these avert illnesses, and that they are a protection against all *palahan*, that is, against every kind of witchcraft, and all secret practices of magic which may be harmful." ¹—"One characteristic trait of the people of Borneo," as we learn from a recent account, "is their fondness for amulets. Among the Kayans, in the gallery of every house there hangs a bunch of amulets which are the common property of the tribe: human scalps, a crocodile's tooth, a few small sacrificial knives, some pieces of crystal or stones of unusual shape, wild boar's tusks, feathers, etc. Nobody dares lay hands on this parcel. . . . Besides this, every member of the tribe possesses a collection of these sacred amulets, some of them being kept in the house, while others are worn on his head-hunting spear." ² So too, in Nias, "the natives have amulets which they wear round the neck to protect them from the *beghu* or spirits which cause sicknesses. As a rule they are made of metal, gold, silver, copper, or lead . . . or else they are discs with some Malay inscriptions on them . . . or merely pieces of paper bearing these inscriptions. . . . There are a great number of other amulets against maladies; for instance, little pieces of stone of unusual shape, shells, animals' tusks, petrified fruits, fossils, etc." ³

¹ A. Hardeland. *Dajacksch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, p. 410 (1859).

² E. Mjöberg. *Durch die Insel der Kopffäger*, pp. 282-83 (1929).

³ Kleiweg de Zwaan. *Die Heilkunde der Niasser*, p. 51 (1913).

There is no need to stress the immense variety of the objects which possess the power of averting misfortune and, by that very means, bringing about good luck. Nearly every ornament known to coquetry, masculine as well as feminine, has become an adornment only after having served as an amulet, and even in that case its first purpose may still function. Among the Ao Nagas, "a little girl's first garment is simply a cotton string round her waist," says Mills, adding in a note: "This string, which is of mixed dark blue and red thread, is supposed to keep off evil influences. A girl often continues to wear a dark blue string round her waist under her skirt for several years."¹

Among the Kafirs of South Africa "*i-ntelezi* is the general name for all those medicinal charms whose object is to counteract evil by rendering its causes innocuous, unsuccessful (as when a doctor by some medicine renders harmless the poison of a sorcerer or the flashing of lightning). They are generally administered by a 'sprinkling' process, and not carried about on the person."²

Bryant here throws light on the concept which has almost everywhere given rise to the specifically protective amulets. In the course of time this idea recedes into the background, and sometimes it is completely forgotten. The natives continue to wear amulets, and still have a certain amount of faith in them. If they were suddenly deprived of them, they would be uneasy, or even afraid, but the custom of wearing them has become merely mechanical. In a general way they still know why they wear these amulets, and what ills they counteract, but they would be unable to say wherein their efficacy consists.

The passage by Bryant just quoted explains this. When exposed to the malignity and attacks of invisible powers and influences pertaining to the supernatural world, how is man to defend himself unless he appeals to this same world? It is impossible to combat mystic forces effectively except by forces of the same kind. Thus it is that to the mystic forces of poison, witchcraft, etc., used by the sorcerer, the doctor opposes the equally mystic force of his medicine. In doing this he paralyzes, "neutralizes," the other. He robs it of its power, or nullifies the effects. To an influence of this kind, a similar influence, equal or superior, can alone prove a countercheck.

¹ J. P. Mills. *The Ao Nagas*, p. 40.

² A. T. Bryant. *A Zulu-English Dictionary*, p. 620.

II

Amulets then, at any rate originally, are the vehicles of mystic forces proceeding from the supernatural world. Thus the *pangantoho* of the Dayaks, for instance, the wooden puppets and other objects to which food and sacrifices are offered at stated intervals, protect the house and its inhabitants. Their mystic virtue permits of their combating evil influences of all kinds victoriously. Their supernatural power acts like that of the "medicine" with which the Zulu doctor sprinkles his clients.

Knud Rasmussen has rightly laid stress upon the mystic nature of amulets. "No Eskimo can altogether dispense with amulets, and this is apparent especially in the fact that a man may sometimes become incapable of all that is required in a hunter and head of a family, living thenceforward only as an object of scorn to his fellows. The reason is that his amulets (the word is used here in the sense of charms) are worthless, having been given to him by one who had no power of entering into communication with the supernatural. This explanation shows that it is not enough that the amulet in itself shall have magic power, but the giver, the one who makes an amulet out of the common object, whatever it may be, must likewise possess such power. If now the passive amulets can somehow get their force renewed, a change at once takes place in the owner who, from being the meanest of unskilful hunters, now appears as surpassing the best." ¹

When it is a question of amulets taken from animals, "it is not the amulet itself, but the soul of the animal from which it is taken, that has the effective helping power. . . . The amulet acts by magic, and it is therefore not absolutely and exclusively confined in its effects to the actual wearer. It may be given away to another person, but the magic power can only be conveyed to the new owner if he gives something in return. . . . Hence it is quite possible to lose an amulet and yet retain its virtue." ²

Thalbitzer, too, noted this magic nature of amulets in the stories of the Eskimos of the east coast of Greenland. "Amulets are consecrated with a spell, or by singing over them . . . they become living. We have a specialized form of the same

¹ Kn. Rasmussen. *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, p. 153.

² *Ibid.* p. 150.

idea, when the amulet is a knife or some other implement, which suddenly in the hour of danger begins to grow and effects the killing itself." ¹

Among the Bantus there have also been found more or less specialized amulets, with the same idea of their mystic virtue. Thus with the Bamangwato, (a Bechuana tribe) "there are the '*lipeku*' or town-charms, which are renewed every year, and which are supposed to protect and bless the town. The varied ingredients are concocted by the united wisdom of the chief doctor and all his assistants. . . . When the concoction of the charm is completed, part of the contents of the sacred vessels in which they have been prepared is emptied into small calabashes or gourds, more than a dozen of which hang from the person of the head sorcerer on public occasions, especially in time of war. During the attack by the Matabele Sekhomo was always arrayed with these calabashes round his shoulder and waist, which gave him a most fantastic appearance. By means of them he was supposed to be able to protect his own people, and to bring evil upon his enemies. Another portion of the *lipeku* is conveyed outside the town by the priests, and placed on all the paths which lead into it. Nothing is visible above the ground but a pair of horns, it may be of a koodoo or some other antelope. A native would not touch these horns for the world." ²

There are the same public and private amulets among the Basutos, and a like belief in their magic power. "Immediately on entering we notice on the threshold and in the courtyard little round, shiny, black pebbles almost hidden in the ground, sticks planted between the huts, pegs sticking out of the thatch, small cords waving in the wind, or here and there a pole . . . at the top of which some shapeless and greasy objects are hanging. All this . . . has but one aim—the safeguarding of the village, house, family and individual against the evil designs of sorcerers and the attacks of enemies. All this is but the material and mystic means of procuring men peace, security, prosperity, so that they may, as they say, 'sleep properly.'" ³

The same missionary describes a magic hail-disperser, which affords both material and mysterious (or, as he says, mystic) protection. "A bamboo, about three yards high, was fixed in the

¹ W. Thalbitzer. *Ethnographical Collections from East Greenland. Meddelelser om Gronland*, XXXIX, p. 361.

² Rev. J. Mackenzie, *Ten years north of the Orange River*, pp. 383-84.

³ *Missions évangéliques*, LXXIV, I, p. 287, 1899. (Diéterlen).

ground. At the end of it there was a cord, and fastened to the cord a piece of calabash, cut to form an oval, upon which some red smears had been made. To this piece of calabash . . . was affixed a reddish feather, old, worn-out, and stripped in places, but of immense importance to the whole, for, said old Felesi, the author of this contraption, 'a bird's feather is really the lightning.' . . . Below this bamboo pole stones had been collected to form a kind of hearth, on which there smouldered day and night a fire sedulously kept up by the old witch-doctor and his family. 'This must be done,' he told me, 'so that the earth can be kept warm, that is, so that everything shall go well, as much for the sake of the hail as for things in general,' and this protective fire was kept alive until the summer was over and the harvest garnered."¹

In the ba-Ila dialect "*shinda*, singular *chinda*, means amulets. The root of the word is *inda*, which as a verb (*kwinda*) means to work upon, apply a charm to. . . . *Diinda*, the reflexive form, means to apply a charm to oneself or to obtain a charm for one's own use; and a person who has not as yet availed himself of this means of protection is described as *muntu budio*, a mere human being, i.e. he is deficient."² Against any supernatural influence whatsoever, in default of possessing an amulet, which itself is a vehicle of supernatural force man, reduced to his own capabilities, is defenceless.

Here is another description of amulets reported by Brutzer, a missionary to the Akamba in East Africa. "My informant, who certainly belonged to those who were enlightened, wore on the brass spiral round his neck a talisman wound round with metal wire. This was to protect him against sorcery in general. Round his wrist there was a bracelet in which similarly a talisman was wrapped. This allowed him to see if there happened to be any poison in the beer which was offered to him. If the hand trembles while raising the cup to the mouth, it is a sign that there is poison in it. On the bracelet also hung two small pieces of wood on a short cord. These were to protect him against snakebites. Beneath the cloth round his loins hung a talisman wrapped in pieces of cloth tightly fastened with string. This was to bring its wearer riches."³

¹ *Ibid.* LXXXI, 2, pp. 24-5. 1906.

² Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, I, p. 251.

³ Brutzer, *Der Geisterglaube bei den Kamba*, p. 12 (1905) quoted by G. Lindblom in *The Akamba*, p. 288.

In a neighbouring district, among the Safwa, a native thus expresses himself: "While we were living in Wanga, my parents recalled the death of the child they had lost at Xitimba. They said to each other: 'Let us go and find another medicine-man, and he must bring a *spinga* (magic horn) to our hut, so that our other children may not die as that one did in Xitimba.' My parents sent for Mwembe and told him what they wanted. They said: 'Look here, Mwembe, there is death in our hut; you must send it away through your magic horn.' Mwembe consented to do this. He took a horn and put black medicine in it and mixed it with castor-oil. Then he gave my parents the horn, and they hung it on the wall of the hut." ¹

These same Safwas also have amulets to protect them against the white man's anger. "Kuwi said to his chief: 'Mwaryego, I am going to make you some amulets of the blackwood tree, to protect you from the white men's words. When they are angry with you, these amulets will turn away their wrath from you and your people.' . . . The chief listened to the medicine-man and gave him permission. . . . The latter made a magic horn for the chief and said: 'Master, take this horn into your hut, and let it stay there. When you hear the white men talking, take a little medicine out of the horn and anoint your forehead with it, and anoint your people too. This magic horn will avert the anger of the white men, if they are meaning any harm to your village.' " ²

The stronger the fear of invisible powers and evil influences, the greater is the need of self-protection by amulets. In some communities they are multiplied to such an extent as to become a heavy burden to those who think they never have enough, or on whom the task of carrying them is laid. The head, neck, shoulders, limbs, wrists, ankles, waist, are covered with them. Babies are peculiarly exposed to the malevolence of wicked spirits, the envious, those possessed of the evil eye, etc. Therefore to protect them against all these they are often kept in the huts during the first weeks or months of life, and longer still if they are of exalted birth, and their lives more valuable accordingly. When at last their attendants run the risk of taking them out of doors, they are not seen in the open air without being loaded with amulets, designed to "neutralize" the evil influences ready to act upon them.

¹ E. Kootz-Kretschmer, *Die Safwa*, II, p. 301.

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 229.

This means of self-protection seems to be more common in Africa than among the primitive peoples of North and South America, or of Polynesia. It is not that the latter are less anxious to protect themselves from invisible powers and malign influences, but they rather incline to other practices, equally mystic in their nature. On this point, there is as much difference between individuals as between communities. In the self-same tribe one man may be wearing one or two amulets only, while his neighbour, staggering under the weight of those he already carries, is thinking solely how to acquire fresh ones.

III

The primitive's sometimes veiled yet ever-present concern is to escape malign influences, and not to incur the animosity of any of the unseen powers upon which his success or his bad fortune depends. This has been noted more than once by observers. Saville, for instance, who lived among the Papuans of British New Guinea for many years, expresses it thus. "From beginning to end of Mailu native life runs the dread of ill luck, individual and social. I think that it is Mr. Marett who points out how in savage communities fear of ill luck may become a panic. . . . Nothing can more nearly express the actual state of psychological affairs within the Mailu community. Its whole mental life is permeated with the 'Touch wood!' feeling."¹

Such a state of mind being assumed, the primitive, always under the threat of a danger he can neither define nor locate, is naturally ever on the look-out, and heedful of the slightest sign that will permit him to discover, and perhaps circumvent, the evil influence he dreads, while still ignorant of its nature. It is therefore of vital interest to him to be as early and as fully cognizant of it as possible, and his continual recourse to divination in its many varied forms largely arises out of this pressing need.

Again, every incident that is to any extent notable is regarded as a sign, and especially whatever appears unusual is considered suspicious. Thus it is not good to be too constantly lucky. "When a dog," writes Kruyt, "is always lucky in hunting, it is *measa* (ill-starred, a bringer of evil), for too much good luck in hunting makes the Toradja uneasy. The mystic virtue by means of which the animal is enabled to seize his prey,

¹ W. J. V. Saville. *In unknown New Guinea*, p. 275.

must necessarily be fatal to his master; he will soon die, or his rice-crop will fail, or, more often still, there will be an epidemic among his cattle or pigs. This belief is general throughout Central Celebes. A native of Bas-Mori gave me a characteristic explanation of it. He said that the dog, foreseeing the death of his master, did his utmost to procure as much game as possible for him, so that there might be enough provided for the visitors who would come to pay their respects to the dead man.”¹

Yet the continued bad luck of a hunting-dog is no less disquieting. “In both cases, either the dog in question is not taken out hunting again, or else it is put at the service of someone else. But if his good luck then decreases, or if the ever-unlucky dog begins to catch game from time to time, the master takes his animal back again. Should the good luck or bad luck of the dog be not belied, then it is often killed, and especially if a case of death is attributed to its influence.” It is clearly evident that it is a witch-beast, and if it were allowed to live, misfortune after misfortune would fall upon its master and on the village.

In East Africa, the Dschaggas experience the same fears when, the mealie harvest having promised well, some unusually fine cobs appear. “A mealie-stalk which assumes unusual proportions . . . is a ‘plantation chief.’ The native who perceives it during the rainy season, before others have noticed it, will root it up at once. He is afraid that it may be bruited abroad that the ‘chief’ is in his plantation. Above all he fears that this mealie stalk itself may cause his death, since he has been so unlucky as to find a ‘chief’ in his insignificant field. If the plant has already had time to develop, he must take care to propitiate it so that it may not do him any harm, or kill him and his family. . . . (He offers a sacrifice, and then an as yet unshorn girl enters the field and waters the cob, pronouncing a magic formula.) It is only after the performance of this rite that the cob may be picked, but it may not yet be eaten. It is first tried upon others, to whom it is given without warning, in order to see whether it is harmless, or if it really kills, by virtue of the royal power within it. . . . In other districts, beer was made with the royal mealie-cob, and this was taken to the headman of the tribe, for he alone could drink it with impunity.”²

¹ A. C. Kruyt, *Measa*, III, T. L. V. LXXVI, p. 66 (1920).

² Br. Gutmann. *Feldbausitten und Wachstumsgebräuche der Wadschagga*. *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, XLV, p. 498 (1913). Upon the first-fruits, *vide infra*, Chap. XII, pp. 464-68.

We know the importance attached to omens by the natives of Borneo and many other districts of the Dutch East Indies. Whether it be sowing, reaping, travelling, marriage, or any other enterprise whatsoever, nothing will be undertaken until the indispensable omens have been secured. (Cf. Author's *Primitive Mentality*, ch. IV, pp. 127-31.) It is not enough to have "sought the inaugurating omens in order to strike the line of good luck, to render the commencement of an undertaking auspicious. The continuance of good fortune must be carried on by omen influence to the end."¹ Should they be unfavourable, the undertaking is stopped, and good omens are awaited, and so on until the work is ended.

These omens not only announce the desired success; they are a necessary condition of it. They guarantee it and they effect it, as Perham has clearly shown. "The yearly rice-farming is a matter of much ceremony as well as of labour, and must be inaugurated with proper omens. Some man who is successful with his paddy will be the augur and undertake to obtain omens for a certain area of land which others besides himself will farm. . . . As soon as he has heard the *ñendak*, he will break off a twig of anything growing near, and take it home and put it in a safe place. . . . He will then go to listen for the *katupong* and the rest, but with the same liability to delays; and it may possibly require a month to obtain all those augural predictions which are to give them confidence in the result of their labours. The augur has now the same number of twigs or sticks as birds he has heard, and he takes these to the land selected for farming, and puts them in the ground, says a short form of address to the birds and Pulang Gana, cuts a little grass or jungle with his parang, and returns. The magic virtue of the birds has been conveyed to the land."²

From these last words it seems as if the omen-birds play the same part, to the Dayaks' minds, as do amulets and charms with so many other primitives. The Dayaks expect that they will secure them against bad luck and failure, by placing at their service a magic force capable of offering successful resistance to hostile powers, and guaranteeing them an abundant harvest. This beneficent influence of the favourable omens is not exhausted at the time it is manifested, and it is therefore right to

¹ J. Perham. *Sea-Dayak Religion. Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. X, p. 231 (1883).

² *Ibid.* pp. 229-30.

preserve the objects which are the vehicles of it. Such, with the Dayaks, are the twigs brought by the augur, and these are afterwards placed on the ground in the fields, as so many talismans or mascots.

In Central Celebes, says Kruyt, "it is for this reason that the feathers of fowls which have been used for divination at the beginning of the planting season, or at the foundation of a new village, are preserved."¹ Before entering on a campaign divination is effected by means of the heart of a dog. "The heart which had promised the victory was carried off and buried at the foot of the slope upon which lay the village in which they looked forward to offering sacrifice."² And finally, in another tribe bordering on the preceding, "when the divination rites had taken place before they went to battle, the chief of the troop would hang round his neck the claws of the dog that had furnished the favourable omens, so that he might thus bear on his person the success of the contest."³ This similarity of the omen to the charm or amulet could hardly be more explicit.

In the same way an evil influence can remain fixed, it may "stick" to a person or thing. In Central Celebes "it is a universal belief that the inhabitants of a house where people have worked during the rain will always be obliged to protect themselves against illness, for the bad influence of the rain will adhere to the house. For a similar reason the hunter who hears the song of a favourable bird exclaims: 'Fasten on' (he is addressing the lucky charm in the bird's voice) 'Fasten on to my dogs' hocks or to my spear!' (and this is in order that his dogs may be fleet, and his spear attain its objective at the first throw). When he hears a bird of ill-omen, he calls out: 'Fasten on to X's dogs' hocks and to his spear!' This wish is expressed about another hunter whom he knows, and it will deprive him of his luck."⁴

Among these same East Indians, and with nearly all primitives, it is not enough to have favourable omens; it is essential that the month, day, and hour on which an enterprise is begun shall be auspicious or "record" days. We know that the primitive mind does not "sense" the successive moments of time as homogeneous. Certain periods of the day or night, of the

¹ A. C. Kruyt, *Measa*. III. T. L. V. LXXXVI, p. 30. (1920).

² *Ibid* p. 64.

³ *Ibid*. p. 66.

⁴ *Id. Measa*. II. T. L. V. LXXXV, p. 55 (1919).

moon's phases, of the year, and so on, are able to exert a favourable or a malignant influence. If one would not risk the chance of misfortune it will be necessary to take these into account just as much as omens. Hardeland has noted the Dayaks' beliefs with regard to this. He says: "Every day has five 'times,' which are fixed for the first day (Sunday) only, and for the others there must be recourse to divination. The Sunday 'times' are:

"1. Sunrise, favourable to the beginning of work. Children born at this time are lucky. But at this hour one must not start hunting, fishing, or begin a journey, for there would be no success.

"2. About 9 A.M. is an unlucky hour, and nothing begun at that time can succeed. If, however, one should be starting on a journey, brigands need not be feared.

"3. Noon: a very 'lucky moment.'

"4. 3 P.M. This is the hour of battle, favourable to enemies, brigands, hunters, fishers, but unlucky to travellers.

"5. Towards sunset; this is the lesser 'lucky moment.'" ¹

"Nearly everywhere there is the same difference between the days: some are auspicious, and some the reverse. Undertakings begun on one of the unlucky days are bound to fail, and they bring about misfortune. Children born on any of these days are suspect, and they are abandoned for fear of the calamities they will cause. At one time the Hovas regarded the month of August as unlucky and the belief still persists. In each week of it there are two fatal days—Tuesday and Friday (though to many of them the second of these is Thursday), and any birth occurring on those days is considered a calamity, the child being abandoned to its evil fate."²—Among the Zulus "there were certain days which the natives, from some superstitious reason, regarded as 'dark, gloomy,' and on which they usually stayed at home, refraining from work, visiting, etc. The day following this, when they would be free again, would be called a white day. The death of a headman, a hailstorm, the lightning striking a tree (signs that the *izulu* is angry) the 'death' or change of the moon were all occasions for this custom."³

The unusual prevalence of these beliefs inclines us to think that they have their source in profound characteristics of the

¹ A. Hardeland, *op. cit.* p. 71.

² *Missions évangéliques*, LXXXIV. I, p. 188 (1911).

³ A. T. Bryant. *A Zulu-English Dictionary*, pp. 389-90.

primitive mentality, and are due to the affective category of the supernatural. This is indeed what the last words of the passage by Bryant just quoted seem to imply. The periods, days, hours, upon which misfortunes occur participate in these misfortunes. They form a part of the same idea and, through the influence of the affective category they, like the unseen powers themselves, become the subject of dread.

There are therefore moments when hostile invisible powers and malign influences preferably manifest themselves. They are then more directly present, more active and more dangerous. Accordingly prudence demands that a man should keep quiet and refrain from undertaking anything—in short, not give these hostile forces any advantage over him, since they would hasten to avail themselves of the opportunity offered. Hence arise those well-known taboos which at certain definite times inhibit such and such an act, or even any activity whatsoever.

In the same way the primitive knows that on other days and hours the evil influences are less to be dreaded. It is to his interest to select these when he wants to begin an undertaking, for thus he will run less risk. It is almost as if he could count on a favourable omen, and therefore it is of the greatest importance that he should know which days are lucky, and which unlucky. When the Eskimos were told by their first missionaries that they must abstain from all work on the Lord's day, they exclaimed: "What! Is there one day in the week that is taboo, and we didn't know it!" They were amazed, but now they felt they had obtained an explanation of many misfortunes, the cause of which they had never been able to discover. Henceforward, Stefánsson tells us, they were more strict and scrupulous in their observance of the Sabbath than their ministers themselves.

IV

It is not only the days and hours, but all things in nature and all the objects with which the primitive comes in contact that may be lucky or unlucky, and bring him good fortune or ill. The slightest sign warning him of this at once arrests his attention.

The Wonkonguru of Central Australia believe that certain objects bring misfortune upon those who use them. "I found," says Horne, "this murrawirrie" (a large boomerang) "down a rabbit burrow. . . . Thinking it a queer place to find it, I brought

it along. I had a boy with me at the time. This boy advised me to leave it, as he knew it and it was 'very bad poison.' I was curious, but he would not tell me any more. On my return I showed it to some of the old blacks, and it was immediately recognized. It was very old, and had been at Kopperamanna for very many years. . . . Bad luck would attend anyone who fought with it, as he always got hurt. If a man who did not know its strength wielded it, he would only get hurt a little bit, but if it was used by anyone who knew its history and used it in bravado, the man would be killed in the fight. It must not be destroyed, but could be lost. It had been lost scores of times, but it was always turning up again, being usually brought in by some boy who did not know its history. The old men were very pleased that I had it, as they reckoned it was now safe."¹

To these same Wonkonguru, "any stone of unusual shape . . . was uncanny. If any were found that were small enough to carry home, they were taken and shown to the assembled old men. These invariably identified them . . . and usually invented a use for them."² Certain small tusk-shaped yellow stones were called 'spirits' teeth.' They are not used for any ceremony, but are kept to ensure good luck."³

If in using certain fishing-nets there has been an unusually abundant catch, if an arrow has hit the mark several times in succession, if in using a certain tool an object has been specially well made, the nets, arrow, tool are all "lucky." Respect will be shown them; they will be well looked after. They will be most carefully preserved so that they may be used again in the future, with the idea that their luck will be constant, and their owner can profit by their good fortune. This is such a well-known trait that a few instances only will no doubt suffice. In Samoa "qualities of good or bad fortune were constantly attributed to natural objects. Fish-hooks, for instance, were considered to be lucky or unlucky. Some canoes or boats were considered to be much more fortunate in attracting sharks or other fish than other canoes were. Weapons were also considered as being courageous or cowardly."⁴ In South Africa, "the Bushmen," relates an early explorer, "despise the arrow which has once failed to hit the mark, but on the other hand one that has been

¹ G. Horne and G. Alston. *Savage Life in Central Australia*, p. 77 (1926).

² *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³ *Ibid.* p. 135.

⁴ G. Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians*, p. 249.

lucky once is of double worth in their eyes. However much time and trouble it needs they would fashion entirely new arrows rather than collect those they had expended in vain, which might have been used once more.”¹—Other Bushmen, according to Steedman, “had a superstitious dread of crossing at the spot where we were stationed, saying that it was ‘evil water,’ which often drowned people. They insisted on our going a considerable distance further up, where they affirmed the water was ‘good,’ and where their women, from the opposite side, came down singing and clapping their hands, as if to soothe and pacify the agitated stream.”²

Finally, in Equatorial Africa, “I well remember,” says Miss Kingsley, “seeing a very nice canoe being chopped up in the Cameroon region, and on asking why, being informed that it was the habit of that canoe to get adrift after dark and go down river, and get itself picked up by someone, who brought it home and had to be paid a goat and three yams, or to go and drift away and smash up some lady or gentleman’s fish trap—and then of course, the value of the presumed lost fish had to be paid ‘on top’ of the canoe-finder’s regular fee; so the owner, feeling he was being dragged into bankruptcy by the thing, was settling its palaver ‘one time.’”³

From objects which bring good fortune because they themselves are “lucky” to amulets, charms and talismans designed to fulfil the same office, it is a scarcely perceptible transition. In the case of a weapon or tool, it will be used as frequently as possible, and even exclusively, and when it threatens to become worn-out, natives will try to pass on its mystic virtue to another like it. If the object has no known use it will be preserved and esteemed simply for the good fortune it promises and assures. It will make one of the large class of luck-bringers.

Here is a description given by a Jesuit Father of luck-bringers of this type among the Hurons in New France. It shows us clearly both the material and the mystic aspects, for the tangible object is revered insomuch as it is the vehicle of supernatural power. “Most things that seem to have something extraordinary about them, or which seem unnatural to our Hurons are readily regarded by them as ‘Okny,’ that is, things

¹ A. Lichtenstein, *Reisen im Sud-Afrika*, II, p. 442.

² A. Steedman. *Wanderings and adventures in the interior of South Africa*, II. pp. 22-3.

³ Mary Kingsley. *West African Studies*, 2nd ed. pp. 400-1.

that have as it were a supernatural power, and thus they deem it lucky to find them, and they preserve them carefully. Such things are stones of unusual shape, snakes, etc. They declare that these Aaskouandy or magic objects sometimes change their form and appearance, and that a man who has inserted a certain stone or snake into the entrails of a stag may be astonished next day to find in its place a bean or a grain of corn, at another time a bird's bill or an eagle's talons, just as if this Aaskouandy or familiar spirit were undergoing a transformation, and took delight in thus deceiving men by these metamorphoses.

"They believe that these Aaskouandy bring good luck in the chase, the fishing-ground, trading, sport, and they say that some of them have general ability for all sorts of things, but in others the force is limited to one thing and not another, and in order that a man may know what it is that makes them lucky, and in what circumstances, he will have to be instructed in a dream."¹

In the N. E. Provinces of India, among the Lhota Nagas, "certain stones called *oha* bring good fortune. They are smooth, water-worn stones, varying in size from that of a man's head to that of a walnut, and are kept under the *mingetung*, or at the foot of the carved post of the *morung*, or by individuals in their houses or granaries. Those kept under the *mingetung* are usually large, and on them the luck of the whole village depends. Those kept in the *morung* affect the prosperity of the section of the village to which they belong. . . . Anyone finding such a stone brings it home, and then notices whether his family increases quickly, or he has good crops, or is particularly successful in trade. He thus finds out what particular form of good luck is attached to the stone in question.—Bad *oha* are not unknown. One kind called 'coughing stone' causes the owner to fall ill. Yet to throw them away would mean certain death."²

The Ao Nagas, their neighbours, have the same beliefs. "Ordinary luckstones are common nowadays. They are small, roundish and black, with a smooth surface. . . . They are kept in a little basket in the granary. . . . Soon, instead of one there are two; these two breed until there may be quite a large family. If neglected, the stones will fly away."³ These Ao Nagas are

¹ *Relations de la Nouvelle-France ès années 1647 et 1648* pp. 108-10.

² J. P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, p. 167.

³ *Idem. The Ao Nagas*, pp. 289-90.

also acquainted with stones that bring misfortune. "Particularly dangerous stones are called *kirunglung*, that is, house-burning stones. They are to be found below the surface of the ground in some villages, which as a result are always getting burned down. Only a medicine-man can locate such a stone and extract it, and he must be quick, for it can burrow almost as fast as a man can dig. When caught, water is poured on it, and it is thrown into a stream."¹ These stones have the power of bewitching or bringing bad luck, and they are therefore treated as witches would be.

V

As a rule a primitive refuses to part with that which brings him luck—amulets, talismans, stones of unusual shape, "lucky" implements and weapons, and so on. The same feeling prompts him to attach himself to persons whom fortune favours, and to avoid those who are not successful, or meet with misfortune. Thus, with the Lhota Nagas, each village has a kind of chief priest, called a *Puthi*, who takes the leading part in all ceremonies. "Five days after the death of a *Puthi* the old men of the village meet . . . and discuss the question of his successor. . . . He must fulfil a certain number of conditions. He must . . . never have been wounded by an enemy or wild animal, or have hurt himself by falling from a tree or rock, or have burnt himself, etc. . . . In other words, a man who has only just escaped an 'apotia' death is not eligible. Nor must he be deformed or mutilated in any way."² In fact, as Mills remarks, there is a mystic participation between the village and its *Puthi*, and an unlucky *Puthi* would bring misfortune upon his village.

With the seaboard Dayaks studied by Perham, remedies are applied to the sick by a man reputed lucky.³ So too, among the Ba-Ila in South Africa, "One of the beliefs of the Ba-Ila is that certain persons have . . . a lucky hand for sowing, and their services are in general request."⁴ In the Blue Nile Province of the Sudan, "if a crop does well one year, the success is often put down to the good luck of the man who planted the

¹ *Ibid.* p. 290.

² J. P. Mills. *The Lhota Nagas*, pp. 121-2.

³ J. Perham. *Manangism in Borneo. Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XIX, p. 87 (1887).

⁴ Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, I, p. 139.

ground, and the boy who threw the seeds; and the next year these two are hunted for and usually receive a higher wage in order to induce them to help again. If a new man comes to a village, and the rains are bad that year, the failure is debited to the stranger. . . . The Governor of a Province or the Inspector of a district is regarded as lucky or the reverse (that is, he will bring good luck or bad luck to the place) according to the rainfall or the height of the Nile in the first year that he arrives. If the river or the rainfall is good, his feet are said to be 'wet.' Similarly a man who puts up a new house is held responsible for any bad luck that befalls his neighbour." ¹ Is it not he who, by coming to establish himself there, has brought about his neighbour's misfortune? He therefore must be a harbinger of ill.

In nearly all primitive communities the natives range themselves, as if instinctively, on the side of the man favoured by fortune. They think that they can thus participate in his good luck, and the favourable influences exercised in his behalf will extend to his companions. The mere fact of "being with" him implies such participation. We shall find numerous examples of this belief later (v. Chap. VI). Therefore if a man is "lucky," his company will be sought, while if the contrary be the case, others will do all they can to avoid him, and when with him, they leave him as soon as they can.

Mackenzie, the missionary, tells us that one day, during his journey northwards, his gun went off and hurt his hand. What did he do? "I laid the damaged gun out of sight, in the waggon, and did not mention to my men the cause of my bound-up hand. Such people believe in 'lucky' and 'unlucky' masters, and I did not wish them to think that they were in the employment of one who was sure to meet with disaster." ² If the blacks had been aware of the accident, they would at once have left Mackenzie for fear of being included in the misfortune that threatened him, for an accident is equivalent to a revelation. It made manifest that Mackenzie was under evil influences, and that as a consequence he would bring ill-luck on those who were so imprudent as to remain in his vicinity. Facts of this kind are by no means rare. For instance, in a Protestant Mission in the

¹ H. C. Jackson. *Seed-time and Harvest. Sudan Notes and Records*, II, pp. 6-7. (1919).

² Rev. J. Mackenzie. *Ten years north of the Orange River*, p. 177.

Cameroons, a little ten-year-old girl had been severely burned all over her body. "She never said anything harsh about the other girls, who had all run away. . . ." (No doubt, in their place, she would have done the same.) "They refused to go back to their dormitory or to their kitchen, lest an evil spirit should come and strike them also. We reasoned with them for some time, but they would not listen to anything, and during the evening service all of them, except two, went off. Two others returned: I now have four left! Those who went away prevent the others from coming back."¹

Mackenzie acted wisely. If his native servants had known that it was his gun that had wounded him, they would have behaved like the little Mission girls in the Cameroons. Neither scolding nor threats would have been strong enough to keep them. Even supposing that they had been really attached to the missionary, the feeling that forced them to get away would have been all the more powerful. A misfortune which primitives witness—especially if it be unexpected and impressive—has an irresistible effect upon them. It inspires them with unconquerable dread, an acute form of that perpetual and yet vague and unformulated fear in which they dwell, feeling themselves always surrounded and threatened by unseen powers and influences that are hostile to them.

Thus what we call an accident means much more to them than it does to us. It reveals at one stroke, without any possibility of doubt, that one or more evil influences are being exerted upon the one who is affected. Even before the accident he was their destined victim. Other misfortunes are bound to follow, for the evil influence (even granting that it may be only a single one) has not been exhausted by this first manifestation of its malevolence. He who does not leave the "ill-starred" individual as soon as possible, will participate in his misfortunes.

There is no question here of a lack of sympathy or indifference or disregard of a master or a comrade, for primitives doubtless are not naturally more prone to this than ourselves. In acting as they do they are obeying the emotional ideas that have such a hold on them. The sight of the accident, the mere fact of hearing that it has taken place, seems to set some kind of reflex to work. They do not pause for reflection or decision. They do not say to themselves that by remaining near the one whom the evil power has attacked they may attract its attention

¹ *Missions évangéliques*, C, 2. p. 250 (1925) Lina Frantz.

to themselves without benefiting the victim in any way—their flight is an automatic action, and as a general rule, nothing can bring them back again.

This characteristic attitude of theirs has a very profound source. This is the fact that in their eyes the supernatural world is inextricably bound up with nature, and as a consequence the invisible powers intervene at all times in what we call the natural course of events. Hence anything unfortunate, or merely unusual, that may happen is never perceived solely as an event, for they at once interpret it as a manifestation of these powers. An accident, misfortune, unusual and disturbing phenomenon can only be a revelation, a warning, a sudden light thrown upon the mysterious world with which they are continually, though not always consciously, preoccupied.

In these frequent occurrences therefore, the primitive mind pays less attention to the happenings themselves than to the suprasensuous realities whose presence and influence they indicate. In this sense it has a perpetual tendency to symbolism. It does not stop short at the very events that strike it, but immediately seeks for the significance behind them. For the primitive mind what has happened is only a manifestation from the Beyond. But this spontaneous symbolism is at the same time very realistic. Properly speaking, symbols are not a creation of the mind; it finds them ready made, or rather, it at once interprets as symbols those events which have brought the affective category of the supernatural into play.

Yet another consequence arises out of this. To minds of such a trend there is no such thing as chance. (Cf. Author's *Primitive Mentality*, Chap. I, pp. 43-50.) They certainly are not unaware of what we consider fortuitous, but as a real accident or misfortune, great or small, is never without "significance," and to them is always a revelation or symbol, it necessarily has its *raison d'être* in an invisible power which is thus made manifest. Far from being due to chance, it reveals its own cause.

The difference between our methods of positive thought and the primitive's mystic mentality is clearly evident in the following scene. In French Equatorial Africa a native chief, disobeying the Administrator's regulation, had had recourse to trial by ordeal in order to discover wizards and, once found, they were executed. The chief was brought up for judgment, and it is to the courtesy of the Administrator, M. Prouteaux, that I am indebted for the account of the official enquiry.

Chief Niedoua: "Some time ago, I was having a plantation of millet prepared. As a storm came on, I made the labourers return to their huts. Shortly afterwards, lightning struck the hut and killed the men in it, who were four in number. This was not natural, and I sent for the witch-doctor Guésimo and told him to point out those who had caused the accident."

"It seems to me that the lightning caused it."

"The lightning did not strike that hut for no reason at all. Guésimo made enquiries, and thanks to the ordeal by poison, he pointed out the guilty parties, and they were put to death by my orders."

"And yet you knew that such proceedings are forbidden?"

"Yes, that is so, but I could not submit to the goings-on of those people, who would have been certain to compass my death."

To the French Administrator, the fact that the lightning, striking the hut, had killed the four men within it at the time, was an accident. The lightning was the cause of their death, and there was no need to seek for any other. But the primitive does not recognize any accident, pure and simple. When the native chief says: "It was not natural," he means to imply that this fourfold death demonstrates the influence of some occult force that uses the lightning to destroy them. This misfortune is therefore the sign, the forerunner of others which will occur if order is not restored. What supernatural force can have acted thus? The chief immediately believes that it is a case of bewitchment, and therefore he will defy the edict of the French authorities. He sends for one or more witch-doctors, that is, he resorts to the traditional method of ordeal by poison. The witch-doctor by this method discovers the guilty parties, and the chief does not hesitate to put them to death, for if he fails in this duty they would continue to propagate misfortune in his village. If the Administrator cannot understand the evident necessity for such a proceeding, so much the worse for him. He is the stronger power, and the chief will submit to the penalty for disobeying the law, but he could not have acted otherwise. His words, like his deeds, express the unanimous feelings of the natives on this point.

VI .

Seeing the unwavering disposition of the primitive to see in an accident, beyond the occurrence itself, the menace for the

future which it reveals, it is natural that he should interpret it as an omen. The accident is a sign. As a manifestation (like an inauspicious augury) of a maleficent influence already exerting itself although still unperceived, it begins a series of other accidents and misfortunes. Hence the profound impression it creates, an impression at times wholly out of proportion with its apparent importance. It is thus that we must understand, for instance, the discomfiture and consternation which often overcome the primitive at the slightest sign of failure in the beginning of an enterprise. He knows quite well that it may easily be set right, but what depresses him is the conviction, at once definitely set up in his mind, that a power from the supernatural world has militated effectively against him, and will continue to do so—that his adversary's charms are more potent than his own, for instance. If, therefore, an attack is not immediately successful, he will abandon it. He will refrain from pursuing the matter in hand, for he is afraid of finding himself in a fix, that is, of being yet more fully exposed to the hostile influence which at the moment is playing freely upon him. This, too, is the reason why, as Spencer and Gillen tell us, an Australian aborigine, as soon as he feels unwell, loses courage and resigns himself to death. It is not that he is unable to bear suffering, or incapable of fighting for his life; but because, in his eyes, illness signifies bewitching, and behind his enfeebled condition he perceives the mystic force that has brought it about. A sorcerer is "willing" him to die, and if nobody intervenes at once, and energetically, he will carry out his design and kill him.

By virtue, too, of this disposition of his, the primitive will unhesitatingly ascribe alarming significance to occurrences which are both ominous and accidental, a misfortune and at the same time an augury. Something unusual happens; a sudden shock is felt, and immediately the man is convinced that a disaster is about to overtake him—and the outcome confirms this conviction. The Reports of the Cambridge Expedition to the Torres Straits contain numerous examples of this kind. "While the mother was digging she broke the stick used for that purpose, and at once thought something amiss. 'I leave my boy,' (she was talking to herself), 'good. I go look, perhaps someone he take him.'" ¹—And a little further on: "Aukum had a very unlucky day; she vainly looked for fish, and when she was in her garden, her digging-stick broke, and Aukum ex-

¹ *Reports of the Cambridge Expedition to the Torres Straits*, V. p. 46.

claimed: 'It is a bad day for me; something must have happened to my boy.' She hurried home (and found her child had been killed)."¹—"The men had caught no turtle, and because of their bad luck they feared some ill had befallen the boys."² (As a matter of fact, the boys were dead.) The author very justly remarks later: "Mishaps or unlucky events are regarded as warnings or omens that something has gone wrong elsewhere, or shortly will do so."³

Not far away, in the island of Kiwai in British New Guinea, Landtman collected facts resembling the preceding from the native folklore. "Abere, who lived in Waboda, had a boy called Gadiva. He used to play close to the creek, and Abere warned him: 'No good you go close to, by-and-by alligator catch you.' Once while Abere and her daughters were in the bush, Gadiva was taken by a crocodile which dragged him into the water. Abere, in the act of pounding sago, hit her foot with the pounding stick, causing blood to flow. 'Ei,' she exclaimed, 'what name that? I no been make like that before. I think something wrong outside, alligator catch him Gadiva.' She ran home."⁴ And in another story: "In the meantime Madura was hunting in the bush, but he did not get a single pig, in consequence of the wrong happening to his wife."⁵

This sudden distress when face to face with some unusual and apparently inexplicable incident is not peculiar to New Guinea. Nieuwenhuis, for instance, tells us that during his travels in Central Borneo a man wounded himself with his own hatchet. "To the Kayans," says Nieuwenhuis, "an accident of this kind is of great importance, for an accident happening at that spot indicated that the spirits were angry with them, and they would have trouble on the journey."⁶ In his admirably meticulous dictionary, Hardeland explains that the Dayaks have one word for omen (*Vorseichen*), a sign for something which will happen (in Dayak, *dahiang*), and another, *tandjalo*, a sign (*Zeichen, Wahrzeichen*) for something which is *just about to happen*. For instance: "The storm is terrible; perhaps it is a sign that someone is even now being murdered.—Yonder is a

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

⁴ G. Landtman. *The Kiwai Papuans*, p. 127.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁶ A. W. Nieuwenhuis. *In centraal Borneo*, II, p. 260.

little rainbow, a sign that someone is fighting, or about to start fighting, etc.”¹

Thus the Dayaks also, when certain unusual or terrifying phenomena occur, are accustomed to interpret them as warnings that a misfortune is just about to happen. Hardeland gives yet one more instance, where the phenomenon announced has nothing dreadful about it. But what specially interests us here is the relation between the accident and that which occurs at the same time. Possibly it would be futile to try and elucidate it. In such circumstances *sign* does not really seem to imply *cause*, for the murder, for instance, might just as well be regarded as the cause of the storm beginning at that instant. No doubt there is some participation here which defies our analysis. In a way that we do not know how to explain, and which the primitive's mind does not require to elucidate, the two simultaneous events, occurring in different spots, are strictly solidary—perhaps even more than solidary. Perhaps it is *one and the same event* occurring at the same time in two different forms, in two places remote from one another. To a mentality which is familiar with “bi-presence,” there would be nothing in this that is impossible to accept, nothing even questionable.

In the quaint old folklore of the Bushmen, collected by Bleek and Lloyd, we meet with similar beliefs. Thus, in one story, “while the mother was looking about for food, the clouds came up. And she spoke, she said: ‘Something is not right at home, for a whirlwind is bringing (things) to the spring.’ Because her daughter killed the Water's children, the whirlwind took them away to the spring. Something had not gone well at home, for her daughter had been killing the Water's children. That was why the whirlwind took them away to the spring.”² Amid the repetitions which are such a perpetual feature of the stories dictated by Bushmen, the train of ideas appears quite distinctly. It is the unusual phenomenon that warns the mother of the drama enacted at her home, and she at once realizes what the sign means. So too, in South America, in many tribes of British Guiana, according to Dr. Roth, “anything that occurs out of the ordinary is accepted in the light of a token of something evil about to happen.” He gives several instances of this, which he has taken from their legends and stories. Here are some of them. “He brought (to the women) a turtle, which they put

¹ A. Hardeland, *op. cit.* p. 565.

² Bleek and Lloyd, *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, pp. 201-3.

on the hot ashes without killing it, so it promptly crawled out; they pushed it on again, but with the same result. It was the omen betokening their death."¹ (They believed they had killed the turtle, and had not done so.) A little later: "the wife also met her death shortly after, and they then remembered having noticed the token: she had omitted to bathe after a meal some days before."²—"The visitor ate the frogs raw, a token that something was going wrong, and the girl was suspicious."³—"It was not long before he again put his feet in the fire, a fact which, considering that he had not been drunk at the time, led the vigilant brother to know that it was a token of some evil about to befall them."⁴

With respect to these occurrences Dr. Roth remarks: "The token or augury may be in the nature of an indescribable sort of feeling. One feels 'frightened, strange,' as if something were about to happen."⁵ In a good many of these stories people have these sudden and inexplicable presentiments: they immediately expect a misfortune which, as a matter of fact, does occur.

For his part, Rasmussen relates a similar story of Takornaq, an Eskimo shaman, who himself is speaking. In it we see very clearly to what extent these incidents, revealing what is about to happen or is happening at the time, are allied to what we term clairvoyance, second sight, or even telepathy.

"Umaga and I were travelling from Iglulik to Tununeq when he dreamed one night that a friend of his had been eaten by his nearest kin. Umaga has the gift of second sight, and always knows when anything remarkable is going to happen. Next day we started off, and there was something remarkable about our journey from the start. Again and again the sledge stuck fast, but when we came to look, there was nothing to show what had stopped it. This went on all day, and in the evening we halted at Aunerit, in the interior (of Cockburn Land). Next morning a ptarmigan flew over our tent; I threw a walrus tusk at it, but missed. Then I threw an axe, and again missed. And it seemed as if this also was to show that other strange things were to happen that day. We started off, and the snow was so deep that we had to help pull the sledge ourselves. Then we heard a noise.

¹ W. E. Roth. *An inquiry into the animism and folklore of the Guiana Indians, Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, XXX, p. 121 (henceforth referred to as E. B.).

² p. 190.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 195.

³ p. 191.

⁵ pp. 272-73.

We could not make out what it was; sometimes it sounded like a dying animal in pain, and then again like human voices in the distance. As we came nearer, we could hear human words, but could not at first make out the meaning, for the voice seemed to come from a great way off. Words that did not sound like real words, and a voice that was powerless and cracked. We listened, and kept on listening, and at last we understood what it was that was being said. The voice broke down between the words, but what it was trying to say was this: 'I am not one who can live any longer among my fellows, for I have eaten my nearest of kin.'"¹ And at length the travellers discovered a woman, dying of hunger, who had eaten her husband and children, who had starved to death before her.

Thus the Iglulik Eskimo, like the natives of Torres Straits and of New Guinea, like the Bushmen and the Guiana Indians, all perceive in certain unusual occurrences warnings and harbingers or tokens of more serious events about to happen, or even then being brought to pass. With all of them we find an exact replica of facts already related. For instance, when the woman Orulo is giving an account of her own life, she relates the following episode. "A little while after, a strange thing happened. Mother had cooked some ribs of walrus, and was sitting eating, when the bone she held suddenly began to make a noise. She was so frightened, she stopped eating at once, and threw down the bone. I remember her face went quite white; and she burst out 'Something has happened to my son.' And so indeed it was."² (A little later, they heard that he was dead.)

In districts most widely separated from each other, primitives thus manifest a disposition to be confounded at incidents, not serious in themselves, but terrifying on account of their unusual nature—a sound occurring without any apparent cause, an inexplicable lack of dexterity on the part of one who never fails to hit his mark, a wound one suddenly gives oneself with a tool one is accustomed to use every day without such a thing happening before, and so on. These are infallible tokens of a catastrophe that has happened, or is about to happen to the person thus warned, although he may still be far away.

These facts, singularly analogous to many of those collected by the Society for Psychical Research, or those related in

¹ Kn. Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, pp. 29-30.

² *Ibid.* p. 50.

“Phantasms of the Living,” are not so mysterious to primitives as they are to us. No doubt the individual thus warned is frightened, and hastens to be convinced of the misfortune, but that is precisely because he does not doubt the fact. The intervention of an unseen force in the ordinary course of events is not incomprehensible to him, nor is it incompatible with his daily experience. To him, on the contrary, the supernatural is continually intermingled with what we call the ordinary course of nature. When a token of this kind appears to a primitive, he is overwhelmed and in despair, but mentally he is not disturbed and disconcerted as we might be by occurrences outside our everyday experience. He is not unaware that one and the same mystic force may exert its power in several places at the same time. The idea of “multipresence” does not upset his mental balance. A wizard, for instance, may send a crocodile to seize a child at the waterside, and perhaps he himself is the crocodile; and at the same time it is he who makes the victim’s mother, at work in her garden, suddenly hurt herself with her mattock.

From the primitive’s point of view, phenomena of this kind, therefore, do not require any special explanation. To him they are no more surprising than metamorphoses or miracles. He feels them to be participating in the workings of the unseen powers. At the same time, the special emotion which assails the primitive is an indication that these conceptions originate in the affective category of the supernatural.

CHAPTER II

“DISPOSITIONS”

AMONG the unseen forces constantly engaging the primitive's attention, he is not likely to lose sight of what I may call the “dispositions” of the beings and things that surround him. Whatever he may undertake or encounter, he rarely thinks of these forces as indifferent about him, and according to his belief that they are favourable or the reverse, his imagination is profoundly affected, and thus his emotions play an important part in his decisions and his actions.

He desires therefore, as a rule, to ascertain what these dispositions may be, and in this matter dreams, unusual occurrences, divination in its various forms all provide him with information which he takes care not to lose sight of. But he does not stop there. It is not enough for him to be informed; he must above all be protected and, in case of need, assisted. This, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, is the purpose of his amulets, talismans, charms, etc., and this accounts for his precautions in allying himself with what is lucky and avoiding all that is attacked by misfortune. Such general measures, however, do not suffice. In each particular case it behoves him to discover and, if need be, divine the dispositions of such and such a being or thing, so that he may regulate his conduct accordingly. He must find out what might possibly render them hostile, and discover means whereby he may try to alter this attitude of theirs, should it already exist. Thus there is a wide expanse of hopes and fears before him, and, in practical matters, of innumerable forms of propitiation, entreaty, prayer, magical coercion, etc., and the primitive can nowhere escape it.

We shall examine in turn the way in which primitives act with regard to the dispositions of members of their own group, then with regard to those of the living beings and things around them, and lastly, with those of the dead, their ancestors and spirits.

The story told by a native of the Fijian Islands will give us,

in an abbreviated form, a general glance. A new net for turtle-fishing is to be used for the first time, and before putting it into the water, this is what has to be done. "The head of the family will earnestly beseech them all to be friendly with each other, and not to have tribal quarrels, and he will ask them to agree to the day fixed upon for the immersion of the new net. Should, however, there be any quarrels, the fishing will not be successful, and it is on account of this that everybody must be present at the meeting. Upon approval of the day being given, the members of the tribe prepare a feast, and at its conclusion everybody (men and women alike) go and weed the graves of their ancestors or their relations, and, after thoroughly cleaning them, drape them with *tapa* and wreaths. The reason for this is that the spirits of the dead may be friendly, and thus insure the success of the new net. . . . The natives maintain that should they fail to weed the graves they will not be successful in their fishing. . . . When the weeding of graves is finished lots are cast . . . then all the members of the tribe proceed to the place where the feast has been prepared, to eat together. A move is then made, and they go fishing, and should one or more turtles be caught, they immediately return to land to cook and eat them."¹

I

That quarrels and contentions may cause enterprises to fail and, in a general way, act to the detriment of the social group, is a fairly widespread belief. It helps to maintain good order and apparent harmony between the members of the family and of the tribe, and herein we find one of the reasons why so many primitive communities know nothing of a state army, or police.² They have no need of these, for in nearly all cases, justice is a private matter. On the other hand, the individual who picks a quarrel with a neighbour knows that he is upsetting everybody and thus, *ipso facto*, is a sort of public danger, and that all will combine against him. Of course this social pressure does not suffice to transform human nature, and in these communities, as elsewhere, people dispute and insult each other and come to blows. Nevertheless it is a fact that with these peoples

¹ W. J. Deane. *Fijian Society*, pp. 187-89.

² On this subject, compare the remarks of M. E. F. Williams. *Orokaiva Society*, p. 315 (1930).

everybody avoids acquiring a reputation for being quarrelsome, for fear of being regarded as unsocial, dangerous to the community, and responsible for any failure or misfortune that the group may encounter.

The Arunta are determined to avenge several deaths due to the neighbouring tribe of Iliaura. The latter are not anxious to meet the attack, and they offer the Arunta satisfaction in the following terms: “There are three bad men in our camp, whom we Iliaura do not like; they must be killed. Two are Iturka (i.e. men who have married within the forbidden degrees of relationship), the other is very quarrelsome, and strong in magic. . . . Kill these men. . . .” And this was accordingly done.¹ The quarrelsome man is then almost as odious and dangerous to the group as the incestuous individual, and there is the same anxiety to be rid of him. Like the sorcerer, he brings misfortune in his train.

In Samoa, “the fact of the chief being angry, or one of the men’s wives being sulky or scolding in his absence was quite sufficient to account for the fishing party being unsuccessful.”² In the Dutch East Indies the same belief has often been confirmed. Apropos of the *sampilen* Hardeland says: “He for whom a rite is being celebrated and a sacrifice offered becomes weak and ailing if a quarrel should be started during the feast.”³ With the Dayaks of Landak and Tajan “in order to avoid evil influences which might harm the newborn child, the parents must abstain from quarrelling. They must,” says Schadee, “take special precautions so that the child may not fall into a state of *siel*, that is, be in danger of imminent misfortune.” An individual (and also those who live with him) may fall into such a state if he has been gravely injured legally, if he has been insulted, if his future has been read, and above all, if he has been cursed. To avoid this, the family of the newborn child must be careful not to give others occasion to injure or offend them, to do them legal wrong or curse them.

“For this reason, the priestess addresses herself seriously to those who have a newborn infant, and enjoins the parents to observe the following commandments:

“You two, man and wife, do not dispute with each other, or with others!

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *The native tribes of Central Australia*, p. 491.

² G. Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians*, p. 249.

³ A. Hardeland, *op. cit.* p. 500.

“Do not swear!

“Do not commit adultery!

“Do not carry off fruits on which there is the owner’s mark!

“Do not steal or beat or curse your neighbour’s beasts!

.

“Do not indulge in jealousy or envy!

“Do not plant your rice on land belonging to somebody else!”¹

Here we see one of the main reasons for the injunction to avoid disputes. They place the person whose action has led to them in imminent danger of misfortune. If he has offended someone, for instance, the latter takes his revenge by injuring him in some way or by cursing him, and thereby he puts him into a state of *siel*. Henceforward he is exposed to ill-luck, and all his family with him. Very young children are particularly susceptible to malign influences, which preferably attach themselves to infants. Should there be a newborn child in the house, and it be in a state of *siel*, the worst is to be feared. Its life is in great danger. On the other hand, the man who has brought another into this state is responsible for the calamities and misfortunes which overtake him, and will be obliged to indemnify him—and here is another reason for abstaining from quarrels.

In Lebak there are various ceremonies to celebrate the vintage of the palm wine. To insure the success of the operation quarrels must be avoided. “A man must not engage in dispute, and if anyone insults him, he must appear not to hear it. For if his state of mind be uneasy it will react on the palm wine; the juice will be spoiled, or stop flowing.”²

From the Celebes Kruyt has collected many facts of the same kind. “When natives are looking for clay to make their pots, there must be no dispute on the subject (as, for example, if someone does not want to search, and another tries to compel him), for the evil disposition brought about by the dispute has a paralyzing effect upon the magic force of the clay, and it becomes unable to acquire the consistency required for making a pot.”³—So too, “when the members of a family are not

¹ M. C. Schadee, *Bijdrage tot de kennis van de godsdienst der Dajaks van Landak en Tajan*. T. L. V. LIX, p. 620 (1906).

² C. M. Pleyte, *Toekang Salap. Eene bijdrage tot het leerstuk dat planten bezielde wezens zijn*. T. L. V. LIX, p. 610 (1906).

³ A. C. Kruyt, *Measa*. I. T. L. V. LXXIV, p. 244 (1918).

agreed as to whether the marriage of one of their young men shall take place or not, if they are arguing loudly and heatedly about it, and quarrel among themselves, the people of Posso say that the marriage, if carried through, will not be a happy one.”¹—Lastly, in a neighbouring district, “it is said that the birth of twins (considered very unlucky) is due to the fact that their parents had been quarrelling, and that they had resumed conjugal relations before they had previously neutralized, in the customary way, the mystic evil influence resulting from their quarrel.”²

In the Mentawai Islands quarrels inspire as much dread as do diseases. “Here is food for you, spirits of the ama, here are your eggs. Bless our children, take care of us. Drive out quarrels, drive out fever from our village.”³ Fishermen are subjected to numerous taboos. “They are not allowed to become angry. This would make the *djarik* (large net) angry, and it would say: ‘My body is tired, and I do not wish to make a catch.’”⁴ During the initiation ceremony “the neophytes were brought down to the river. When they arrived at the water, the priest took a large-sized rooster and a large-sized hen. He wet the feet of the chickens and laid them on the heads of the neophytes, saying: ‘I have made the feet of the chickens wet, so that you, the children, will never be irritable— . . . Boys, do not become angry with one another. If one of you is overbearing, let the others give in. It is only thus that we can preserve peace. If one does not give in, the other will draw a dagger from his waist or a sword from his bamboo carrier. Then there will be a murder, which will cause trouble for all of us.’”⁵

“Parents are forbidden to become hasty or angry in the house. If they do so, the spirits will likewise become angry and bring sickness to the children.”⁶

“The women relatives of the men who are away are forbidden to be angry, lest the men be bitten by a snake or pricked by the *lalatek* (a poisonous plant with thorns).”⁷

Among the Ao Nagas “a quarrel with an elder blood-relation (father, mother, uncle, aunt, elder brother or sister, etc.) is a

¹ *Ibid.* II. T. L. V. LXXV, p. 41 (1919).

² *Ibid.* III. T. L. V. LXXXVI, p. 19 (1920).

³ Ed. Loeb. *Mentawai Religious Cult.* Univ. of California, Publins. XXV, p. 193 (Cf. p. 196).

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 201.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 209, 216-17.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 236.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 241

serious thing, and is believed to entail illness, poor crops, and other evil fortune. Reconciliation is necessary. (A sacrifice is offered: the younger provides a pig.) Should the elder relation die before a reconciliation can be effected, he must be approached even in the next world. For this purpose a ceremony called . . . 'sending meat to the dead' is performed. A medicine man is engaged to meet the dead man in a dream, and, after offering him appropriate presents, to persuade him to make up the quarrel. In this world too, a small offering of food, thread, etc. is placed in front of his corpse platform."¹ Thus a quarrel has the same effect as witchcraft, and death itself does not put an end to its dire results, unless a formal reconciliation has taken place. Moreover, as in the case of the Malays of the Dutch East Indies, lack of consent on the part of parents is enough to make a marriage sterile. "A childless couple consult a medicine man, and either send an offering to their *titya* in the sky, or to the living parents of one of the couple, whose disapproval is causing the marriage to be unblessed and fruitless."²

In South Africa, similar beliefs are to be found. To the Bergdama the wellbeing of the tribe depends upon the favourable influence of the sacred fire, which may easily be offended. Now "the grumbings of a discontented man do it harm, and it takes its revenge. It is inevitable that in the distribution of pieces of meat one man may receive a rather larger portion than another, especially as squinting eyes rarely see quite correctly. These men no doubt take care not to grumble aloud, but even if anger and jealousy be not expressed, the fire perceives it, and then it readily happens that it withdraws from the entire group the favour which had procured the meat for them."³

"A man who had been lucky in the chase brings home a buck he has ensnared, and it is roasted or stewed for a meal. Bad luck, however, if one of the children, thinking his share too small, begins to grumble or cry! Henceforward the snare, so carefully baited, will entrap nothing, and it must be set up again somewhere else."⁴

"Is there a marriage in prospect? Somewhere or other there may be an old aunt or uncle who refuses consent, and this very often proves fatal to the permanence of the marriage. If any

¹ J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, pp. 175-76.

² *Ibid*, p. 263.

³ H. Vedder, *Die Bergdama*, I, p. 30.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 120.

trouble arises, the offended relative takes advantage of the disagreement to widen the breach between the married pair, offering shelter to the one related to him or her, and thus bringing about a final separation.”¹

The ba-Ila “give the name *insefu* to swellings such as wens on the head, and goitre. It is believed that meat of eland (*musefu*), if distributed by you to a person, and he is discontented with the size of his portion, but does not speak out, will cause this complaint, not in the grumbler, but in his child, or relation.”² In Equatorial Africa, among the Waniaturu, “when two people have quarrelled, no member of the family can repair to a member of the other family without falling ill and dying. If there is a disposition to reconciliation on both sides, the elders assemble to prepare a medicine or charm to bring it about. A sheep is sacrificed, and all the interested parties are sprinkled with the contents of its stomach, after which all must take a draught which induces vomiting. In this way anger is expelled and reconciliation effected. Even a stranger, if he be present, must drink with the others, although he may have nothing to do with the quarrel, for if he does not do so, he is sure to fall ill.”³

Lindblom relates the following incident. “As often happens, a man had lent a field, which he did not at the time need himself, to another man. When he wanted it back later, the wife of the other man refused to agree to his having it. In the meantime, however, the owner sent his wife to set the field in order, but the other woman went there also. In vain she was exhorted to give in. According to the women’s ideas, the controversy would bring bad luck to the crops on all the neighbouring fields, since it might cause the rains to fail. Therefore they decided to take the matter into their own hands, so as to get it settled as soon as possible.”⁴ Despite the obstinacy of both parties, they did succeed.

This last story helps to make the previous instances more precise; it confirms, and at the same time, explains them. To the Bantus, Bergdama, Nagas, etc., alike, an evil influence emanates from the discontent of one person, from his anger,

¹ *Ibid*, I, p. 180.

² Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, I, p. 241.

³ Eberhard von Sick. *Die Waniaturu*, *Büssler-Archiv*. V, Heft 1-2, p. 47 (1915).

⁴ G. Lindblom. “*The Akamba*,” pp. 180-1 (1920).

jealousy, and the quarrel that follows. This influence entails misfortune, either on such and such a person, or on the whole group. The result of it may be either an illness, or the rupture or sterility of a marriage, or a drought that proves fatal to a plantation, etc.,—in short, all the misfortunes on account of which the responsible party (the one who is embittered, or who has provoked the quarrel) lays himself open to a grave suspicion of witchcraft.

Possibly an outward display of anger is that which proves most disquieting to primitives, and this is not, as we might suppose, on account of the acts of violence to which such passion might lead, but from fear of the evil influence it might let loose upon the group or, to be exact, the harmful principle whose presence the angry man's rage reveals. In the Andaman Isles, "a man who is liable to outbursts of violent anger is feared by his fellows, and unless he has other counterbalancing qualities, he is never likely to become popular. He is treated with outward respect, for every one is afraid of offending him, but he never acquires the esteem of others. There is a special nickname *Tarenjek*, in the North Andaman, to denote such a man."¹ In East Africa, among the Kikuyu, "no elder must go to the sacred tree (for a sacrifice) in a state of anger; no one must display anger with a wife, child, or even a stranger the day before he attends at the tree."² "At the approach of a big storm the Zande will not fail to take a mouthful of water, and to spit it out again, saying: 'If I have done wrong in any matter whatsoever, if I have uttered angry words, it is all over and done with; I spit out this water as a sign of my good intentions.'³

In the Cameroons, with the Bakoko tribe, "sometimes a hot-tempered man would be so carried away by wrath as to strike an enemy openly with a weapon, wounding or even killing him. . . . This unusual occurrence at once made his kinsmen (particularly in the case of a free man), say that if their brother were unable to control himself, he was under the spell of a witch who had induced him to strike the blow, or again, he might, unknown to himself, be possessed of an evil spirit which would have to be exorcized.

"If he had committed murder, the free man was very fre-

¹ A. Ratcliffe-Brown. *The Andaman Islanders*, p. 49.

² C. W. Hobley, *Bantu beliefs and magic*, p. 41 (1922).

³ C. R. Lagae. *Les Azande ou Niam-Niam*, pp. 138-39.

quently pardoned; he managed to get out of the difficulty by imbibing a drug which had the power of destroying the maleficent principle within him. The murder, too, was used as a pretext for the discovery and condemnation of a so-called witch who must have influenced the murderer in spite of himself. Nevertheless, the guilty man's family offered a considerable compensation to the victim's family.”¹ Such a statement no doubt calls for closer investigation, but let us for the moment stop short at the points which interest us here. The murder committed in a fit of anger is due to witchcraft. Either the murderer himself has been bewitched (and this accounts for his anger), or else he has within him an evil principle—that is, he is a witch (and this is shown by his anger). Therefore the “drug” which he swallows seems to be an ordeal poison, and he is being subjected to the ordinary trial by ordeal.

On the Upper Welle in the Belgian Congo, “on the 26th of March,” writes Father Basiel Tanghe, “I was in the village of Ngamba when, early in the morning, a little child died. All the men in the village assembled under the presidency of the chief. Everything of course came to light! The wife had scolded her husband, who hotly resented it; the baby fell ill, and almost immediately it died. After the funeral, at the very moment when they began to fill up the grave, a halter was placed round the woman's neck, and, crying bitterly, she suffered herself to be led away to the headman's prison.” Thus from the mere fact of its father's having given way to wrath, the baby was bewitched. The evil influence emanating from the angry man had brought about the death of his child.²

In South America, Yves d'Evreux, one of the first white men to see the natives of Brazil, also tells us: “Every angry man became an object of dread to others, and all around hastened to pacify him. This process even had a name of its own: it was called *mogere coap*, to smooth down that which is irritated. Those who had quarrelled, when once their strife was at an end, would set fire to their huts; and nobody had the right to hinder them, even if the whole village were to be burnt down.”³

A contemporary observer has noted that the same fears are

¹ Yves Nicol, *La tribu des Bakoko*, pp. 180-1 (1930).

² Fr. Basiel Tanghe. *De Ngbandi naar het leven geschetst*, p. 53 (1930).

³ Yves d'Evreux. *Voyage dans le nord de Brésil*, p. 101, quoted by Métraux in *La religion des Tupinamba*, p. 177.

excited by anger in the Pueblos of North America, and he suggests a similar explanation to the one just given, which would account for the universal nature of this phenomenon. He says: "Bewitching is very commonly the result of a grievance, since a witch who feels injured will retaliate. Now, as you never know who is a witch, you are always careful not to give offence—unless you are yourself a witch. A reckless attitude towards others, 'not caring what you say,' seems to be one indication of witchhood. I cannot but connect the very striking social timidities of the Pueblos with their witchcraft theories. Father Dumarest has the same impression. 'Why are the Pueblo Indians so pacific?' he writes. 'Why do they not even try to defend themselves in quarrels? Because from their youth their elders have taught them that nobody can know the hearts of men. There are witches everywhere.'"¹

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Adair had noticed the same thing with the American Indians of the lower Mississippi. "As they know each other's temper, they are very cautious of irritating, as the consequences might one day prove fatal.—they never scold each other when sober—they conceal their enmity, be it ever so violent, and will converse together with smooth, kind language, and an obliging easy behaviour, while envy is preying on their heart."² Such hypocrisy is obligatory, for it would be too dangerous to allow their real feelings to be discovered.

II

Since it is highly important to do and say nothing that may arouse anger, primitives will take pains, too, to abstain from words or deeds which may merely vex others or put them into a bad humour, for how can one know beforehand the strength of the resentment aroused, and what the person in whom it is aroused may do? Hence there are many customs dictated by considerations of prudence, and these are very widespread. Thus, among the Dayaks, "it is *pantang* (forbidden) to refuse food or drink that is offered you. The person from whom you do not accept it is endangered by the refusal. This the Malays call *kempoenan*, and the Dayaks of Menjoek *soempunan*. By

¹ E. C. Parsons. *Witchcraft among the Pueblos: Indian or Spanish?* in *Man*, June, 1927, p. 107.

² J. Adair, *History of the American Indians*, p. 429. (1775).

merely tasting what is offered, or even simply touching it, the danger is obviated. For example, a careful observer, with the Malays and the Dayaks alike, may often see the guest, to whom betel-nut is offered, merely touch it with his hand while declining it.”¹ “In Central Celebes they give the name of *solora* to the evil influence which may manifest itself when a guest, invited to remain for a meal, declines to do so, or when one person denies what another affirms. . . . When something is offered you, even if you do not make use of it you must not fail to touch it, *boi kasolora*, so that no harm may come to the one who offers it.”²

Hardeland’s Dictionary gives: “*pahuni*, to make oneself responsible, if, entering as someone is about to take a meal, one does not taste of his dish, or at any rate touch it. (This is what should be done, for otherwise the *gana* or spirit of the food becomes angry, and misfortune follows.) For example: my leg is swollen, because I was guilty of wrongdoing to the rice they were eating. . . . I forgot to touch their cakes, and went back quickly (to do it), so that I might not offend and become liable to misfortune.”³

For the same reason primitives never openly contradict an interlocutor, and this, at least partially, accounts for the excessive politeness so often extolled by those who live among them. Most observers have noted, not without surprise, their readiness to assent to what is said to them. “It is to this fear of the evil influence (*kasolora*),” says Kruyt in the passage just quoted, “that we must attribute the peculiar form of the replies in which people begin by accepting what they are really refusing. By this assent, which they regard as indispensable, they say exactly the contrary of what is in their minds.”

Not to contradict is a rule very generally observed, as missionaries have frequently found. “It is an extremely rare thing for savages to contradict anyone who speaks to them, and when they are being instructed they assent to everything. This gives missionaries a good deal of trouble, for it is not always easy to discriminate those who do not sincerely wish to believe.”⁴ “One reason why the Indian lies is, again, because of his constitu-

¹ C. M. Schadec, *Bijdrage tot de kennis van de godsdienst der Dajaks van Landak en Tajan*, T. L. V. LV, pp. 324-25 (1903).

² A. C. Kruyt, *Measa II*, T. L. V. LXXV, p. 119 (1929).

³ A. Hardeland, *op. cit.* p. 397.

⁴ *The Jesuit Relations*. (Nouvelle France) LVIII, p. 80 (1672-73) ed. Thwaites.

tional desire to be agreeable. He hesitates to tell the truth, because he dislikes giving offence when he knows the truth would be unpleasant.”¹ Without laying further stress upon this well-known characteristic, let us conclude with this frank avowal taken from among the Basutos. “One day a headman in this neighbourhood said to me naïvely: ‘You may come and preach in my village as often as you like; we shall never make fun of your words in your presence, though we may very likely do so after you have gone.’ ‘And you are very wrong’; I told him, ‘I am tired of hearing your everlasting “You are quite right; what you are telling us is true, etc.,” now that I know quite well that it is merely a piece of politeness on your part.’”² I should be inclined to say that it is a precaution, for every contradiction is the beginning, sign, cause of a conflict, and hence of angry feelings which are a danger. “If a European argue with them they immediately think he is angry.”³ Now anger, for the reasons we have noted, is the parent of misfortunes.

If not accepting what is offered be dangerous, the refusal of what is asked is no less so. I have already instanced elsewhere⁴ this belief, as illustrated by Steller and the Jesuit missionaries of New France. But there I especially laid stress upon the necessity, as the primitives consider it, of carrying out what they have seen in dreams. By placing these facts side by side with those, we see their significance more clearly. What prevents the primitive from refusing something asked for is primarily the fear of setting an evil influence to work, that is, of attracting to themselves or to their social group some misfortune or other. By refusing, the one who has asked becomes incensed; ill-will is aroused, a hostile disposition, akin to envy, is excited, and this, once brought into being, has a force of its own and can engender evil. This must be avoided at all costs.

To a demand that may be inconsiderate, even importunate, there will therefore be no negative reply—unless it be to exact later full compensation or even, in the case of failure, harsh vengeance. Facts of this kind are abundant; I shall quote merely a few of them. At Buin in the Solomon Islands “when a headman has a fine drum and another headman, hearing of it, comes

¹ W. B. Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land*, pp. 206-7.

² *Missions évangéliques*. XLVII, pp. 9-10 (Germond).

³ Granville and F. Roth, *Notes on the Sekris, Sobos, and Ijos of the Warri District of the Niger Coast Protectorate*, J. A. I. XXVIII, p. 109 (1889).

⁴ *Primitive Mentality*, pp. 114-15.

to him and says: ‘You have a fine drum,’ the other is obliged to give him a *mamoko*,—literally, a ransom, a redemption (of his envy), for otherwise the visitor gets angry and destroys the drum.”¹ In such a case the primitive does not hesitate, and almost invariably the coveted object passes out of the owner’s hands.

In the Cameroons, with the Bakoko, “the gifts which are so common among primitives do not arise from any reminiscences of an age-long habit of holding property in common in earlier days. It seems to me that their motive is, firstly, the vanity of the donor who is flattered to have people under an obligation to him, but above all his fear of disobliging a relative of a neighbour who might be avenged by casting an evil spell upon him. In reality it is this obsession about witchcraft that is the determining factor in all these acts of generosity.” And again: “If he is in need of a kid, he goes to one of his neighbours who leases animals out, and asks if he may buy one of his, and the man asked nearly always consents, for must he not avoid displeasing a man who through rancour or jealousy might put a spell upon him?”² With the Xosa Kafirs, “often the mere expression of a wish, such as ‘I should like to have the horse you are riding,’ or ‘How useful that cow would be to my children,’ is enough to bring the thing desired into the wisher’s possession.”³ It will be a deprivation to its owner, who does not part from it without regret, and who would like to be indemnified, but if by keeping it he arouses an unfriendly disposition in the one who wants it, he fears that his regret may be even greater.

Jochelson has expressly stated: “The Koryak, in general, are afraid to disregard the wishes of any man, for refusal might arouse his anger or displeasure, and the ill-will of a man, whether shaman or not, may result in misfortune. The visitor, on his part, tries to be moderate in his demands, for if the host fulfils them reluctantly and conceives an ill-feeling against his visitor, the object received will not bring any luck.”⁴

After these instances taken from Africa and Asia, here are some similar ones from North America. “The Pomo” (a Californian tribe) “have an absurd habit of hospitality, which reminds one of the Bedouin Arab. Let a perfect stranger enter a

¹ R. Thurnwald, *Forschungen auf den Solomon Inseln und dem Bismarckarchipel*, III, p. 37.

² Yves Nicol, *op. cit.* pp. 144, 158.

³ A. Kropf, *Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern*, p. 94.

⁴ W. Jochelson, *The Koryak*, p. 764.

wigwam, and offer the lodge father a string of beads for any object that takes his fancy—merely pointing to it, but uttering no word—and the owner holds himself bound in savage honour to make the exchange, whether it is a fair one or not. The next day he may thrust the stranger through with his spear, or crush his forehead with a pebble from his sling, and the bystanders will look upon it as only the rectification of a bad bargain.”¹ Father Dumarest has clearly shown the real reason for this good-nature on the part of the Indians: it is the fear of witches. “At Zuni, if you ask for any article, it is straightaway given to you—you might be a witch, and were you refused, you might work injury. . . . The reason why we always ask visitors to eat, I have been told, is because a witch might enter and be angry if not asked.”² “So great was the sway of this custom among the Pomo that it has been known for a stranger to demand a man’s daughter or some other woman in the household, setting his own price in beads. One story relates how a stranger asked for a man’s wife. The husband had to accept the proffered beads, but the wife had a mind of her own, and she refused to go with the stranger. So the husband handed back the beads. No ill effects followed the incident, so far as is known.”

“My Coast informant stated that the entire matter regarding the treatment of strangers was motivated by a fear of poisoning (i.e. bewitching).”³

It may be as well here to distinguish the fact itself, a very general and apparently well-established one, from the interpretation put upon it, though often inadvertently, by more than one observer. The primitive hardly ever refuses what is asked of him—this is a fact. When the author adds: “because he fears that the man he refuses may be a witch and may avenge himself by poisoning him,” he is giving a psychological and no doubt probable explanation, but it is one that is possibly not altogether correct. It is true that certain shades of feeling do not escape the notice of primitives any more than they would our own. These people are often expert physiognomists, who can read the most secret intentions in the faces of others, but in this case, as in so many others, their attention does not stop short at the fact they perceive. It is at once projected beyond the

¹ Powers. *Tribes of California*, p. 153 (1877).

² Father Dumarest, *Notes on Cochiti*, p. 162.

³ Ed. Loeb. *Pomo Folkways*. *University of California. Pubns. in Amer. Archy. and Ethny.* XIX, pp. 195-96.

actual experience. They know, as we do, that a refusal may result in irritation, ill-will, hostile feelings, and they are not unaware of either the symptoms or the effects of such a state of mind. But it is not on account of this that their inveterate habit of never replying to any demand by a formal refusal has arisen. What they dread above all is not the vengeance of the man who has met with a refusal—or at any rate, this is not the chief reason for their fear. It is directed elsewhere. They believe and feel that an angry disposition, from the mere fact of its existence, exercises some harmful influence, and this will bring misfortune upon the individual who has sustained a refusal. For this misfortune and all its consequences the author of the refusal is responsible. Thus he not only exposes himself to the ill-will or the vengeance of the other—that is a risk he may be able to estimate, and even defy, especially if he be the stronger of the two—but there is something else, quite apart from that. By refusing, by preventing the desire expressed from being satisfied, by arousing ill-will, he lets loose a maleficent force whose effects will be attributed to him, and none knows how far they may extend.

Generally speaking, an unsatisfied desire, whatever it may be, creates a danger. In Borneo and in the Malay Peninsula Evans has collected some characteristic instances of this. “A peculiar belief, which is found both among some of the pagans and among the Malays of the Peninsula, is also held by the Dusuns (in North Borneo), i.e. that it is particularly unlucky for anybody to go out into the jungle, or start on a journey, with an unsatisfied craving of any kind. For instance, should a man hurt his foot, fall ill, be stung by a scorpion, be bitten by a snake or meet with any other misfortune, and then remembers that he had intended to chew betel, smoke a cigarette, or eat rice before leaving the house, but had omitted to do so, he would immediately put down his ill-luck to his not having satisfied his want. I have seen a mouse which had been killed divided up between a dozen or more Dusun coolies of mine, so that everyone might eat a little of it, and thus not be exposed to danger on the journey they were undertaking, which would have been the case with anyone who wished to taste the animal, but did not receive a portion of it.”¹ “At Jeram Kawan, on the Sungkai River, I came across a case in which a man was thought to

¹J. Evans. *Studies in religion, folk-lore and custom in British North Borneo and the Malay Peninsula*, p. 39 (1923).

have met with an accident because of his neglect to chew sirih—which he had wished to do—before going out. Being in a hurry, however, he had omitted to satisfy his want. The man in question, Yok Dalam, fell from a tree owing to a branch breaking, and was considerably bruised and shaken, but, I believe, eventually recovered.”¹

These last facts, if compared with the preceding ones, throw some light both on the nature of dispositions and the effects they produce. Anger, irritation, rancour, ill-will, unsatisfied desire—all these are forces which, to some extent are autonomous. Solely from the fact that they come into being and manifest themselves, one or more persons will find themselves in imminent danger of misfortune, independently of the psychological developments which may ensue among the interested parties. The man offended by a refusal may try to take his revenge. But he who had intended to smoke a cigarette before setting out cannot reproach anyone for not having satisfied his craving. He does not even reproach himself. He does not think about it until an accident has befallen him. It is this accident that primitives dread, in the case of the angry and of the forgetful man alike.

To bring this matter to a conclusion, in our minds a disposition is a complex state of consciousness which interests us practically on account of the decisions and the deeds it helps to determine. To primitives the dispositions of human beings are indeed states of consciousness that each one knows and defines according to his own personal experience—irritation, anger, jealousy, desire, and so on. But what primitives perceive in them also, and what their attention fastens upon, is the evil influence which such dispositions exercise, from the mere fact of their existence. They do not therefore, as we do, place them mainly upon the psychological plane, but range them among those unseen forces and influences which, while belonging to the supernatural world, continually intervene in the course of our mundane affairs.

III

From this “mystic” conception of dispositions it follows that they produce their effects without any consideration for the causal connections on which we are accustomed to make

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 237-38.

them depend. Therefore the primitives are led to make assertions which, to them, are self-evident, but which prove highly disconcerting to us. To make this contrast clearer, I cannot do better than recount an investigation recently reported from Tahiti. It is somewhat detailed, but it cannot be abridged without losing a good deal of its value as proof.

A white man is spending the night in the cave of an old native who lives the life of a hermit in the mountains. He is cold, and his host gives him, as a covering, a coat which another native had presented to him, after having worn it for many years. A little while afterwards he mentioned his name. “I jumped to my feet and cast the coat away from me, and fairly yelled at the old man: ‘Don’t you know that young Nandau is a leper, and of the worst kind; he is literally falling to pieces; how dare you wear this coat on your bare body, and besides give it to me to touch?’ I reached for the rum bottle and, to the great despair of Afaiau, I poured part of its contents over my hands and feet, for disinfection as I thought.

“The old man gave me a look of condescending pity and said: ‘What are you so excited and worried about? My only intention was to convey comfort to you when I gave you that tunic, and not to convey the disease of its former owner.’ . . . Afaiau then explains that he maintains the most friendly relations with this leper, who is living alone. He does his errands and goes to see him ‘and when he was still able to use his feet, which do no longer exist, he used to steal up here occasionally and spend a few days with me, after which he would return to his hut feeling that my cave was the one spot under the skies where he was made welcome, and that I did not loathe his company. The other day, when he gave me the tunic, he told me to boil it so as to kill all germs of leprosy before I should wear it. But as I have not the slightest fear of being a leper, and knowing that the young man has but good and kind feelings towards me, I simply accepted the tunic as it was; besides, in what should I have boiled it, I have no receptacle big enough.

“‘You white people think that leprosy is caught easily, and make yourselves miserable trying to escape it. If you are to get it, you will get it, and nothing will prevent it; if on the other hand a leper of his own good and free will gives you some of his personal belongings, you can use them and never catch the disease.

“‘I have often worn clothes,’ he continued, ‘that the poor lad

left up here for me, and nothing has happened to me. Ah! had I been cruel or even unkind to him, or had I stolen something from him, he certainly could and probably would will me to become a leper. In short, he gave me this tunic, but kept back his disease. You probably find this hard to believe, but I can assure you that the sole way such ailments are propagated is through the will of the sick one, who has a grudge against those that have harmed him.'

"The old man went on: 'All your disinfection precautions are to me mere signs of your lack of comprehension of the principles of contagion. For instance, see Faatiraha who was a leper: he had a wife who bore him beautiful children, boys and girls, all in good health; he remained twenty-five years with his wife, and when he died none of his household were sick nor have they since shown any signs of being contaminated. That is because Faatiraha was loved and cared for by his wife and family, so that he had no occasion of feeling any resentment towards any of them. Whereas, look at Tafai's family, they are all lepers; for when Tafai first showed signs of being infected, they all forsook him, so afraid were they to become lepers themselves, and the poor man had to attend to himself as best he could until he died. He naturally resented all that, and although his people were very seldom within his reach, he managed to convey his disease to them. Young Nandau has been in this very cave scores of times, and has lain down at the very spot you now occupy, and I have not caught his disease, nor will you.' " ¹

We cannot unfortunately be sure of the correctness of the expressions put into the mouth of the Tahitian hermit, but the meaning of his thought does not admit of doubt. We see very clearly how he pictures the dispositions of people, the effects these may produce, and the conception he has formed of the disease in question. He does not dwell upon the physiological conditions of leprosy—possibly he has no suspicion of them. Although he may have heard people speak of the physical conditions of contagion, he attaches no importance to these either. The white men say that one can escape the disease if one avoids contact with lepers, and that one may be infected by things that they have worn. He does not believe it, and his experience proves the contrary. He has exposed himself to this contact a

¹ Monsord Reklaw. *Afaiu the Hermit. Bulletin de la Société des Etudes océaniques*, No. 9, pp. 34-36 (1924).

great many times, but he has remained immune. Others, who had shunned the leper, have caught the disease. Then its cause must be sought elsewhere. According to him, it is to be found in the leper's disposition. If it is kindly-intentioned towards someone, any number of contacts will not prove contaminating, but if his mood is hostile he can communicate his disease, even from a distance.¹

The "will" to which the hermit refers is not the will that makes well thought-out resolves, and acts only after having reflected. It is the direct and immediate effect of the dispositions, produced without reflection having any part in it, and often without having previously become conscious. The leper is sensitive to the compassion he arouses, he is grateful for the care his friend bestows upon him, and the consideration he manifests towards him; and he is indebted to him for not shunning his presence but coming to visit him, and making him welcome to his own cave. Thanks to the benevolent disposition of the leper, his friend can wear the garments he presents to him without danger. He runs no risk of being infected. On the contrary, in the case of Tafai, whose family had abandoned him and let him die untended, the unfeeling attitude and the selfish fears of his relatives cannot fail to excite in the sick man annoyance, irritation, resentment,—in short, ill-will. Does he go so far as to say: "To be avenged on them for their behaviour to me, I shall give my wife and children leprosy?" We know nothing about that, and it would be useless to try to find such a meaning in the

¹H. Diéterlen, a missionary who has spent forty years among the Basutos, notes a similar belief among them. "We may say . . . that the Basutos believe that a man may convey to certain things or substances, in or by themselves quite harmless, a beneficent or maleficent power, according to the intentions of him who gives them to others. In a case of malevolence, it is not a question of poisons whose effects would be natural and of material origin, but of preparations into the noxious influence of which ill-will, hatred, vengeance are in some way introduced, and acting thus through the intermediary of a vehicle in itself inert. One may even, by this means, send disease, lightning, hail, to an enemy, by using the air to bring them to their destination. This materialization of malice is witchcraft." H. Diéterlen. *La médecine et les médecins au Lessouto*, Paris, 1930, p. 27.

These "intentions," which can act physically by taking things as their vehicles of transmission, seem closely to resemble the "dispositions" of which the old hermit of Tahiti speaks. He, too, would no doubt have found the "materialization of malice" quite a natural thing. This remarkable expression very vividly recalls Elsdon Best's profound thought, which I have quoted more than once before: There are "native terms denoting both material representations of immaterial qualities and immaterial representations of material objects." *The "Soul" of the Primitive*, p. 114.

story as it is given us, and indeed it is not necessary. If Tafai does not explicitly "will" the infection of his relatives, it is enough that his disposition with regard to them should be malevolent. Then, with the very slightest contact, or even none at all, he communicates his disease to them. And according to the hermit, this is what happened.

Dispositions, then, have effects which we might be tempted to call magical, since they are produced independently of the objective conditions of phenomena. In the above example, these conditions remaining the same, contagion would or would not have been effected according to the disposition of the leper being this or that. It is then true that they pertain to the world of supernatural powers which the primitive mind feels to be constantly intervening in its experiences, and we can therefore comprehend why it is that primitives should attach so much importance to dispositions and often dread them as much as they do witchcraft. The man who harbours ill-will is a "Jonah," just like the one in whom some noxious influence dwells. The lepers of whom the hermit is speaking are not witches, but if their feelings with regard to certain persons become inimical, things occur just as if they were. They make them ill, which is equivalent to bewitching them. The objects of their resentment are attacked, but those whom they love have nothing to fear.¹

This kind of selective action of the dispositions, which in certain cases choose their victim, as it were, recalls that of the medicines and poisons which, in obedience to the sorcerer's orders, do no harm to any but the person pointed out by him. For example, "in Patiko I was assured that not infrequently people die from contact with the *logaga*; this is a poison trap set at the entrance to a village, and supposed to be such that only the person whose life or health is aimed at is in any danger of its virulence. . . . In the case of a big chief named Awin, who died mysteriously near to us in Patiko, the fatal dose was supposed to have been conveyed by a live fowl, of which others partook as well as the chief himself. There seemed to be no doubt that the fowl was sent as a present by one who was an enemy of

¹ In South Africa we find testimony to a belief similar to that of the Tahitian hermit. "Two horses, left by the Doctor (Livingstone) in 1853, had lived, in spite of hard usage and perpetual hunting; this was, in the native opinion, because he loved the Makololo; while others, from whom they purchased horses, hated them and bewitched their horses."

D. and Ch. Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its tributaries*, p. 277 (1865).

Awin, but we never confirmed the mystery as to how poison could be conveyed in such a manner."¹ To the primitive mind there would be no mystery in it. The chief's enemy had no reason to kill the other guests. He "willed" that the poison with which the fowl had been treated should act upon Awin, and on him alone. The poison obeyed his orders; and to a primitive there is nothing simpler than this selection, which to us is inexplicable.

So too, on the south-west of Lake Nyassa, "a medicine may be placed at the victim's doorway, or it may be buried under a path along which he must pass; here it will have a selective action for the intended victim only, who dies soon after he has passed over it."² Monseigneur Lagae describes the same custom in greater detail. "The sorcerer . . . spreads the drug, reduced to powder, on the threshold of the door, for example. He addresses the drug, saying that if such and such a man steps on it the drug must attack him on the way. The victim, not suspecting danger, leaves his hut in the morning, steps on the drug, and at once feels himself seized with illness. If someone does not come quickly to his aid with a counter-irritant, the victim soon dies, say the Azande. It is a curious thing that another person, at whom the murderer has not aimed, can step over the drug without danger. Only he whose name has been uttered in addressing the drug can be attacked. It happens too that sometimes the drug is scattered upon a public road in the hope that the destined victim will pass along it shortly. The other passers-by remain unharmed."³

"Sometimes the drug is administered by mixing it secretly with food. As all declare, the really important thing is contact in some way or other, but not necessarily absorption. In all the theories, the persons not aimed at when the drug is apostrophized, have nothing to fear. The drug does not work through its physical properties; its action is purely magical, and only reaches the person against whom its power is directed."⁴ A little later, the author adds: "That which distinguishes these drugs is that they kill the destined victim without doing any harm to persons not pointed out. He who makes use of these drugs speaks to them, explaining what he expects from them,

¹ A. L. Kitching. *On the backwaters of the Nile*, pp. 242-3.

² H. S. Stannus. *Notes on some tribes of British East Africa*. J. A. I. XL, p. 302 (1910).

³ C. R. Lagae, O. P. *Les Azande ou Niam-Niam*, p. 114.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 115.

and he is convinced that the drug will make no mistake. There is then a certain community of thought between the man and the drug; they understand each other and act in concert.”¹

I do not know whether this interpretation, excellent as its basis is, does not go a little too much into detail, or whether we may say that the man and the drug have a “community of thought.” Mgr. Lagae was perhaps nearer the truth when he wrote, in more general terms, that it was a case of “purely magical” action. The primitive mind does not clearly picture such action: it does not feel any need to do so. To the primitive, actions of this kind are not anything extraordinary; they are to be seen any day. When the “doctor” makes a man suspected of witchcraft take the ordeal poison, he exhorts the draught to run through his body from head to foot and to the extremities of his limbs, so that it may find the hurtful principle, to master it, and to kill the man if he be a witch. So too, when a magician charges a crocodile to seize the victim he has “doomed,” he points him out, and then the beast makes no mistake; it will only attack the person designated. Others have nothing to fear from it. In short, the choice is not the business of the drug or of the crocodile, which only enact the part of obedient instruments. It is exercised by the one who employs them. The actual causal connection is established between the “will” of the medicine-man or witch-doctor, and the result is produced. In this sense it does not differ from the connection we found existing between the leper’s disposition and the communication of his disease.

IV

Since dispositions are thus a kind of autonomous powers which may be considered apart from the persons or things in which they are to be found, primitives have been induced to try to act directly upon them by means of charms. An example at once presents itself to the mind, and it is a universal one. There is scarcely any community, more or less primitive, in which use is not made of charms and love-philtres. These charms exercise, from far and near, a magic influence on the person by whom a man desires to be beloved—most frequently through the intermediary of one of his appurtenances. They transform an individual’s disposition, and make liking and fa-

¹ *Ibid.* p. 142.

vous succeed to indifference and aversion. The person upon whom a love-charm has operated is no longer capable of resistance. Is it not almost superfluous to recount instances? Here, however, is one, in which we find the selective action we have just been studying. Among the Arunta, says Sir Baldwin Spencer, “a woman is ‘charmed’ by a man going out secretly into the bush, and swinging one of the smaller bull-roarers called *namatwinna*. . . . The sound is carried magically to her ears, and hers only; she becomes what is called *okunjepunna*, i. e. much infatuated, and sooner or later joins the man.”¹

In New Zealand, a jealous woman desires to leave off loving her husband or her paramour. “She goes to the adept in order that her affection for her husband or her lover be ‘separated’ from her. The adept takes her to the water side, and there sprinkles her with water, and takes from her the *ahua*, semblance or personality of her affections. He does so by just touching her body with his fingers as though picking or plucking something off it. This ‘semblance’ he washes off, as it were, and so the real affection is *miria*, effaced, or separated from her.”² In the Trobriand Islands, when a canoe on a trading expedition, is nearing the trading place, “all skilled in the art of charming evil thoughts out of men’s minds and filling them with a spirit of kindness, are allotted places over the canoe—at the bow, at the stern, and at the sides, and keep on charming until they land.”³

Among the Bantus of South Africa we find, too, in many varied forms, a belief in the possibility of acting physically upon dispositions. For example, the Xosa Kafirs “have doctors who know how to ‘close,’ ‘stop up,’ and ‘shut’ the heart of a man accused of witchcraft on several occasions, so that he no longer *thinks* of such things. They give him a ‘charm,’ and they wash him.”⁴ If this man has been suspected of witchcraft, it is, they believe, because with regard to certain persons he has had a disposition that brings misfortune. (This is what “dispositions” mean: the things about which he thinks.) The charm and the ablutions will change this disposition. He will no longer be a danger to anybody, and if some misfortune should occur, he will not be suspected. The Zulus have a word to de-

¹ B. Spencer, *Wanderings in wild Australia*, p. 303.

² Elsdon Best. *The Maori*, I. p. 475.

³ *Annual Report, Papua*. 1905, p. 72.

⁴ A. Kropf. *Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern*, p. 193.

note "any medicine or charm supposed to possess the power of taking the sharpness off anything, putting a damper on it, rendering it dull and ineffective, as on the evil practices of an *um-takati*, the skilful assegai-throwing of an enemy, or the generous feelings of a benefactor. The common Kafir-needle is an example of this. A man going to war would carry one of those to render himself invulnerable to the enemy. But one going to beg food of a friend in time of famine would take care to leave it at home, lest it affect the good-will of his friend."¹

To the minds of the Zulus a charm acts upon the moods of a benefactor in the same way that others may paralyze a witch's manœuvres. In both cases the action is magical, and pictured physically in a more or less distinct fashion. Here is a characteristic example, borrowed from the same excellent Dictionary. "A boy who has had the misfortune to allow the cattle to trespass into a neighbour's fields, nibbles a certain herb as he goes home, in order to induce forgetfulness in his father's mind—which this plant is supposed to do; and so he escapes punishment."²

Is it a question of the influence of missionaries upon their catechumens? Bantus, without exception, never seem to picture this to themselves except in a physical guise. If the missionary has effected a conversion, he must have made use of a charm which has altered a man's disposition. To annul his work and "deconvert" the new Christian, if one dare use such an expression, his friends will accordingly employ means similar to his own. Speckmann relates numerous instances which show this. "In September 1873 a boy presented himself for baptism. Five times his brothers and sisters came forward to carry him off, but he always resisted them. The sixth attempt, aided by cunning and violence, was successful. When they brought him to the kraal, he was forced to take a powerful emetic so that he might eject his faith."³ After a conversion the other natives are afraid, and stop coming to church. "All were seized with fear, lest they too might be made believers" (by some magic process).⁴ . . . To do half a day's work in the garden is all very well, but not to serve in the house, even for a couple of days only. They are afraid that Weber (the missionary) will be-

¹ A. T. Bryant, *op. cit.* p. 202.

² *Ibid.* p. 6.

³ F. Speckmann, *Die Hermannsburg Mission in Afrika*, pp. 491-92. Cf. p. 501 (1876).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

witch them with the charms he uses at prayers, or at his books or at table.”¹ . . . He (the devil) spread a report among the people that the missionary had charms to make them Christians, and that he carried these in his mouth. The man who came near him was sprinkled with these charms, and then it was all up with him; he could not help becoming a believer. The consequence was that from that time forward the children stopped coming to the services and, as a general rule, avoided approaching Meyer. Only grown-up men, who felt themselves strong enough to resist, still came to the church.”² Another time, “the family of the neophyte had recourse to endless expedients in order to dissuade him from being baptized. Among others, the parents of the first catechumens tried to persuade them that they were obliged to drink Mrs. Engelbrecht’s milk (although she had none) or else she put it in their food when they were not looking; and that was the reason why they stayed in the Engelbrechts’ house, and went so far as to desire baptism.”³

Dr. Wangemann has related similar incidents. For instance, “in 1876, a young Zulu was preparing to embrace Christianity. His nearest relatives, appalled at the idea of losing him, got hold of him by cunning, and tried to make him abjure his faith. . . . They had bound and concealed him; they had made him swallow ‘medicine’ to exorcise the abominable faith. All his clothes had been disinfected, so that every bit of the poison of this faith might be eliminated.”⁴—We read in Kropf’s Kafir-English dictionary: “*l-gqobóka*, pierced, i.e. a converted person. This is a nickname given to converts by heathens, who have the idea that the word or preaching pierced a hole through the heart, ascribing the change to natural causes.”⁵ With the Bechuanas, “a few days ago, a civilised and intelligent heathen, trying to account for Morumo’s conversion, said: ‘The other night they gave him the medicine. The missionaries have a medicine which changes the hearts, so that the boys no longer love their fathers or mothers or relatives, or care about dancing and the old customs.’ ”⁶

A South African ruler, Sepopo, is anxious to bring back to his capital some of his people, who fled to escape from his cru-

¹ *Ibid.* p. 490.

² p. 520.

³ p. 540.

⁴ Dr. Wangemann, *Die Berliner Mission im Zululande*, p. 197.

⁵ A. Kropf. *A Kafir-English Dictionary*, p. 125.

⁶ *Bulletin de la mission romande*, II, 29, p. 237 (1874).

elty. The charm he employs for the purpose consists of taking the fat round the heart of some domestic animals, fixing it on laths arranged in the form of a cross, and planting these in front of the fugitives' huts during the night. "The charm will so act upon their states of mind that they will lose their senses, and return blindly, like drunken men, to their homes."¹ Among the ba-Ila, "if you have 'that which blackens the heart,' anyone wishing to do you harm will become black-hearted, i.e. will relinquish his intention. Another charm causes an enemy, as soon as he arrives in your presence, to feel sorry for you and change his mind. If you have another charm, your enemy on the point of doing you harm will remember that he too is a sinner, and will spare you. And on the other hand, as you are likely to want to harm others, you fortify yourself against relenting by getting a charm which will enable you to keep resentment against a person, when you might be inclined to look upon him with favour."²—In the Cameroons the Basa are acquainted with a medicine "which is able to make creditors patient."³ "This is the reason why a veritable creditor will never accept anything to eat, so that his mind may not be changed."⁴

"They [the Basutos] believe that one may communicate to another certain qualities, or do him good, in case of sickness, for instance, by introducing into certain substances benevolence, generosity, or the remedy one desires for them. When my wife took our first child to an old Christian named Mophomotri ('she who gives repose') this 'grandmother' took the small boy on her lap and rubbed his head against hers, hoary with old age, so that she might endow him with the privilege of living as long as she did; this being a transmission of vitality by means of the hair, which with her was the visible material sign of it. When I gave a sick man a packet of iodide of potassium, telling him to mix it with a bottle of water when he got home, he said to me: 'We need your hand,' meaning that he desired me to make the mixture myself, since my hand would add to the remedy the magic power of my good-will towards him."⁵

To these few instances taken from Bantu records it would

¹ E. Holub. *Sieben Jahre in S. Afrika*, II, p. 404.

² Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, I, p. 259.

³ G. Schürle. *Die Sprache der Basa in Kamerun*, p. 106.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 193.

⁵ H. Diéterlen. *op. cit.* pp. 27-8 (1930).

be easy to add many others proceeding from the most diverse regions. Here is just one from the Araucans. "A cacique of Collimallin, somewhat to the north of Temmuco, seized a young boy by the skin near his heart, drew him towards him, and made a slight incision with a lancet. The blood flowed into a wooden dish, and a woman ran to take it outside and throw it in the river. The author inquired of a medicine-man what this proceeding signified. The latter replied that as the boy was dishonest and obstinate, they had taken the evil out of his heart and given it to the river to carry away."¹

From all these incidents we gather that, according to primitives, it is possible to excite, suppress, modify, and transform a man's disposition, acting upon his moods in a direct, physical manner, without having to penetrate his consciousness, upon which these do not seem necessarily to depend.

¹ T. Guevara, *La mentalidad araucana*, p. 163.

CHAPTER III

“DISPOSITIONS” (contd.)

I

PRIMITIVES, as we know, do not classify the entities in nature in orders clearly marked out from each other, nor do they attach the same importance to the distinction between living beings and others, as we do. Without having thought about the matter, they believe that there is homogeneity of essence in all the persons and things, even inanimate, that surround them.

This does not mean that the fundamental differences which form the framework for our classifications have escaped their notice, for as a rule, they are not unaware of them. Frequently they even discriminate very clearly between the numerous varieties of plants which it behooves them to recognize. But this knowledge is only important to them when the need for it arises, and they can profit by it. Their attention is oriented in another direction. It is claimed and retained by the invisible powers and supernatural influences which they believe they perceive and feel at all times in nature, and upon which their happiness or misfortune, their success or failure in any enterprise, depends.

In conformity with this ever-present attitude of theirs, although they observe (with amazing sagacity at times) the habits, for instance, of the animals which provide them with food, and note what is necessary to the tracking and capturing of them, their main preoccupation is the dispositions of these animals, and the methods by which they may be made favourable to the hunter. It is the same with regard to all the vegetable species and, in a general way, to all beings and objects in nature whose dispositions may influence their lot.

There is a great temptation to express these tendencies and customs of the primitive in animistic terms. Its language is so convenient for the purpose, and primitives themselves so readily adopt it as soon as they have come into contact with religions

in which spirits, demons, divinities, more or less clearly individualized, form the subject of worship. In these they find their framework ready made, and in this scheme their conceptions, which as a rule are so fluid and indeterminate, can easily find a place. But in stealing thus into a clearly defined form which was fresh to them, they run the risk of being distorted. In most of the testimony at our command, this distortion makes itself apparent. An explorer in Borneo, for example, recently wrote: “The natives of Borneo have, in the main, the same fundamental conceptions, despite all the differences of tribe and race that separate them. According to them, all nature, mankind, animals, plants, the dried leaves on the ground, air, fire, water, all is animate, all can experience pleasure and pain. The Borneo native carefully avoids irritating the souls of things, and this he does from a feeling of delicacy. If hunger forces him to lay his hand upon the beings that surround him, he tries to appease their anger by sacrifices. . . . Since thunder, lightning, rain, tempest, are mysteries to him, he interprets them as manifestations of spirits (*Antoh*) which are more powerful than men, yet think and feel in the same way as he does. From the cradle to the tomb the fear of the demons of this mysterious spirit-world never leaves him. What he does, or does not do, is one continual effort to steer successfully between Scylla and Charybdis on this uncertain sea.”¹

In this passage, the counterpart of which may be found in the remarks of other writers about the so-called primitive communities, we can without much difficulty separate the fact, which is correct, from the animistic framework in which the author inserts it. In all the tribes he has visited he finds there is anxiety to curry favour with the beings and the objects—even those which we call inanimate—they have to do with. Everywhere there is a need to find them “well-disposed,” for otherwise primitives would believe themselves in imminent danger of disaster. He rightly says that these fundamental conceptions are common to the tribes on the lowest rung of the ladder, and to those who have been more or less deeply imbued with the influence of the Malays or of the Chinese. But when he imputes to them all a conception of “demons and spirits who think and feel like human beings” this animistic interpretation of their ideas, in some cases justified by the language of the natives

¹ E. Mjöberg. *Durch die Insel der Kopffäger*. pp. 221-22 (1929).

themselves (provided that they are not expressing themselves in terms that have been borrowed), is not applicable to others, in which the dispositions of beings and things does not appear to them in this exclusively psychical aspect.

It may perhaps seem presumptuous to dispute an interpretation which apparently is the direct result of the nature of the phenomena. Who can entertain a favourable or a hostile disposition with regard to men, if it be not a "spirit," or something of the same nature? And how is it possible for primitives to have any mental image that is not more or less anthropomorphic? This is true, if we judge of their habits of thought by our own. But if we bear in mind that in this respect they differ from ourselves, and that they know nothing of our conceptions of matter, spirit, consciousness, we shall hesitate to attribute these animistic ideas to them offhand.

An observer as meticulous as he is clear-sighted, Edwin W. Smith, has not been mistaken here. He declares explicitly that the *ba-Ila*, even though they believe in the influences emanating from persons and things around them, have nevertheless no idea at all that these are due to spirits or beings that are immanent in these persons and things. On the subject of charms, for instance, he writes: "These things are not supposed to be possessed of a 'soul' (save in exceptional cases). When the lover, trader, warrior, diviner, addresses the *musamo* (charm), he is not as a rule conscious of any ghost or spirit in it . . . he speaks to the medicine itself."¹

As a matter of fact, primitives do not feel themselves bound to believe either that the dispositions of persons and things have something psychic about them or the contrary, and a dilemma which would prove embarrassing to us, does not even present itself to them. Since they have never considered the nature of the "psychic" or "non-psychic," they have not to decide on one or other of them. Even when dealing with the dispositions of human beings, they imagine them, as we saw in the last chapter, like unseen forces similar to those which are continually manifesting themselves around and about them. They do not explicitly detach them from the personality, but neither do they make them strictly dependent upon it. In short, to their minds the dispositions of conscious subjects do not differ from those of beings and things to which we should not dream of attributing consciousness. Both alike are imagined as vague and

¹ Smith and Dale. *op. cit.* II, pp. 84-5.

indefinite, and this suffices. Since the mental images they evoke bring the affective category into play, their emotional elements predominate. Primitives scarcely trouble about the precise nature of these dispositions. They are wholly concerned with hopes or fears of what they may have in reserve for them.

Our conceptual thought, which arranges entities and objects in genera and classes, and makes consciousness a characteristic feature of some of these classes, finds extreme difficulty in placing itself at the primitive's point of view here. If by patient effort it does succeed in occupying the position for an instant, it is unable to sustain it, and glides insensibly away from its embarrassments. Little by little our minds regain their usual attitude and then they begin once more to pervert these conceptions of the primitives by imposing on them our own scheme of thought, and seeking from them answers to questions couched in terms which are meaningless to them.

II

Among the dispositions of major importance to primitives, we come first to those of the animals and edible plants to which they are indebted for not dying of hunger. We know—Brother Gutmann in his books about the Dschagga has made this point clear—that they regard them, not as inferior beings destined to serve as food, but as equals, if not superiors. These animals and plants are, or may become, protectors and benefactors to the group as a whole, or to certain of its members. Totemism, however we may interpret it, implies respect for the animal or plant from which the clan is named. But even independently of the totemic institution, this feeling of respect exists. “When we show respect to the game,” said the old Bushmen, “we act in this manner because we wish that the game may die [i.e. let themselves be killed]; for the game would not die, if we did not show respect to it.”¹

These expressions of respect consist, as a rule, of propitiatory practices which it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to differentiate from magical operations. This is precisely the consequence of the way in which the dispositions are pictured. Primitives do not try above all to soften, sway, persuade the entities—animals and plants—to which these practices are addressed, although this intention is certainly present. They desire pri-

¹ Bleek and Lloyd. *op. cit.* p. 271 (1911).

marily that their dispositions may remain, or become, such as they would have them, and to arrive at this end they make use of almost the same processes as we have seen employed with regard to human beings. They put their confidence in charms which act both physically and magically.

When an animal has been brought down or captured, they must first of all take care that the spirit of its species be not incensed. It must forgive the hunters for the murder they have been obliged to commit, so that in future it may continue to be favourable to them. Thus, with the Xosa Kafirs, "when a buck has been killed, a creeper, which is burnt before going into the forest to hunt, is strewn upon and around it, for they trust, by this means, that more game will be charmed to the hunters, and that they will be successful in taking it."¹ With the ba-Ila, respect is paid to an elephant that is killed. "The motive underlying these rites is to prevent the ghost of the deceased elephant from taking vengeance upon the hunters, and to induce it to assist them in bringing the same fate upon other elephants. When the elephant is dead the hunter runs off and is chased in mock resentment by his companions. . . ." The rites accomplished, they return to the village, and a great feast is made. "First an offering is made to Leza, (the Supreme Being), to the *mizhimo* (ancestral spirits) and to the ghost of the deceased elephant which has accompanied them to the village. Addressing this last, they say: 'O spirit, have you no brothers and fathers who will come to be killed? Go and fetch them.' The ghost of the elephant then returns and joins the herd as the guardian of the elephant who has 'eaten his name.' Observe that they regard the elephants as acting as men act; one dies, and another inherits his portion, 'eats his name,' as they say."² In West Africa, "the natives round Lake Ayzingo say that if the first fishes that come up into the lake in the great dry season are killed, the rest of the shoal turn back, so on the arrival of this vanguard they are treated most carefully, talked to with 'a sweet mouth,' and given things."³

Facts of this kind are common throughout Africa, and in other parts. We must remember, too, the equally numerous ones which relate to domestic animals and particularly, with most Bantus, to horned animals. We know the devotion that

¹ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 87.

² Smith and Dale, *op. cit.* I, pp. 167-68.

³ Mary Kingsley. *West African Studies*, p. 108.

blacks show to their cattle, the care and attention—one might almost say, the worship and adoration—with which they surround them. Their cows and oxen are the supreme interest in their lives. A European one day suggested that a fatiguing piece of work which fell to the women’s share might just as well be done by oxen. There was great indignation at this, and they would not even consider so ridiculous an idea.

The feelings of these animals must be humoured, and above all nothing must be done that would be an offence to them. This gives rise to a most complicated series of practices and observances and taboos. To the native who has conformed to these from his childhood, all this ritual is natural, and he believes that everybody else knows it as well as he does. But the white man does not know anything of these rules and interdicts, and very often he does not take the least trouble to be informed. If by chance he should get some inkling of them he misunderstands them, and the consequences of his ignorance or his errors astonish him. For example, the blacks, who have abundance of milk, may refuse to give or sell him any. He believes this is due to unwillingness, or to ill-will, but in this he is mistaken. They are afraid that his methods of using milk without the necessary precautions—he may even put it on the fire!—will react unpleasantly on the cow which has provided it, and that she will yield no more. Thus, with the Bahima, “strange notions prevail as to the knowingness of cows as to the disposition of their milk; one gets quite used to being told by one’s cowherd such fables as that a certain cow refuses to be milked any more ‘because you have been boiling the milk.’”¹ Gutmann has given a detailed account of the precautions necessary when a beast is to be killed. “This can only be done on the land belonging to the family (*Sippe*). With much solemnity and many ceremonies, the cow is thanked for all that she has done. Her master assures her that he cannot kill her, but will allow her to live in retirement in his home, because she has given him ten calves. Therefore if any misfortune happens, she will know that it is not his fault. . . . The fatal blow must be given by a stranger from the neighbourhood, and the master and his brothers have hidden themselves away. The women of the family remain, and they begin their lamentations for this splendid animal, while it is being untied and led away to be slaughtered; they assure it that they are innocent of its death.

¹ A. L. Kitching. *On the backwaters of the Nile*, p. 122.

"It is only after the carcase has been skinned that its master and his brothers draw near. He exclaims loudly with grief and surprise, and in great anger demands who has killed the cow? The slaughterer advances, saying: 'We stole her from you during your absence.' Then there is a controversy between them, in which the master enumerates the good qualities of his cow—but the other has the last word. 'She was old; she had to make way for others. That will be your lot some day, too.' The master breaks out afresh in sobs and lamentations, as if he were bewailing the death of his mother. He does not touch any of the meat."¹ This scene very clearly recalls what the same missionary wrote in his pamphlet "L'Apiculture chez les Dschagga" of the moment when the tree destined to furnish the wood for the hives is cut down. There is the same respect for the cow as for the tree, the same despair of the master in face of the accomplished deed. It is reckoned that these stereotyped propitiatory practices will have a magical effect, that is infallible, upon the dispositions of the victims and their like.

Among the Toradjas of the Celebes, "the hunter hangs up in his house the jawbones of wild boars and stags, fastened to a rattan cane stretched almost invariably close to the fire, so that they shall be smoked. Of these the natives say: 'The animals to whom these jawbones belong are calling their companions loudly, in order that their grandparents, children and grandchildren shall not go away.' By hanging up these jawbones thus, the natives hope to prevent the other stags and boars from removing to a distance. For the same reason they hang near the fire, too, feathers of birds that they have ensnared, and they fasten the tails of eels they have caught to the beams of the house."² We know that bones, especially those of the skull, "represent" in the strongest sense of the word, indeed *are* the animals themselves. By thus exposing them to the smoke from the domestic hearth, they are, if I may say so, placating the animals themselves. In this way they can make sure that their descendants will allow themselves to be taken and killed in their turn. In the Mentawai Islands "it is believed that formerly stags used to offer themselves, and one had only to take them and kill them."³

¹ Br. Gutmann. *Archiv für die gesammte Psychologie*, XLVIII, p. 139.

² A. C. Kruyt. *De Bare sprekende Toradja's*, II, p. 360.

³ J. K. K. Hansen. "De group N. en Z. Pageh van de Mentawai eilanden. T. L. V. LXX, p. 189 (1914)

The Eskimos have very many propitiatory rites destined to maintain the animals in favourable moods. Thus at Point Barrow, "when a Polar bear has been killed, he is presented with the tools that he specially affects, and in the case of a female, women's knives, needle-cases, etc. are given. . . . There are certain manners and customs of humanity which are displeasing to polar bears, and for that reason those customs are carefully abjured during the period when the soul of the bear is in the man's house. The bear, in other words, is treated as an honoured guest who must not be offended. If the bear's soul has been properly treated during this stay with the man, and if he has received the souls of implements of good quality, then he will report those things in the land of the polar bears to which he returns, and other bears will be anxious to be killed by so reliable a man. If the wives of certain hunters are careless about treating the souls of the bears properly while they are in their houses, this will offend the bears quite as much as if the man who killed them had done it, and this may cause an excellent hunter to get no polar bear at all. Certain women are known in their communities for this very undesirable quality, and if a woman becomes a widow, her reputation for carelessness in treating the souls of animals may prevent her from getting a good second husband.

"The animals," say these Eskimos, "are much wiser than men, and know everything in the world—including the thoughts of men; but there are certain things which the animals need, and which they can get only from men. The seals and whales live in the salt water, and are therefore continually thirsty. They have no means of getting fresh water, except to come to men for it. A seal will therefore allow himself to be killed by the hunter who will give him a drink of water in return; that is why a dipperful of water is always poured into the mouth of a seal when it is brought ashore. If a hunter neglects to do this, all the other seals know about it, and no other seal will ever allow himself to be killed by that hunter . . . they will prefer to be killed by another from whom they know they will get a drink of fresh water. Some men are so careful to do everything that seals want, that the seals tumble over themselves in their eagerness to be killed by those particular men." ¹

Boas noted the same beliefs and customs on the west coast of Hudson Bay. "All the tribes of the west coast of Hudson

¹ W. Stefánsson. *My Life with the Eskimo*. pp. 57-8.

Bay are careful to treat game animals respectfully.”¹ “The Copper Eskimos offer fresh water to seals, oil to wild birds, etc. Propitiation must be offered to the shades of all fierce and dangerous animals, that is, of polar and brown bears and of wolves.”² Rasmussen reports the same practices. Everywhere they offer the soul of the bear (i. e. the dead bear) weapons (miniature bows and arrows), and if it is a female, needles, etc. and this, said an Eskimo to the author, is done “because bears often assume human shape.”³ It is not surprising therefore, that so much intelligence and sagacity should be attributed to them. They know everything, as the Point Barrow people say, and they understand everything that men say. In his recent work, *The Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, Rasmussen several times lays stress upon the taboos observed by hunters in certain circumstances, with the object of not offending the animals. For instance, “when a seal is caught in Tasinjag . . . near Iglulik, the same sacrifice must be made as in the case of a man who has lost his brother. . . . The hunter concerned must not work with hunting implements, fashion hunting implements, and the like. He must also cook all his food in a special pot until a year has elapsed from the time of the capture. If a white caribou is brought down . . . the hunter is subject to the same taboo as a man who has lost his sister . . . The first time a man who has lost his wife goes out hunting and gets a seal, . . . he must observe a kind of taboo, as he is considered unclean, in relation to game (they may take umbrage that he should have killed one of them while in this state). He is subjected to many restrictions regarding the flesh, entrails, skin of the animal. These are the same with regard to his first bearded seal, and his first three caribou. In the case of walrus, there is no special taboo.”⁴

From the Déné, neighbours of the Eskimos, Father Petitot collected similar instances. “For a long time now our trapper Le Noir has come to the Mission station only to sigh and complain that since he had been baptized the animals were making fun of him. ‘There are elks about,’ he said; ‘I can see them and I track them, but they will not let themselves be killed; they

¹ F. Boas. *Eskimo of Baffin Land and Hudson Bay. Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*. XV, pp. 500-01 (1907).

² D. Jenness. *The Life of the Copper Eskimos. The Canadian Arctic Expn.* 1913-1918. XII, p. 181.

³ Kn. Rasmussen. *The People of the Polar North*, pp. 111-12.

⁴ Id. *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, pp. 185, 194, 201.

are laughing at me.’ Since these Indians are convinced that game animals are more knowing and far-seeing than human beings; that they really are men who have retired from their activities and been metamorphosed into quadrupeds; that they condescend to satisfy the hunter’s needs, when they like him, by letting themselves be trapped; and that if they despise him they disregard his efforts and become invulnerable—all this makes it very difficult to revive the spirits of an Indian who is discouraged.”¹ The man in question believes that his conversion has made the elks unfavourably disposed towards him, and he is convinced that he will not be able to kill any more.

The Chukchee, according to Bogoras’ testimony, indulge in similar practices to those of the Eskimos. “After a successful hunt of one of the larger animals—wolf or wolverine, black and polar bear, wild reindeer, walrus and thong seal—various ceremonials are performed when the game is brought home. Their common feature is the ‘giving of a drink and a bed’ to the animals. This is symbolized by bringing out of the house a small quantity of water, and pouring it over the head of the animal as it lies on the snow before the entrance, and by placing a small willow twig under the hindquarters of the carcass for a bed.”² The Indians of New France used similar precautions with respect to the animals they had caught when hunting. “They consider fishes to be reasoning beings, as well as reindeer and elks, and this is the reason why they never throw the bones of the latter to the dogs when out hunting, nor give them fishbones when fishing, for otherwise, with the warning that others of the species would have, there would be no further catches.”³ And again: “Some of the natives, seeing that he threw to the dogs the bones of the beaver he had trapped, said that he was mad, and would trap no more beavers. It is one of their old superstitions to throw into the river or into the fire the bones of certain animals, so that they may have good hunting.”⁴ “If they trap some beavers . . . they must take great care that the broth does not fall into the fire, and they must preserve the bones religiously, for to do otherwise would be an omen of misfortune, or of some disaster affecting the whole tribe. They never burn the bones of the elk-calf, nor the car-

¹ Eug. Petitot. *Autour du grand lac des Esclaves*, pp. 32-3.

² W. Bogoras. *The Chukchee*, p. 378. Cf. p. 407.

³ *Relations de la Nouvelle-France*. 1636, pp. 114-15. (Hurons).

⁴ *Ibid.* 1640 and 1641. Paris, 1642. p. 60.

case of the sable, and they take care, too, to avoid giving them to the dogs, because they could not trap any more of these animals, if the spirits of the sables and the elks told their fellows what unkind treatment the natives had given them.”¹

Finally, to add just one testimony from South America, about the Carios of Colombia. “Hanging between the thatch and the beams of their huts our Indians always preserve fish-bones, skulls of wild beasts and game animals, the beaks and fine feathers of birds, double mealie-cobs, eggshells, etc.;—in fact, a veritable archæological museum. This is due to a superstition of theirs that, by keeping these remains, they will have a more abundant result of their fishing, hunting, and harvest.” And again: “They are obliged to burn the fishbones, for if they threw them away just anywhere, they could not fish any more. For this reason, too, some Indians do not like selling their fish to white men. If, when they are being cooked, the water should boil over the pot, no more fish will be caught. In this pot there must be nothing else cooked, or else fish will be caught only with difficulty, and for the same reason it is essential that the water in which the pot has been washed out, should be thrown into the river. Fish guts must not be thrown on the ground, but eaten or else thrown into the river, and this is why the Indians gut their fish before they sell it to white men.”²

III

The ceremonies of the more or less nomadic tribes who live partly upon crops of fruit, tubers and roots, and the vast number and variety of agrarian rites, in all places where man demands part of his nourishment from the soil he cultivates, suffice to show that the primitive is not less anxious to gain the favour of the vegetable life on which he depends, than he is with regard to animals. Brother Gutmann, for instance, has emphasized the feelings of gratitude and respect that the Dschagga show to the banyan tree which has been, as it were, the founder of their civilization, which feeds them, and from which, in countless forms, they receive aid and protection. (Cf. *The “Soul” of the Primitive*, pp. 26-8.)

With the Acholi of the Egyptian Sudan, “the hunting gen-

¹ P. Le Clerq, récollet. *Nouvelle relation de la Gaspésie* (1919) p. 398.

² Fr. Severino de Sta Teresa. *Creencias, ritos, usos y costumbres de los Indios Carios de la Prefectura apostolica de Uruba*, p. 129.

erally begins with sacrifices. . . . The Jok Tim (spirit of the bush, generally regarded as a snake) has to be propitiated by gifts of milk and merissa, which are set out in the bush for him to drink. He will then collect all the game together in a favourable spot for the hunters."¹ With the Lango, also, "at the time of the earliest hunting in the season (taking place from September to December), there is one ceremony by which the goodwill of the bush is obtained, and the effect of which lasts for all kinds of hunts during the whole season."² Therefore, for a successful hunt it is not enough to secure the goodwill of the animals involved. It is no less necessary for the trees and other plant life of the forests to be favourable to the hunters. These natives know what it behooves them to do, and they bring to the forest—to its "spirit"—the necessary offerings and sacrifices. In exchange for these, the forest will grant them its support.

It is especially when primitives are directly concerned with plants and with trees that their anxiety to secure their favourable co-operation is seen. Without recurring to the meticulous precautions shown by so many natives of the Dutch East Indies not to offend "the mother of the rice," or to the agrarian rites so thoroughly investigated by Mannhardt, I shall confine myself to quoting a few significant facts.

Here, for example, is the way in which the woodcutters of a tribe of Kattourie Indians proceed: "Before they commence the operation of cutting any billets of wood, they perform certain propitiatory rites, by worshipping one of the khyre trees. Having procured a cocoanut, some sendoor (red pigment) and a little frankincense, they select a tree for their purpose, rub the sendoor on the trunk near the root, burn the frankincense in front of it, and then break the nut; after which they join their hands in a supplicatory position, and address themselves to the tree, asking it to bless their undertaking, and to allow them to prepare abundance of catechu. Having constituted by this ceremony the tree a subordinate deity . . . they divide the cocoanut among those around them. . . . The following day the Kattouries proceed into the jungle and examine the khyre trees. . . . These people have a superstitious dread of bad luck attending their operations in the event of a person speaking while a tree

¹ Captain Grove. *Customs of the Acholi. Sudan Notes and Records*, II. p. 165 (1919).

² J. H. Driberg. *The Lango*, p. 113.

which they are cutting is in the act of falling, so that many of them preserve a dead silence on such occasions." ¹

Like the animal the native desires to kill, the tree he wishes to fell demands consideration therefore. So that it may be cut down without any accident intervening, its consent is required, and care must be taken, too, to placate other trees of the same species. They might be incensed by the treatment meted out to one of their family, and not grant success in any future operations. Hence these ceremonies which, according to Major Mackintosh's expression, constitute a kind of worship.

Mjöberg not long since reported some facts of the same nature, and these he interprets in animistic terms. He says: "The souls of plants are particularly sensitive, and they must be pacified when one of these terrestrial beings has suffered violent treatment. For example, if in building a house, a good many trees have been felled, the natives must do penance for a whole year. If an ironwood tree has been cut down to furnish the pillars of a new house, certain delicacies must not be eaten for a period of three years. Quite extraordinary respect is paid to the souls of the camphor-tree, and the upas, which furnishes the well-known poison for their arrows. He who touches it has to pay a fine immediately, and the tree may not be spoken of by its right name.

"As one might imagine, a plant as important as rice has a very powerful soul. Before planting, during growth, and at harvest-time, the Borneo native tries by all the means in his power to induce a good crop, through its favourable disposition towards him." ²

The Truk Islanders of the South Pacific are absolutely obliged to win the goodwill of the breadfruit tree to escape death from famine. "According to them, the fruits of this tree come from the celestial country of Eaur. Thence they fly down to the earth, and rest upon the breadfruit trees. The souatamai, or multiplier of breadfruits, has the task of making the largest number possible settle on these trees. As soon as the souatamai begins work, the whole tribe, or rather, the whole island, enters upon a solemn period, and certain taboos are pronounced, to which all must submit. These are mainly concerned with food-

¹ Maj. A. Mackintosh. *A short account of the Kattouries residing in the Koncan and Altaveesy. Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, 1836. Reprinted 1864, I. p. 333.

² E. Mjöberg. *Durch die Insel der Kopffjäger*. pp. 230-31. (1929).

stuffs, and it is forbidden to eat under breadfruit trees. It is likewise forbidden to wash or dress beneath them, to cut down trees, build houses or canoes, to light a fire near these trees, or make any noise there. These taboos are an expression of the natives' effort to avoid anything that might offend the trees, and frighten the fruits flying down to them.

“In many of the islands they go further still. As soon as the *atomai*, i.e. the growing period for the fruit, has begun, the natives climb up cocoanut palms, shake down the nuts, and throw them into the sea. . . . The head-quarters of the souatomaï's activities is the breadfruit house. . . . In the middle of the house there is a heap of offerings, gifts from the tribe to the benign divinities of Eaur, and to the souls of dead souatomaï. . . . Morning and evening the souatomaï leaves the house, walks about under the breadfruit trees, on the shore and in the mountain. Here and there, he climbs into a breadfruit tree to take a glance around, and he blows in his conch-shell. While he is doing this, nobody must disturb him.

“Very often the souatomaï is also the ‘souatom ik,’ the multiplier of fishes. It is his task to bring a sufficient quantity of sardines near to shore by means of his charms. . . . When a souatomaï dies, locks of his hair and bits of his nails are cut off. It is feared, indeed, that the departing soul (the dead man) may carry away with it all the breadfruit tree's products, and to prevent this, they keep something belonging to the corpse. The soul of the souatomaï goes straight to Eaur to dwell with the colleagues who have preceded it.”¹

The same need to secure the favourable disposition which is absolutely essential has inspired elsewhere a series of observances similar to those of the Truk Islanders, though these relate, certainly, not to the fruit harvest but to fishing and hunting. In British New Guinea, at the mouth of the Wanigela River, for instance, when the dugong fishing season begins, the first expedition cannot take place until the tribe has undergone a certain number of taboos. One of the natives, who thus becomes a sacred personage, lives apart, observing an almost unbroken fast, and he exerts magical influence on the dugongs to persuade, and no doubt, too, to constrain, them to appear. The whole tribe, in ardent expectation, respectfully follows the efforts of him who at this moment seems to be its incarnate form, as it were, for he is going to make the dugongs amen-

¹ P. L. Bollig, *Die Bewohner der Truk-Inseln*, pp. 69-71.

able and disposed to let themselves be killed.¹ Landtman has given a detailed description of the same ceremonial in the island of Kiwai. At Mailu in New Guinea, before the departure of the expedition which will go by sea to get pigs for the Govi ceremony, a man specially appointed concentrates in his person the mystic preparations which are indispensable. "During his fast this man is sacred above all others. He remains behind in seclusion in the tabooed house. Only boys or male friends may bring him food. His slightest movement may cause the displeasure of the spirits, and the consequent failure of those away to get pigs. . . . On the mainland about Orangerie Bay this man emerges from his vigil in so weak and emaciated a state that for some time he can scarcely stand, or walk about."²

In all these cases, and in other similar ones that we might add to them, the imperative need of obtaining sufficient quantities of the necessary fruits or animals, has given rise to what we might call a mystic, if not religious, technique in addition to the more or less complete technique applied to cultivation, hunting, or fishing. The man who "concentrates in his person" the mystic preparations, who during this period imposes the most severe penance upon himself, the object of the respect and veneration of all, whom none must disturb—a truly "sacred" personage—establishes an intimate participation between the tribe of whom he is at the moment the incarnate essence, and the guardian spirit, the "genius" of the dugongs, the wild pigs, the breadfruit trees, etc. In the campaign about to open, the tribe can count upon their goodwill henceforward. This "sacred" man is then the necessary and privileged intermediary between them and the unseen powers whose favour the tribe is trying to gain. In this sense, he corresponds with what elsewhere would be a priest, as far as it is allowable to use such a term, in cases where the quasi-sacerdotal function consists, not in addressing a divinity, but in exercising magic influence upon the mystic essence of certain animal or vegetable species.

IV

Inanimate entities such as rivers, boulders, mountains, things made by man, like houses, weapons, tools etc., are all capable,

¹ R. E. Guise. *On the tribes inhabiting the mouth of the Wanigela River, New Guinea*. p. 218. J. A. I. XXVIII (1899).

² G. Landtman, *op. cit.* p. 130.

like living beings, of exercising a good or bad influence upon the fate and upon the success of those who approach them or make use of them. Since the primitive finds no difficulty in assuming homogeneity in all entities, he does not think it any stranger that he should have to depend on the goodwill of his spear or of his canoe than on the good offices of the omen-birds or of his own fellows, and since, as we know, he considers no metamorphosis to be impossible, his feeling about this is all the stronger. The real matter of importance to the primitive mind is not the form assumed by beings and things, which may at any moment change entirely; it is not their physico-chemical properties or their physiological functions, about which he knows nothing—it is the influences emanating from them, and hence their disposition with respect to him.

Accordingly a primitive will hardly risk swimming across a dangerous river without having endeavoured to gain its favour. It is only if he has succeeded in this, that he will arrive safe and sound on the farther shore; if not, he will be drowned, or a crocodile will seize him. We are told that most frequently, when about to enter the river, he will address a “prayer” to the “spirit” or the “god” of the river, and that he makes some offering to further his purpose. But it is not easy to tell whether this animistic language expresses exactly what is in the primitive’s mind, or whether the observer interprets it in terms that he can trust, because they are familiar to himself. It is very true that the native entreats good-will and protection, and that he makes some sacrificial offering to obtain it, but in very many cases it is not to a “spirit” or to a divinity that he addresses himself—it is to the *river*. From our childhood the Greek and Roman mythology have accustomed us to people even inanimate nature, with minor demons and divinities, but we should be in error if we considered this to be a universal habit imposing itself on certain mystic conceptions in all communities. When the primitive is anxious about the disposition of any entity, even inanimate matter, or any thing, with regard to him, and is endeavouring to gain its good-will, he does not thereby necessarily admit that there is a spirit dwelling in it. It is enough for him to know that in his relations with it, he cannot be too circumspect.

A few examples among the hundreds will no doubt suffice to prove this. “Lightning desires the people to fear it,” writes a missionary to the Lesuto; “hail demands that certain rites

described by the witch-doctor shall be performed; every disease has its own laws to which all must submit."¹

In many districts where drought is regarded as the worst of scourges, rain is the object of the greatest care. The natives avoid doing anything which may drive it elsewhere or stop it, and they cannot do enough in their efforts to attract and to keep it. In the Sotho dictionary of South Africa, we read: "*roka*, to extol, exalt, sing the praises of anyone; *Xo roka pula*, to entice the rain by magic, by praising it."² In a Bechuana tribe, "it was at the time of the rain-making, and the chief who was the chief of the ceremony had issued the command that if the first rain which fell was not a heavy soaking rain no one must go out to the gardens to plough, nor make any preparation for ploughing. The rain came, but only in small showers, and notwithstanding the chief's prohibition, some women took their hoes and went forth to plough. On this reaching the ears of the chief, he waxed very wrath. . . ."³ As a matter of fact these women, hindered in their work by the rain, might be wishing in spite of themselves that it would cease, and their desire might send it away.

In another place, a Kafir rain-maker regards the missionary as responsible for his failure. "I have never found any difficulty in making rain," he said, addressing the people, "until *he* [alluding to Mr. Shaw] came among us, but no sooner do I collect the clouds and the rain is about to fall in copious showers on the dry and parched soil, than there immediately begins a sound of ting, ting, ting [alluding to the Chapel bell], which puts the clouds to flight, and prevents the rain from descending on your land."⁴ And in a neighbouring district, "How many complaints the missionary has had to listen to! It was not only that he had in his house a spiteful Kafir who had bewitched the sky, but that he had done the same himself, and because he had not yet completed his building he did not want the rain to fall. The cross on the top of the church, the chimney above the kitchen, the water he had had brought to his land—all these were signs of witchcraft which, the Zulus believed, would prevent rain."⁵ Here we have an accusation often made about the mis-

¹ *Missions évangéliques*, C. 2. p. 176 (1915) P. Ramseyer.

² K. Endemann, *Wörterbuch der Sotho-Sprache*, p. 441.

³ J. T. Brown, *Among the Bantu nomads*. p. 145.

⁴ A. Steedman, *Wanderings and adventures in the Interior of South Africa*, I, p. 44.

⁵ Fr. Speckmann, *op. cit.* p. 458.

sionaries. They themselves see in it fresh proof of the malignity and deceit of the rain-makers, who prey upon the credulity of their people to transfer the responsibility and the odium of their failure to the missionaries, but in this they are almost always mistaken. The rain-maker is generally in earnest, and himself believes in the efficacy of his operations. Above all he, and the whole tribe with him, is convinced that if anything unusual occurs while they are taking place, the sky is bewitched, and the terrified clouds retreat. This is why the rain will not fall when the white men ring their bells, (“make iron cry,” in the picturesque expression of another Bantu).

When it rains too much in New Pomerania “the Sulka, in the endeavour to make it stop, put stones on the fire, uttering certain words meanwhile. When the stones are hot they are carried out of doors, always with the appropriate formulas. The drops of rain, falling on the hot stones, become burnt, and then the rain ceases.”¹

V

In the Dutch East Indies certain tribes offer food to the implements they use. In Halmahera, “they speak of a weapon as if it had a living being within it, and if, for example, they are not very lucky in the hunt, and miss the game, or if they do not give it a fatal wound, they immediately are inclined to make the *gikiri* of the gun responsible. Then there has to be a ceremony organized, so that this defect may be remedied, and a magician must find out what food the *gikiri* would like. . . . These people seem to picture nearly all things of any importance as having a *gikiri* within them.”² So too, at Timor, “food is given to the instruments used. The spade, axe, hoe, etc., are placed in turn in their arms and covered with maize-meal. The women treat the frame on which they wind their thread in the same way. . . . This custom is fairly general.”³

As a matter of fact, implements and tools do not remain blind and passive in the hands of those who use them. They themselves see what they have to do, and act accordingly. In the Mentawai Islands, “traps and nets in Pageh are supposed

¹ P. Rascher. *Die Sulka; Ein betrag zur Ethnographie von Neu-Pommern*, *Archiv für Anthropologie*. N. F. L. p. 225 (1904).

² A. Hueting. *De Tobolorcezen en hun denken en doen*. T. L. V. LXXVIII, pp. 194-95 (1922).

³ A. C. Kruyt. *De Timoreezen*. T. L. V. LXXIX, pp. 482-83 (1923).

to be able to make their catch by 'seeing' the desired quarry. It is the spirits (*kina*) of the implements who do the seeing. Arrow quivers are especially sacred and expensive. They have bead eyes which are consecrated to the seeing of the game. The beads also draw the souls of the animals to them. One form of witchcraft is performed for the purpose of blinding the arrow quiver of an enemy."¹ And again: "Before the men go hunting, they are forbidden to make the drink *djurit*. This would cloud the outside of the arrow containers, and the men would be unable to locate the monkeys. (It is thought that the arrow containers can locate the prey through the powers of their 'bead-eyes'.)"²

In Kiwai, likewise, "there are certain rites affecting the canoes to be used in a harpooning expedition. . . . The decoration of a canoe includes an eye painted on each side of the bow, and in the painted eye is fastened part of the real eye of a fish-hawk. This helps the canoe to find the dugong and turtle. . . . A successful harpooning expedition is celebrated by a feast. . . . The harpoons with which dugong have been speared are leaned against a tree or house near by, butt end downward, with a mat underneath. The shafts are rubbed with dugong fat, and more fat is put on the mat close to the hole in the end. A sprouting coconut is placed on each side of the harpoon with a great quantity of sago, taro, bananas and other provisions around. This is 'kaikai belong wapo,' from which the harpoon benefits, as there is a symbolic association between the food and the catch expected on the next harpooning expedition. The provisions are afterwards distributed among the people. An old man performs the *karea* over the harpoons, and, when sprinkling them with *gamoda*, says: 'Next time you [the harpoons] go again; same fashion you find him; you spear him good; you no miss; you spear him woman dugong he got piccanniny inside' [these are considered a particular delicacy]."³

Such beliefs and customs are not peculiar to the Dutch East Indies. In British Columbia, for instance, "the Tlinkit always talked to their halibut lines, halibut hooks and buoys, addressing them as 'brother-in-law,' 'father-in-law,' etc. If one did not do so, these would become ashamed, and refuse to let the fish

¹ Ed. Loeb. *Mentawai Religious Cult. University of California Publications in Archaeology and Ethnology*. XXV, p. 201.

² *Ibid.* p. 241.

³ G. Landtman. "The Kiwai Papuans," pp. 130-31, 141.

bite. . . . Food products collected at low tide, especially mussels and clams, were talked to, so that they would not bring sickness upon those eating them. In olden times, people talked to anything that was carved like or in any way resembled a human being. If they saw such an object when they were travelling about, they spoke to it. . . . They talked to canoes, to spears.”¹ Evidently here it is some sort of prayer. The Tlinkit are trying to get good luck from all the objects to which they speak; they are soliciting their favour. It is the same custom, and based upon the same experience, as that expressed in animistic terms by observers in the Dutch East Indies.

As a rule, when an object “behaves” differently from what has been expected of it, the primitive at once suspects ill-will on its part. “When I was leaving the country (Matabele Land) my waggons stuck fast in a deep rut opposite one of the towns. Some scores of soldiers came out to witness the efforts of the oxen to pull the waggon out. ‘Go back to Inyate and live there,’ said the men; ‘don’t you see that the waggon refuses to go again to Sekhomo?’ ”² With the Akamba, “when a person has been wounded or killed by an accidental shot, for instance, by an arrow shot during a hunt, the headman in the deceased’s village takes the fatal arrow and touches the wound with it. He then carries the arrow out into the wilds, and with his eyes shut, he puts it into a hole or crack, saying something like the following sentence: ‘Thou who hast killed our man, mayst thou lie here and not kill again.’ He then covers the opening up.” Lindblom adds, “This procedure is probably based on a desire to prevent the arrow or the power dwelling in it from doing an injury again, as according to native ideas an accidental shot may very well be due to the secret arts of some enemy.”³ It may indeed be that this is what has made the arrow homicidal, but perhaps also they believe it to be malignant in its own nature, and it is from the evil disposition of which it has shown proof that the headman desires to protect his people.

Must I add other incidents to this already lengthy list? I shall remind my readers of the care exhibited by the Dschagga bee-keeper (cf. *The “Soul” of the Primitive*, ch. I. pp. 21-26) to obtain the good-will, not only of his family and neighbours, the bees and the trees with which he has to deal, but also of the

¹ Swanton, *The Tlinkit Indians*. E. B. XXVI. pp. 458-59.

² Rev. J. Mackenzie, *Ten years North of the Orange River*. p. 348.

³ G. Lindblom. *op. cit.* p. 577 (1920).

shaft and iron of his hatchet, the rope, cord, hive, etc., in short, every one of the things that form part of his undertaking. If he is to be successful, not one of them must be unfriendly towards him. He will therefore try to win the favour of each in turn, not neglecting a single one.

When it was a case of human beings or animals, and possibly, too, of plants, we could understand his ideas and his methods. But when he has to deal with objects, metallic or otherwise, we feel ourselves at a loss; we can no longer follow him. To rid ourselves of embarrassment it is tempting to suppose that his entreaties are addressed, not to the objects themselves but to the "spirits" immanent in them. "The Yorubas," writes Major Leonard too, "say of the axe itself that it enters the forest, cuts the tree, and is not afraid,—implying that it is the familiar spirit who is in the axe that gives it courage and moves it accordingly to enter and to cut."¹ But is it quite certain that this is implied? Why not simply hold fast to what they say themselves—that the axe is not afraid, that the axe itself cuts? Is it not the white man who, unable to enter into a mind differently oriented from his own, thinks it necessary to interpret his language, which to those who use it, is perfectly clear?

If you were to ask the Yorubas to explain precisely what they meant to say, they would no doubt be unable to understand your question. They would give you, as primitives invariably do, the reply that they thought would be most agreeable to you. But is it necessary to ask them? It is enough to place their words side by side with so many others which have been quoted throughout this chapter. To the minds of primitives, all beings, whether alive or not, all things, natural or manufactured, have not only a palpable physical existence, perceptible to the senses; they share also in the supernatural powers of the mystic world and, by dint of this, as vehicles of some of these powers, they exercise good or bad influences and bring good fortune or misfortune. To succeed in any enterprise, therefore, it is essential to be able to count on the favour of everything, even the most humble factor, which plays a part therein. The beekeeper tries to secure the good-will of bees as he does of men, of his rope no less than of his trees.

¹ Major Leonard. *The Lower Niger and its tribes*, p. 181.

CHAPTER IV

CEREMONIES AND DANCES

AT CERTAIN periods of the year in most of the so-called primitive communities, it is no longer one particular individual or one particular family, but the whole group, clan, or tribe, that is endeavouring to gain the favour of, and obtain help from, the unseen powers upon which its prosperity and its very existence depend.

This collective effort is expressed in what are called ceremonies. These often play a very considerable rôle in the social life of the tribe, both on account of the time they take and the prolonged labour they entail. We have many excellent descriptions of them, as, for instance, Spencer and Gillen's for the Arunta and Loritja peoples of Central Australia; Paul Wirz' regarding the Marind-Anim of Dutch New Guinea; Landtman's of the Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea; F. E. Williams' accounts of those taking place among the tribes of the Purari delta, and Vedder's of the Bergdama of South Africa, among many others. We are not concerned here with the study of these; we shall merely try to discern the aims which are more or less obscurely involved in them in the natives' minds, and what connections are established between these and the unseen powers supposed to be present in these ceremonies.

I

We, at any rate in the Western world, are accustomed to find the religious feeling of dependence and the need of protection and fellowship associated with the idea of one or more superior beings, and it is from him or from them that we implore aid and succour, and from the same source we look for salvation. We can scarcely conceive of any worship without deities that are more or less clearly defined and individualized. Now in a great many primitive tribes we find nothing of this sort. "The celebration of these ceremonies," say Spencer and Gillen, "is

not associated in the native mind with the idea of appealing to the assistance of any supernatural being.”¹ Most certainly Spencer and Gillen do not dispute the fact that by means of their ceremonies the Aruntas endeavour to obtain the assistance of mystic powers, for according to them, this is their principal *raison d'être*. But they have never noticed, in any of these ceremonies, that the natives had a particular being such as a deity, demon, or spirit in view.

It is no doubt difficult for us to comprehend these very complicated practices designed to propitiate, the effect of which is to be produced mystically and, as it were, automatically, if they are not addressed to a being able to listen to them and prepared to be persuaded, appeased, softened, etc. This is, however, the way in which many primitives proceed, and what we have already gathered permits of our finding the reason for it. Primitives do not consider the dispositions of beings, of any kind whatever, as tendencies, or as essentially psychic states of nature, but as semi-physical realities upon which they may act directly by magical operations. They therefore do not need to imagine the unseen powers they are striving to conciliate, in the form of separate beings, still less as personalities, although it does happen that they do so.

As to the constituents proper to these ceremonies, which are not to be met with, or are hardly recognizable, in the worship of other communities, they will appear during our brief analysis of the facts. This analysis, too, will endeavour to decide, as far as possible, what the essential features of these ceremonies signify.

II

In the first place, in Australia, New Guinea, and many other parts, they always include some kind of dramatic representation. Actors are nominated (according to the clans especially interested in the successive episodes of the ceremony), and each has to undertake a rôle which has been carefully learnt and rehearsed. The dance-measure is given by women, who clap their hands or slap their thighs rhythmically; sometimes, too, by drums; and the audience, which follows with enthusiasm scenes of which it already knows the movements, is made up of the rest of the tribe, and of neighbouring tribes, should any guests be present.

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *The native tribes of Central Australia*. p. 170.

The dances carried out by the North American Indians before starting off to hunt the bison have often been described, as, for instance, by Catlin and by Maximilian von Neuwied. In them the natives represented or "played" the incidents of the hunt. One of them, covered with buffalo-hide, imitated the animal's movements when feeding; others, the hunters, drew near it with innumerable precautions, attacked it unawares, and so on. But we must not stop short at this pantomimic display, for it is only the ceremony seen from the outside. It has a profound symbolical meaning and, in reality, is something other than a play. To the Indians' minds it has a mystic bearing on the disposition of the animals, and its efficacy is such that they allow themselves to be seen and approached and killed. So too, in certain episodes of the Arunta initiation ceremonies, "at the first glance it looks much as if all that they were intended to represent were the behaviour of certain animals; but in reality they have a much deeper meaning, for each performer represents an ancestral individual who lived in the mythic age of the Alcheringa (hence a totemic animal)." ¹

This is not the place to analyse and interpret in detail the ceremonies described by Spencer and Gillen, some of which last for months. We shall merely remind ourselves that there is mystic significance in everything therein, from the very beginning, when a considerable length of time is occupied in "singing the ground" upon which the ceremony is to take place, and the young men are to draw blood from a vein in their arms—blood which spurts out upon the other actors—to the act by which the ceremony terminates, when all the objects used in it are finally destroyed.

Most frequently it is not one single aim that the primitives pursue in these ceremonies. By imitating what their mythical ancestors have done in certain circumstances, and reproducing their gestures and their acts, these natives are in communion with them and actually participating in their substance. At the same time they are introducing the neophytes, the younger generation which is to be added to the others, to the secrets of the sacred usages upon which, from season to season, the wellbeing and the safety of the group depend. And again, by virtue of these ceremonies, they succeed in multiplying and developing the totem plants and animals of the various clans of the tribe.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 228.

Therefore in a ceremony relating to a particular totem, the actors will be drawn from the members of that totem.¹ "The ceremonies," adds Strehlow, "take place in districts which are in some way associated with the myths of the totemic ancestor in question. They believe that the corresponding totemic animals are present in these spots, hidden in the rocks, or underground, and that at the moment in the ceremony when the old men cause their blood to flow upon the rocks, they emerge. Where, for instance, in earlier times a kangaroo-ancestor has rested, or has been transformed into a tjurunga, kangaroos lurk among the boulders, and the mystic operation brings them forth."² Spencer and Gillen say practically the same.

Strehlow draws attention to the fact that this operation has the effect of multiplying totemic plants and animals, and making them more vigorous. Naturally, where edible plants and animals are in question, the ceremony is intended for those upon which no taboo is placed, and not for those which it is forbidden to eat. Also, Strehlow thinks, it is not for any alimentary profit that the natives celebrate these ceremonies, and as a proof he adduces, beside their lack of thought for others, the fact that they celebrate similar ceremonies for totems that are of no use to them, or are even harmful. They do this "because their ancestors ordered it to be done." Strehlow gives a list of totems that are neither animal nor vegetable, of which the ceremonies can have no other motive than that of obeying these orders. "For certain totems, however, special motives are invoked."³

Sir Baldwin Spencer, on the contrary, insists upon the beneficial effects the Arunta hope to derive from their ceremonies. "The headman of every totem group must, once every year, perform a special ceremony to bring about the increase of his totem animal or plant. The natives firmly believe that by magic they can make animals breed and plants grow. The ceremony is always held a little while before the usual breeding time; if the animals increase, then of course it is the man's magic who has made them do so; if not, his failure is put down to the strong counter-magic of some evilly-disposed enemy. When the animal has increased in numbers, men who do not belong to that particular totem bring a supply of it into the camp, and offer it to the headman, who eats just a little of it and then hands the

¹ Carl Strehlow. *Die Aranda und Loritja Stämme in Zentral-Australien*. Part III. *Die totemistischen Kulte*. p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

rest back to the others, telling them that he has made it for them, and that they may now eat it.”¹

Later, Spencer had the opportunity of being present at the initiation ceremonies of the Kakadu, a tribe of Northern Australia, far removed from the Aruntas. The last and most important part, the Muraian ceremony, is completed as follows. “When all the sticks and stones, many of them elaborately decorated, had been brought in, they were arranged in a circle, and a final dance was held, the men rushing round and round them, stopping every now and then to thrust out and draw back their arms, with hands extended, while they yelled: ‘*Brau! Brau!*’ (Give! Give!)’ It was, as the natives told us afterwards, a request, in fact, a demand, to the various animals and plants, represented by the sticks and stones, to provide them with those same animals and plants that form their food supply.

“I was very interested in this ceremony, because it was clearly equivalent, fundamentally, to the *Mbanbiuna* or *Intichiuma* ceremonies that Gillen and myself had seen and described first of all in the Arunta. . . .

“The way in which the men danced round the ceremonial objects, or rolled over on the ground, holding them tightly all the time in their hands, seemed to indicate clearly that by doing so they brought about some close connection between themselves and the totem animals and plants represented by the sacred sticks and stones.”² In this “close connection” we recognize what we term “participation.” The symbolism of the Kakadu is less complicated than that of the ceremonies described at length in *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, but, as Spencer remarks, they are fundamentally of the same kind. With the Arunta and the Loritja the symbols (the *wanunga*, etc.) are not so simple as the sticks and stones of the Kakadu. But both alike secure that participation between the tribe and the plants and animals they need for their sustenance, and in its turn this participation favours their reproduction and their growth.

We are dealing here, Spencer says, with “magic” operations. We may say the same, adding that they do not differ fundamentally from those we analysed in the last chapter. These aborigines are indeed concerned to secure the good offices of the totemic ancestor and of the animals and plants which participate in its essence. “Give! Give!” they entreat, and thus the

¹ Baldwin Spencer. *Wanderings in Wild Australia*, pp. 372-73.

² *Ibid.* pp. 834-35.

ceremony concludes by a formal request or demand. It is a kind of prayer that apparently has the magic force and the constraining virtue of an incantation.

III

Landtman has given a detailed description of the ceremony of the "hóriómu," as practised by the Kiwai Papuans. "It is one of the great secret ceremonies and comprehends a series of pantomimic dances and rites. . . . One of the chief objects of the ceremony is to assist the people in the harpooning of dugong. . . . It is connected with the cult of the dead and, as usual, the men are the real performers. Masked and dressed up to impersonate the ghosts of departed people, the whole male population takes part in the ceremony, representing a large cast of different supernatural characters, each personage or group bearing a marked individuality of its own. The women, accompanied by the elder children, are the spectators, and by various devices they are induced to believe that they actually see their deceased friends and other ghosts, so on this account there is much wailing during part of the performance. Offerings of food to the dead are brought to the place every day by the women. . . . There is even a stage arrangement and, in fact, the hóriómu ground in its main features suggests a theatre. The curtain is represented by two long screens . . . which prevent the spectators from looking into the interior of the shrine. The spirits appear in groups or singly through the aperture in the screens, and dance on the open space outside, retiring into the shrine again after each performance. . . . On one side of the dancing-ground, in front of the screens, is the place of the 'orchestra'. . . . Occasionally the drummers sing also, whereas the dancers always remain silent so as not to be betrayed by their voices. Nearer to the beach is the place of the onlookers." ¹

This ceremony, like many of the Arunta ceremonies, lasts for several weeks. As a rule it proceeds for some hours daily before sunset—though with intervals of a day or two from time to time, to allow of a fishing expedition or the harpooning of dugong. It is preceded by a fortnight of varied games, such as skipping, and a kind of hockey, to which some mystic virtue, favourable to the success of the fishing, is attributed. Later,

¹G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 327.

with the arrival of the spirits or ghosts, the ceremony proper begins.

It is impossible to analyse, or even enumerate, the various episodes which succeed each other, each in turn exciting, terrifying, and sometimes amusing the spectators. To give some idea of them I shall merely indicate the part played by the personage called *múru*, who is directly concerned with dugong and turtle fishing. "The *múru* appears alone . . . he carries on his shoulders the people's harpoon-heads and the *iga* ropes used for tying the poles of the harpooning platforms together, these being kept in the shrine together with the harpoon-shafts. . . . His thighs are tied round with a great number of strings, and his calves are wrapped round with banana leaves. The *múru* does not dance, but walks round and round the arena, inclined forward with bent knees, staggering to right and left. He blows a trumpet-shell continuously. . . . After the rite the harpoon-heads and *iga* strings are taken back by their owners. . . . The *múru* rite and the objects used in it bring luck to the harpooners." ¹

"Towards the end of the ceremony the men one day launch the canoes, and prepare to go out harpooning. . . . The various harpooning instruments, which have been kept in the *hóriómu* during the ceremony, are picked up, also the *súru* posts which are used for erecting the harpooning platforms, and in a certain order the men file out from the shrine. . . . They advance towards the canoes with dancing, almost galloping, steps." ² The fishing begins, and many other rites take place, especially when the first dugong is brought back, divided and eaten. . . . At length the last day of the *hóriómu* has arrived. The "ghosts" return to the abode of the dead. "The last to come out of the shrine is the *múru*, wearing his full equipment. . . . One of the ropes, fastened to his belt, is trailing behind him, and suddenly a man, standing in the opening of the shrine, and holding the other end of the rope, gives it a violent pull, so that the *múru* is brought to the ground. The great harpooners carry him back to the shrine head first, and he must not move or kick in their arms, for his purpose is to 'teach' the dugong to allow themselves to be caught quietly after being harpooned. . . .

"The following night when the men go out to the reefs, the *múru* must remain by himself in the shrine. From there he is able to follow the progress of the harpooning, for the ghosts of

¹ *Ibid.* p. 341.

² *Ibid.* pp. 345-46.

the successful harpooners come and make their presence known to him during the following night in the following way: when a dugong is being speared, the grass decorations which have been fastened to the harpooner or his implements, break off, and then the múru will feel a twitch at that part of the body where the decoration had been attached. 'That no dream, that proper feel.' Only at the return of the canoes in the morning will the múru be released from his captivity. 'That man he stow away along hóríómu; that man make him people lucky along dugong,' say the natives."¹

Thus, after the last rites have been celebrated, a fishing expedition concludes the ceremony which has been performed with the direct object of making it successful. Thanks to this ceremony, the fishermen will escape the misfortunes which evil influences might draw down upon them. The men, for example, will not perish miserably by drowning, dragged under by the rope that is unwound at the moment they plunge into the water after having cast their harpoons. The dugong will not obstinately conceal themselves, but on the contrary will approach the platforms, so that the fishermen have no difficulty in perceiving them, and their harpoons will not miss the prey. Once speared, they will allow themselves to be captured, and their congeners will also offer themselves in their turn. All this, as the natives are convinced, will be due to the virtue inherent in the acting, rites, dancing, songs, and mimicry which compose the hóríómu ceremony. It is this that *teaches* the dugong to allow themselves to be captured, the harpoon-heads to dig deep into their flesh, the rope not to strangle or impede the fisherman, etc., just as other ceremonies "teach" the taro to germinate and sprout, the cocoanut palms to bear fruit, and so on. This expression occurs very frequently in the jargon the natives employ in talking to Landtman. It expresses metaphorically the magico-propitiatory action which the Australian aborigines themselves also manifest in their ceremonies which, though they differ in form from those of the Kiwai Papuans, have their origin in the same needs, and develop the same themes. For in both the object is to effect a mystic participation between the social group and the animal and the vegetable species necessary to its existence. In both districts, it is the presence of the ancestors that secures this participation—with the Arunta through that of the totemic ancestors, and with the Kiwai Papuans,

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 347-48.

through the spirits of those recently deceased, whose memory has not yet been effaced.

IV

Without laying further stress upon these ceremonies, which have their counterpart in many other districts of Australia and New Guinea, we find among the Bergdama of South Africa (to take but one instance for comparison) examples based upon conceptions of the same kind. "It is absolutely wrong," writes Vedder, "to look upon these dances as amusements alone. On the contrary, the genuine dances, called *geis*, represent a kind of worship. It is true that they serve as a model for the profane dances, but these are a playful imitation of the others, which can easily be seen in the fact that in the imitated dances those taking part do not adorn themselves, nor are there any drums. . . .

"One of the men is entrusted with the lighting of a large fire on the dancing-place, which is on one side of the village. It is highly important that this man should be of blameless character, and not one who may be accused of lack of zeal in hunting, for example. Only if the man who lights the fire is worthy, will the fire itself be a good one; and only if the fire be a good one, will the dance be successful. And upon the success of the dance alone will any benefit be received, that is, an abundant crop or a successful hunt. Whenever natives have noticed that after a certain dance the hunters have been particularly lucky, they remember who lighted the fire on that occasion, and they charge him to do it always in future. Should the village not possess among its members any man with 'a lucky hand,' they must take it in turns to light the fire."¹

This selection throws light upon the object, or at least, one of the main objects, of the dance. It must "favourably dispose" the animals that the men will hunt, and the fruits and tubers that the women will seek and collect. Lighted by a particular individual, the sacred fire and the dance which followed it have succeeded in making the disposition such as was desired. Therefore this important function will be deputed again and again to this same individual, just as the Bushmen like to make further use of an arrow that has attained its aim, or as the Loango fishermen will use, over and over again, the same worn and

¹H. Vedder. *op. cit.* I, pp. 92-3.

mended nets if they have once noticed that the fish are more ready to be caught by them than by others which are newer.

The fire-lighter, therefore, brings good fortune in his own person; the dance also exercises an influence which is both magical and propitiatory. Vedder says this explicitly. "The more profound significance of these dances is that they induce the game, through some kind of witchcraft, to place themselves in the hunter's hands. I have made notes of some twenty-two different kinds of dance, all bearing the name of some animal or other. For instance, we have gemsbok, springbok . . . jackal, hyena, leopard, lion, tiger, cheetah, turtle-dove, toucan, vulture, eagle, elephant, etc. The art of the dancers consists in the skilful imitation of some animal, usually a quadruped, so that everybody may recognize it, and this they do with the upper part of the body bent forward. . . . The dancers do not take any part in the singing, but when occasion demands it they imitate the cries of the animals they represent.

"Beside these so-called animal-dances, there are others which represent rain, storms, and clouds. The recollection of dead ancestors and heroes is often celebrated in dances, and then men have to represent their exploits. Whilst the women dancers cannot move from their places, the men march in a circle round the fire, or even make undulating files behind the row of women. The leader of the dance heads the file. At the same time he must celebrate in song the natural phenomena which cannot be imitated by gesture. He improvises a brief sentence in rhythmical form. . . . The women reply by unintelligible songs, and the men dance with the same movements as the women, with the sole difference that they follow behind the dance-leader.

"There are no fixed times for these dances. They are organized when there is general agreement that the vegetable products are not so great as they would like. The rain-dances are held at the beginning of the rainy season."¹

The dances imitating the movements of certain animals are to be met with to some extent everywhere—in North America, Central and South Africa, etc. Landtman has noted them too in Kiwai. He says: "Nearly all the outdoor dances can be called mimetic, inasmuch as they imitate actions from real life. They belong to the prettiest dances of all, some indeed being very picturesque and also displaying great ingenuity, for the dancers do not just copy the various movements in a mechanical way,

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 94-5.

but let their gestures, simplified and conventionalized, mimic the characteristic features of each act. One cannot always understand, without being told, what the dances represent, but having once grasped their meaning, one watches the performance of the dancers with unfeigned admiration.”¹

The Toba Indians of Gran Chaco “impatiently await the algaroba-season (end November—end January) and they try to ‘hurry on’ its coming by various magical means which are thought to influence the plant-spirits. Whereas, for instance, the Matacos beat the drum every night for about a month previous to the commencement of the algaroba-season proper, in order to influence the plant-spirit, and to expel the evil demons who try to prevent the fruit from reaching maturity, the Tobas dance their festival dance, the *nomi*, with the same view. The dance is thus supposed to ‘hurry on’ the algaroba, and to effect a good harvest. During the season proper, the dance goes on daily and is believed continually to influence the fruits.”²

V

Is it possible to penetrate yet further into the significance of these ceremonies and these magico-propitiatory dances? As we have already noted, the natives do not count upon the magic virtue proper to the rites, dances, and songs alone; they base their hopes upon the succour of their ancestors and the recently dead, whose presence the ceremonies secure. All the observers who give us sufficiently detailed testimony expressly mention this fact. But even had they not done so, we should be quite correct in rectifying the omission, if they report that in the dances and ceremonies in question there is recourse to masks other than those of animals. For there seems to be no doubt that in nearly all such dances the wearers of these masks represent “ghosts,” that is, save in exceptional cases, the dead or the ancestral spirits.

Now the word “represent” must be understood here in its literal etymological sense—that in which the primitives would take it if they used it: *to re-present, to cause to reappear that which has disappeared*. As long as the actors and dancers wear these masks, and from the mere fact that they cover their

¹ G. Landtman, *op. cit.* p. 418.

² R. Karsten. *The Toba Indians of the Bolivian Gran Chaco. Acta Academiae Aboensis humaniora*. IV, p. 70. (1925).

faces, they are not only the representatives of the dead and the ancestors whom these masks portray: for the time being, they actually *become* these dead and these ancestors. To primitives, as we know, bi-presence is not an inconceivable, or even unnatural idea, and the inhabitants of the other world can therefore reappear in this one, without leaving their own, provided one knows how to bring them hither. And it is precisely for this purpose that the virtue of the ceremony is invoked.

To wear a mask thus is therefore something totally different from a game. It is the most serious and weighty matter that can be, for it is an immediate and direct contact with, and even an intimate participation in, the beings of the unseen world from whom such indispensable favours are expected. For the time being, the individuality of the actor gives place to that of the ghost or spirit he represents, or rather, the two become one.

These beliefs and customs would doubtless seem less strange to us if we, escaping for a moment from our own mental habits, try to take our stand at the primitives' point of view. First of all, as we have already seen in the Introduction, the general orientation of their thought brings them into constant familiarity with the supernatural world, that is, with the powers and forces dwelling therein, the "genii" or guardian spirits of the animal and vegetable species, and the "unseen members" of the clan, (to use the striking expression quoted by Fewkes), those who have left our world for the next.—On the other hand, to put on a mask, with these people, is not, as it is with us, a mere disguise behind which the individual remains himself. It is to undergo a real transformation. The mask is to the head what the skin is to the rest of the body. The man who places on his head a mask representing a bird is metamorphosed, at any rate partially, into that bird, just as he who covers himself with the skin of a wolf or a bear becomes *ipso facto* wolf or bear. We need only recall the panther-men and leopard-men of West Africa. When they have assumed the skin of the animal, the necessary magical conditions being fulfilled, they feel that they really have become panthers and leopards; they possess the strength and ferocity of these animals. Should they fail in their capture, and their victim, defending himself, snatches away their skin, they are instantly no more than very frightened men, and then they can be easily overpowered.

In Darkest Africa we often find the idea expressed that the skin and the body are the same thing. "*Kpɔwoto*: body, skin. As

in many Congo languages, the same word can be used equally well for the skin as for the body.”¹ Smith and Dale say too: “Another charm, *Wakudifundula* (for ‘shedding one’s skin’) enables a man to turn into a lion or other beast.”²—Conversely, an animal through magic means may shed its skin and assume the body and appearance of a man. In a Kpelle legend that Westermann relates, we find a crocodile that had carried off a woman and lived in the river with her. One day the woman’s husband set out to find his wife’s corpse. Just at the same moment the crocodile came out of the water. He took off his skin, hid it near the bank, and went off to the town. The man then went off in his turn, but he carried away the skin, and hung it up in his kitchen. . . . Later on he went to play at dice with his companions, the crocodile (in his human form) being among them. The latter began to tease him, but the man, throwing the dice, said: ‘Keep quiet, crocodile-skin, you were seen to change!’ When night fell, the crocodile left, but when he came to the river-bank, he looked for his skin and could not find it. . . . In order to get it again, he restored the woman to her husband.”³ If his skin had not been returned to him he would have remained a man (as it happens in another story, which I have quoted elsewhere). As soon as he had regained possession of his skin, he puts it on, and is once more a crocodile. In short, as the dictionary says: “*skin*” is the same as “*body*.” Here again is a story recently obtained from the Safwa, who are also a Bantu tribe. “The python crept into the hut and slept there. While it was there a young girl entered the hut, saying: ‘I will be the python’s wife.’ The snake took the young girl and she became his wife. One night, while they were in bed, the woman awoke and saw that the python had discarded its skin, and had turned into a man. Then she hastily took the skin and threw it into the fire where it was burnt to ashes. The next morning when the python awoke it looked for its skin, but being unable to find it, it was now no longer a python, but a man all the time.”⁴

The Pueblos in North America hold the same belief. “A common means of metamorphosis is by putting on the skin of the creature one is to be changed into.” (This is for witches.)

¹ C. R. Lagae and H. V. van den Plas. *La langue des Azande*. III, p. 87.

² Smith & Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. I. p. 264.

³ D. Westermann. *Die Kpelle*, p. 521.

⁴ E. Kootz-Kretschmer, *op. cit.* II, pp. 97-8.

"Analogously in Pueblo folk-tales all the creatures become like people when they take off their skins, or, in the mask ritual, men become kachina spirits when they put on the kachina masks."¹

This last touch shows that the legends just quoted were alluding to a belief that is very generally admitted, for it would be impossible to state more explicitly that the skin and the mask have the same magic power, or that one *is* the being whose mask or skin one is wearing. Consequently when, during the ceremonies, and the ritual dances, the actors have assumed their masks—and very often, too, they wear a costume and ornaments to complete the transformation—they have *ipso facto* become the beings of whom the masks, from our own point of view, are symbols and likenesses.

In this matter, as in so many others, symbolism has not the same meaning to primitive minds as it has to our own. To us a symbol merely prefigures, and, strictly speaking, takes the place of that which it represents. But the primitive mentality is not accustomed to the "as if," and as a general rule, does not even understand it. The allegories and parables, the sacred books that are brought to them by the missionaries, are all accepted literally by them, as accounts of things that really happened. What we call a resemblance is to the primitives a consubstantiality, and thus the symbol, by virtue of a participation in it, *is* actually the being or the thing it represents.

Since it is thus, the ceremonies and dances in which the actors wear costumes and masks have a more profound significance and bearing than is generally stated. Both actors and spectators have doubtless a more or less distinct consciousness of the utilitarian end in view (even though we must not forget what Strehlow has said upon that point, viz: that there are ceremonies from which no apparent advantage of any kind is expected). But this end is not their main interest, and the utility of the ceremony, important, even vital, as it may well be for the group, has nevertheless only a subsidiary claim.

The fundamental *raison d'être* of both ceremony and dance, to those who celebrate and those who watch them, is the mystic communion, the fusion which then makes them one with the mythic or totemic ancestor, animal-man or plant-man, as the case may be, or with the tutelary genius of the animal or vege-

¹E. C. Parsons. *Witchcraft among the Pueblos; Indian or Spanish? Man*, 1927, pp. 106-07.

table species, or with the ancestors and the dead members of their group, who have responded to their call. Why should they try to gain the good-will of these unseen powers, since they are privileged to make one with them? When he has reached this state of mystic ecstasy, the primitive no longer feels himself exposed and defenceless before the unforeseen dangers of the supernatural world. He has found, in this world itself, something better than succour, protection, allies. The participation which these ceremonies assure him is his salvation.

The object in view, then, the influence they exercise, are not purely magical, nor are they directly propitiatory. We hesitate to term them "religious," for they do not comprise any feeling of love or adoration, or any giving of oneself to a divinity. Yet nevertheless these ceremonies are religious—were it only for the communion in which the living members of the group feel themselves united with either the dead members or the unseen powers, and for the intensity of the sacred emotion they arouse.

On many occasions, and particularly in the passage which follows, Koch-Grünberg has laid stress upon the mystic efficacy of the ceremonial dances, and the participation they effect. "The idea of magic influence is at the basis of all these mimetic representations. They are destined to bring to the village and its inhabitants, their plantations, and to all the surrounding nature, blessing and fertility. . . . From the circumstance that the dancer in his movements and gestures imitates, as faithfully as it is in his power to do, the being whom he endeavours to represent, he identifies himself with him. The magic power dwelling in the mask is transferred to the dancer, makes him a masterful 'demon,' capable of subduing 'demons' or making them favourable to him. Especially the 'demons' of plant-life, those of the animal species which play a part in the ceremonies, those of the hunt and of the fishing-ground, are magically brought under the power of this man by means of this pantomime."¹

When these costumed and masked actors "represent" spirits and ghosts, do they believe in the actual presence of the latter within them? Are they conscious of the transformation in their personality, and do they still know that they are playing a part? We are often told that they try to delude the women and children, and that they themselves are not taken in by their mas-

¹ Koch-Grünberg, *Zwei Jahre unter den Indianern*. II p. 196. Cf. I p. 139.

querading. In Kiwai Island, "the women and children firmly believed that the dancers representing the spirits of the dead were actually the *real spirits* of their departed relatives and friends. The men, however, did not share that belief; they knew the whole thing was a piece of deception, but did their utmost to encourage the belief held by the women and children. Yet these same men firmly believed that the spirits of their ancestors were present at all their dances, and also at their gardening operations and their fishing, though unseen by them, and that they rejoiced at the honor done to their memory by the dancers and the sacrificial gifts of food." ¹ Landtman says too: "Not even to the men, however, is the *hóriómu* a play only. They firmly believe that real ghosts take part in the rites, although invisible to the eye, and their whole demeanour during the ceremony is inspired with awe and reverence. The dead require to be celebrated in the *hóriómu* ritual, and therefore the people are anxious that each of their recently departed relatives should be represented by some one among the other ghosts, and ask each other to undertake this office, giving the dancers presents of food by way of reward. Anyone who acts as a spirit at the *hóriómu* will afterwards be assisted by the real ghost when spearing *dugong*." ²

If through the magic virtue of the mask, as Koch-Grünberg puts it, the dead are identified with those who "represent" them, and make one with them, they can only become visible in the persons of the dancers in whom they are actually present. No doubt the actors often have recourse to "tricks" to make the uninformed spectators believe that the mysterious beings whom they see dancing are veritable ghosts, and not their living neighbours, but we must not at once conclude that there is fraud and chicanery. Up to a certain point the actors may be sincere, and really share the illusion they are creating. This is the direct effect of the participation which has been accomplished in them. In the same way, medicine-men and shamans in many communities do not themselves hesitate to employ sleight of hand. They are none the less nearly always convinced of the efficacy of their practices, and as credulous as their clients. The Eskimo shaman, save in exceptional cases, does not doubt the reality of his subterranean or celestial travels. And indeed, to minds that accept bi-presence as quite natural, why should such travels seem

¹ E. B. Riley. *Among Papuan Head-hunters*. pp. 300-01.

² G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 335.

incredible? The fact that the shaman remained lying on his pallet did not prevent him from being transported to the moon, or to the depths of the ocean.

Writing of the New Hebrides, F. Speiser discriminates between masks used in the ceremonies of secret societies, and the rest. "Among the number of masks used by secret societies, I put all those which, worn with a garment of leaves that hang down to the feet, conceal those wearing them, so that they can present themselves as ghosts. This conception must originally have been the one which inspired all the masks. It no longer exists in the case of masks which cover the face only, and thus allow the wearer to be recognized. . . . Grotesque masks intended to inspire fear are consequently always used when the body of the wearer is entirely concealed."¹ The use of masks, in ceremonies in which those who wear them represent spirits or ghosts, seems everywhere to have implied, at least in the beginning, a belief in the actual presence of these, and their identification with the dancers. An example taken from an African report will suffice us here. "It is difficult to gauge the extent of the Ibo man's belief that these *maws* are re-embodied spirits. They undoubtedly think that they are not men, and that the ceremony of making *maws* has somehow transformed the man and endowed him with extraordinary supernatural qualities. Among the women and children, the belief is complete, and so tenacious is the idea with them, that even when it is disproved they cannot abandon it: it is much too deeply ingrained."²

VI

If we are to account for the intense emotion that seizes and carries away both actors and bystanders during these ceremonies, we must take into consideration, not only the effect produced by the movements and gestures of the actors, but also that of the measured dance, the music, and the songs. In accordance with a well-known psychological law, any rather powerful emotion is immediately expressed by movements of the body and sounds uttered by the voice. Conversely, this muscular and vocal expression reacts in its turn upon the emotion

¹ F. Speiser. *Ethnologische Materialien aus den Neuen-Hebriden und der Banks-Inseln*. pp. 377-78.

² G. T. Basden. *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*. pp. 723-28. (1921).

and increases it, and the intensity of this twofold effect is doubled when the emotion is common to a crowd, each of the actors and the spectators perceiving the movements of others and hearing their voices.

Elsdon Best, writing of the Maoris, says: "These people made use of song to express their feelings and thoughts. When we are listening to one of our race delivering a speech, ceremonial or otherwise, it would come as a surprise to us, were he to break into song every now and again. Yet this is just what the Maori does. . . . Whenever his emotions are stirred, then he is prompted to indulge in song. Hence these forms of expression are observed in connection with the most prosaic occurrences. The simplest form of recital uttered even by a child is delivered with such modulations of tone as to render it euphonious and grateful to the ear. This is an aspect of Maori mentality that the writer wishes to impress upon the reader."¹ And a few pages further, we read: "Nothing was too trivial to serve as subject for a song. In a MS. book containing some four hundred native songs, I note one that was composed by a man who had lost his fish-hook. . . . One of the most peculiar is composed as a lament for a pig that had died, leaving many friends disconsolate in the world of life. It was the first pig that had been acquired by the tribe. . . . Almost all natives are singers, after the manner of their kind."²

If daily, commonplace emotions thus find a spontaneous expression in song, this will be ever more so with the violent emotions aroused by the ceremonies in those who take part in them, or witness them. The form taken by the song is as a rule stereotyped, and its words usually unintelligible. Moreover, the primitive does not give his emotion vocal expression alone. Unless he has some reason for concealing it (as, for instance, he often does in the case of anger)³ he imitates it and makes a play of it. "Action," says Willoughby, "is as natural to a primitive people as speech. When the worshippers desire to relieve their overcharged feelings they proceed instinctively to dramatize their needs and wishes. In time of drought a man will go to the grave of an ancestor, taking the milk-pail, the thong with which he ties the cow's legs for milking, or some such implements, and holding them over the grave will beg the spirit to

¹ Elsdon Best. *The Maori*, II. p. 135.

² *Ibid.* pp. 141-42.

³ Cf. *supra*, Chapter II, pp. 73-75.

let these things still be of use. The clapping of hands, the utterance of that curious ululation that only Bantu women can properly produce—both being methods of saluting royalty—and even dancing, are intimately associated with praise. A very intelligent tribesman goes so far as to state, in a letter to me, that songs of war and other sad occasions are the only ones ‘not sung with the feet.’ ”¹

However important the part played by movements and dramatization in the expression of the primitives’ emotions may be, that of music and rhythm surpass it. There are hardly any communities, however primitive, where some musical instrument cannot be found. Even the Australian aborigines and the Bushmen possess them. Among the Bangala of the Upper Congo, “many of the nganga (medicine-men) used much drumming and singing at their ceremonies, especially at the rites for frightening and exhorting evil spirits. Such sounds were supposed to exert a great influence over their patients, and over those spirits of disease that were affecting them. Drumming also soothed the patient and made him amenable to the nganga, so that in answer to his questions he could properly diagnose the case.”² The drum, then, independently of its psychological effect, well known to the natives, exerts a real mystic influence. It acts upon the dispositions of unseen beings as it does upon those of human beings. It is thus the necessary accompaniment to all the ceremonies in which the group feels itself in contact with invisible supernatural powers, and is endeavouring to gain their favour. From the mystic point of view, the drum is an indispensable part of the magico-propitiatory apparatus.

We know that the African negroes, as a rule, are very musical. Present-day fashion, both in Europe and in America, no longer allows us to ignore the fact that in the matter of rhythm they are our superiors. But perhaps we have not so fully taken into account the effect of music on their feelings, and the place occupied by music in their ceremonies. “The more one listens to native music,” says Basden, “the more one is conscious of its vital power. It touches the chords of man’s inmost being, and stirs his primal instincts. It demands the performer’s whole attention, and so sways the individual as almost to divide asunder, for the time being, mind and body. . . . Under its influence, and

¹ Rev. W. C. Willoughby. *Race problems in the new Africa*. p. 76.

² Rev. J. H. Weeks. *Anthropological notes on the Bangala*. J. A. I. XL. p. 404. (1910).

that of the accompanying dance, one has seen men and women pass into a completely dazed condition, oblivious and apparently unconscious of the world around them. . . . This music is savage; its instruments are barbaric; but it pulsates with the spirit of the thing in its most potent forms. . . . Even the European, if he has within him the feeblest susceptibility to music, is liable to find the elemental forces of his nature strangely stirred by the passionate fervour of the 'possessed' musicians."¹

With these Ibos, dancing produces a similar frenzy. "As a matter of fact, each person becomes so completely absorbed in the dance, that any interference would give rise to emphatic protest and annoyance. I have watched such dances and can testify to the extraordinary manner in which the dancers, for the time being, lose consciousness of their surroundings. One stands before them, and they give no sign of recognition; one speaks, but there is no response other than a fixed stare. Only gradually do they become normal again."²

Of the Iglulik Eskimos Rasmussen relates circumstances of the same kind. "*Qilaut* means literally, 'that by means of which the spirits are called up.' This term for the drum, which with its mysterious rumbling dominates the general tone of the songs, is doubtless a reminiscence of the time when all song was sacred. For the old ones believe that song came to man from the souls in the Land of the Dead, brought thence by a shaman; spirit songs are therefore the beginning of all song. And the direct relation of the songs to the spirits is also explained by the fact that every Eskimo who, under the influence of powerful emotion, loses control of himself, often breaks into song, whether the occasion be pleasurable or painful" (as we found to be the case with the Maoris).

"There are very precise rules for the use of the *qilaut*. The skin of the drum itself is never struck, the edge of the wooden frame being beaten instead, with a short and rather thick stick."³

Rasmussen later describes gatherings in which the audience singing in chorus to support the melody of the soloists, take up the refrain of an incantation relating to a walrus hunt. "These words: *ajaja, ja aja, aja ja*, are always the same, and these words alone can work up the chorus to full pitch when constantly repeated, and all can join in. And this general participa-

¹ G. T. Basden. *op. cit.* pp. 192-93.

² *Ibid.* p. 133.

³ Kn. Rasmussen. *op. cit.* pp. 228-29.

tion, when every one present can feel, as it were, a part of the song itself, is perhaps what makes it possible for a song festival to go on for many hours without anyone growing tired.”¹

Such processes of collective hypnotism, comparable with those indulged in by the African negroes, are, like them, very convenient for ending those states of ecstasy or *trance* that have often been described, in which the subjects, beside themselves, have no longer any existence save in a world of intensely mystical emotion. It is in such moments as these that the communion of feeling between the actors in the ceremony and the supernatural powers or beings—spirits, ancestors, ghosts of the recently defunct, tutelary genii of the species, etc.—in whose honour it is celebrated, those who are present, and those who take part in it, is effected. The various episodes of the dance, the spectacle of the actors’ evolutions, the furious and rapid movements repeated times without number, the songs, the rhythm and the volume of sounds produced by the various instruments, the costumes, coloured ornaments, masks—all these gradually, though increasingly, coalesce with the religious aim which has more or less consciously inspired the ceremony. The emotional paroxysm to which all alike, actors and spectators, are finally reduced, while it robs them of their self-possession, yet gives them the most complete assurance that their aim has been attained.²

¹ *Ibid.* p. 236.

² Cf. Emile Durkheim. *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. pp. 308-14.

CHAPTER V

THE WORSHIP OF ANCESTORS AND OF THE DEAD

I

AMONG the unseen powers whose anger the primitive must avoid and whose good-will and support he must, if possible, secure, spirits, ancestors and the recently dead predominate. In this chapter we shall treat only of the ancestors and the dead. From the standpoint we have taken up, the primitives' relations with them are better defined, and we know rather more about them than we do of their connection with the spirits. On the other hand, the propitiatory measures directed to the latter—the spirits of the mountain, the river, the earth, the animal and vegetable species, illnesses, and so on—do not differ in essentials from those used with regard to the ancestors and the dead.

Before beginning to analyse our data it might be as well to note the misunderstandings and the errors which may arise from expressions very frequently used, such as "the religion of the ancestors," "the worship of the dead," and the like, if the necessary reservations are not present to our minds. Neither the dead nor the ancestors seem to be pictured by primitives as possessing the traditional attributes of divinities, even minor ones, or those of demi-gods, and without these attributes primitives would not make them the object of a religion or a form of worship. Junod, for instance, in his *Life of a South African Tribe*, has very clearly shown that in spite of the power attributed to ancestors and to the dead, they are not really "deified." Their nature is in no sense transfigured, and in the other world they remain human. They do not therefore become the object of a strictly religious devotion. There is no doubt that the living are sorely in need of assurance that the dead are kindly disposed towards them, and to secure their good-will, they have recourse to various propitiatory operations, inspired by tradition always held sacred, and in particular, they resort to oblations and sacrifices. In this respect we may possibly see a form

of worship, but only on condition that the word is taken *lato sensu*, and not enveloped in an atmosphere that is strictly religious.

Instead, therefore, of pursuing a convenient analogy, which would speedily become fallacious, we shall, at any rate for the moment, discard expressions dealing with religion and worship. We shall merely try to find what attitude primitives have been led to assume towards their ancestors and their dead, given the way in which they picture their relations with them. In the second part of *The "Soul" of the Primitive* I have made an analysis of these ideas of theirs, and I trust I may be excused for referring the reader to that volume. He will find there that the dead are in reality living, having merely passed from this world to another. There they have become invisible, impalpable, invulnerable, at any rate in ordinary circumstances, and to the generality of human beings.

With this exception their condition does not differ in essentials from what it has been in this world. Their needs are almost the same, and since they are themselves incapable of providing for them, they depend upon the living, just as the living, in their turn, depend upon them. They thus find themselves obliged to rely on their descendants, and are more or less kindly disposed towards them, according to whether their expectations are fulfilled or not. Their displeasure may have dire consequences, and a man who has drawn it down upon himself lives in constant dread; he hastens to procure forgiveness, if he can.

The world of the dead is thus in constant relations with that of the living. In this sense, it forms part of what we call nature. Those recently deceased are really, according to an expression we have already quoted, "the unseen members of the clan." In nearly all primitive communities, therefore, the natives consider them as neighbours with whom they would on no account be on unfriendly terms. Their relations with them must remain satisfactory and they try to manage this with as little bribery as possible.

We shall not dwell here on the brief period which directly follows upon the death, in which the recently dead, according to general belief, is not yet far away. During these critical days, fear is the predominating factor in the complexity of feelings which agitate the survivors. They are anxious to know that the dead man, conscious of his new state and resigned to his lot, has definitely left this world.

Let us suppose that the funeral ceremonies, with the accustomed ritual, have taken place. The dead man is now settled in the world in which he must henceforth dwell. What relations are to be established between him and "his" living?

The most striking, and also the most constant feature of them is again the fear which the dead inspire. This has very often been stressed by missionaries. Thus, with the Papuans of British New Guinea, "here, as in everything else in the native mind, at least everything that touches the mysteries of life and death, that has to do with what may be called religion, there seems no suggestion of goodness, of help, of love. All the ideas turn on evil and fear. As they have apparently no conception of good spirits who help and comfort, and to whom they may appeal, so all their thoughts of the spirits of the dead are thoughts of jealousy and malice. They must provide the death feast, or the spirit will be angry, their pigs will die, they will themselves break out in horrid sores or waste away and die, their crops will fail." ¹

Should one of these disasters occur, they will at once think of the anger, or even displeasure, of a dead person. It is not the only possible cause, but at any rate it is one of the most probable, and therefore in a matter of serious illness (unless there is good reason for suspecting a sorcerer's machinations), it is the idea that presents itself first of all. "When a Nias native," says Kleiweg de Zwaan, "neglects to pay the honours due to the *Zatua* (carved effigy) of a dead relative, he is punished for it by an illness or some other misfortune."² And he adds: "It is not only to the spirits of the dead that the power of inflicting illnesses is attributed. Many natives believe that the *beghu* (spirits) of dead animals possess it too. So when an epidemic broke out in the district inhabited by Thomas the missionary, the natives informed him that it was caused by the spirit of his dead horse."³

The Xosa Kafirs have a special word addressed to one afflicted with severe illness, "the affliction being supposed to be sent by his ancestors in displeasure about something done or left undone, especially the latter. People entering his hut exclaim: '*Camagu!*' which means: 'Let there be propitiousness! Let there be clemency or alleviation! Let the departed of your

¹ H. Newton. *In far New Guinea*, p. 229.

² Kleiweg de Zwaan, *Die Heilkunde der Niasser*. pp. 18-19. (1913).

³ *Ibid.* p. 23.

people and your chiefs look upon you!"¹ . . . Another word, *u-taru*, means kindness, tender feeling, sympathy, mercy. . . . Originally the doctor (priest), when entering the hut of a sick person, said: '*Taruni!*' addressing the ghosts of the ancestors, and imploring them to be propitious, to have mercy on the sick person, and withdraw their evil influence from him."² Thus, before doing anything else, the doctor invokes the mercy of the dead for the sick man. He there and then admits that the trouble is probably caused by them, and that if they are appeased it will disappear.

We find the same attitude, though sometimes less respectful, among the Xosa's neighbours the Zulus. A child is seriously ill, and a medicine-man has been consulted. He tells them that the illness is due to the anger of the ancestors. "Why," exclaimed the father, "did not our ancestral spirits tell me in a dream that there was something they wanted, instead of revealing themselves by coming to kill the child in this way? What prevented them from telling me in a dream what they complained about, instead of coming to kill the child in this way, without saying anything to me first? These dead men are fools! Why have they revealed themselves by killing the child in this way without telling me? Go and fetch the goat, boys."³ (The goat is for the sacrifice which will appease the dead.) The father's indignation is comprehensible. The dead have failed to observe the tacit agreement between themselves and the living. When they want something that the latter have neglected to give them, it is understood that before resorting to angry measures, they will give warning, and make known their requirements in the dream of the person interested. There are even special doctors (*isanusi*) whom the ancestors (*amahlozi*) have qualified to interpret the dreams they send.

In his dictionary Kropf has further explained the different meanings of the word *i-dini*, or rather, the various circumstances in which it is right to offer the propitiatory sacrifice or *dini*, and it is just when the displeased ancestors have given a warning, or already struck a blow.

"1. Should anyone dream about his ancestors who are dead, it was taken as an indication that they were displeased at some neglect, and demanded an *idini* (propitiatory sacrifice).

¹ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 53.

² *Ibid.* p. 384.

³ C. H. Callaway. *The religious system of the Amazulu*, p. 371.

"2. Should there be illness, either of man or beast, and a doctor be called in and say: 'I see, your ancestors are displeased, because you have not rendered them their due'; it was understood that a sacrifice was demanded.

"3. Should there be no rain, the people would go to the chief and say: 'Why do you allow it to be thus? Why don't you invoke your ancestors?' whereupon he would offer a sacrifice." ¹

Other disasters, both public and private, may proceed from this same cause. With the Safwa of East Africa, "during the government of Mwenipyana there was a great famine in the land, and men were reduced to feeding on leaves and roots. According to one native, it was the *vazimu* or spirits of the dead chiefs that had sent this famine, because they were angry that Mwenipyana had become chief." ²

These Bantus, therefore, hold that it is of the utmost importance to avoid giving the dead any just cause for complaint. To neglect to bring them, on the due dates, that to which they are entitled is to call down misfortune upon themselves, for even without warning, they can manifest their displeasure in a cruel manner. Every native, for his part, according to his status from the chief to the man of the very lowest rank, must faithfully fulfil the obligations incumbent upon him towards the dead and the ancestors. His nearest relatives, and sometimes the whole group with them, are no less interested in this matter than he is himself.

II

All ancestors are not on the same level. There is often a kind of hierarchy established among them, for the social conditions of the next world are a reflection of those here. With the Basutos, for instance, "each family is deemed to be under the direct protection and safeguard of its ancestors, but the tribe as a whole recognizes as its national gods the ancestors of the chief who is governing them. . . . They distinguish between the ancient gods and the recent ones. The latter are considered of inferior power, but more accessible, hence the oft-used formula: 'New gods, pray to the old gods for us!'" ³ Here it is a case of

¹ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 76. Upon the chief's function as rain-maker, cf. *infra*. Ch. V. pp. 141-143.

² E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *op. cit.* II, p. 187.

³ E. Casalis. *Les Bassoutos*, p. 262.

the recently dead and the dead of long ago, the ancestors. Neither, as we have just seen, are properly speaking divinities; nevertheless, the missionaries, who often talk of the "worship" and of the "religion" of the dead, find themselves led to use the term "gods" also. To account for the resistance to the new faith they bring to the natives, they believe them to be pertinaciously devoted to their traditions, and in this they are quite right. But it does not follow that these traditions constitute a "religion," in the same sense as Christianity, nor that the ancestors are "gods," and the homage rendered them "worship." Junod, although he, too, speaks of them as "gods," does not leave us in doubt as to what the ba-Ronga ideas on the subject are.

"Every man when he dies becomes a *chikoembo*. But, as in the case of the different human beings on earth, there are various categories of gods. There are young and old. . . . We even see some that crawl upon the ground like babies. . . . The individual who dies preserves his age, appearance, habits, as he had them in this life. . . .

"There are also different grades of importance among them. The *great gods*, or *gods of the country*, are the ancestors of the reigning chief. It is to them that prayers and sacrifices are offered whenever the interest of the tribe as a whole is at stake—during a national calamity, in times of famine and drought, at the beginning of the season when it is hoped to obtain abundant crops. It is their names that are found in the royal genealogies. . . .

"Nevertheless, each family possesses its kyrielle of *chikouembo*, which is more or less lengthy, and more or less well preserved. . . . These gods are familiar spirits, manes, in the strict sense of the word. They have much in common with the lares and penates of the ancient Romans.

"The *chikouembo* are feared more than they are loved." ¹

With the ba-Ila also, "the basangushi, (ghosts), regarded as objects of adoration, are named mizhimo. Strictly speaking, not all basangushi are mizhimo, but only those more or less helpful to men, not those who, for some reason, are inimical, though in a loose way the word is applied to all ghosts.

"Muzhimo is not a personal name, but neuter or collective; the plural, as almost always in Bantu languages, is mizhimo, not bazhimo. It would seem as if the dead were regarded as

¹ H. A. Junod. *Lcs ba-Ronga*. pp. 381-82.

having lost their individualities and become mere potentialities. . . .

"For the purpose of description we may divide the mizhimo into three classes: personal (guardian spirits), family, and communal divinities.¹

"The genius is the man's own personal divinity; each family has its own, and the chief's or headman's divinities are in a way the guardians of the village. Over and above all these are the great mizhimo, whose function it is to care for the common interests of the communes to which they belong. They are distinguished from all others by their greater permanence; within the family the ghosts of one's remote ancestors cease to be regarded, but the respect paid to communal divinities lasts as long as the community survives. And they are unlike in this respect also: the communal divinities are never re-incarnated, but remain in the spirit world. While the ba-Ila give them all the same name: mizhimo, we may, to mark the grades in the hierarchy, call the three classes: genii, divinities, and demigods."² This last sentence shows that in the authors' thought there is no ambiguity, for while giving two of these categories of ancestors the names of "divinities" and "demigods," it is expressly stated that to the ba-Ila all of them are mizhimo, that is, dead human beings.

"The family divinities are the ghosts of one's grandfathers, grandmothers, father and mother, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters. In the unseen world they continue to take an interest in things mundane, and, in particular, in the welfare of their relatives on earth. Theoretically their number is indefinite; all the deceased members of a man's family are his mizhimo, but in practice it is mostly only those who have recently passed over that are thought of.³ . . . Husband and wife each have their own. A man has to do only with the divinities of his own family . . .

". . . A man and his wife, being of different families, have different divinities, and it would be an offence for a man to appeal to his wife's divinities, or she to his. More curious is the word 'buditazhi' [a very grave mistake] applied to the divinities themselves—to any who should presume to go beyond their province and affect, for good or ill, the members of another family."⁴

¹ Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia* II, 164.

² *Ibid.* p. 180.

³ *Ibid.* p. 165.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 165-66.

As for the honours and the offerings that a man owes to his tutelary genius, I must refer the reader to *The "Soul" of the Primitive*, for this is discussed at length in Chapter XI. With regard to the demigods (i.e., the ancestors of the royal family, whose anger is manifested in public calamities—epidemics, earthquakes, drought, famine, etc.), the regnant chief alone has the right to address them; it is he who must placate them when they are offended; entreat their good-will and effective help, in case of war, for instance; and very particularly implore them to grant the rainfall. This last function is as it were essential to the condition of chief. In the unpublished epic of Chaka, the African Napoleon, after the death of Chaka's father we find that the old men are proclaiming Mfokasana chief. The crowd at once calls out: "Think of our cattle, chief! Look after us; we are thy people. Let there be rain!" A little later, Mfokasana is killed and Dingiswayo, the paramount chief, names Chaka as his successor. The whole assembly acclaims Chaka, crying: "Rain! Rain! We are thy people, chief. Look after us."¹

Whether it is to be a rainy season, or one of drought, is a question of life or death to these kafirs, who cannot subsist without their cattle. When the right time comes, will the rain fall, or not? It is the dead chiefs who decide the matter. Now it is only their descendant, their successor, who, when the need arises, can plead with them. This is one of the reasons of the unusual mystic prestige of the chief among the Bantus. If he dies, the whole tribe is disabled, lost, like a hive that has lost its queen. No other person is qualified to apply to the dead chiefs or supplicate them to put an end to the drought in which men and cattle will perish.

Mme. Kootz-Kretschmer gives some very characteristic stories relating to this matter. A usurper named Merere seized the Safwa territory, and took the place of the paramount chief. He exercised the powers of the lawful chief, but this usurper could not, like him, make the ancestors pay any attention to him, for they did not know him, and they remained deaf to all his entreaties. "One day he said to some Safwa who had come to him: 'Go and pray at the graves of your chief Mwaryego's ancestors, so that we may have rain.' They answered, 'Good, Merere. Here is Mudjenda, who has always prayed at the graves of Mwaryego's ancestors.' And Merere said: 'From now on, the ancestors of Mwaryego will begin to love me; you,

¹ *Chaka*. Ch. XIV.

Mudjenda, and the other elders always pray henceforward at their graves.'

"As the rain failed to appear, Merere seized these priests, bound them with ropes, and exposed them to the sun, giving them only salt meat and ground nuts. Then he ordered them to eat. When they had eaten, and were suffering from thirst, he would not give them any water to drink, saying: 'You did not pray to your chief's ancestors properly, for if you had done so, it would have brought the rain.' When they told him: 'Merere, it is God who sends the rain; no man can make it come' [here we see the influence of the missionaries], he struck them, saying: 'Pray at once! We must have rain immediately!' Then the priests uttered some words, no matter what, in the form of prayer."¹

This story, written down at the dictation of a native, shows to what extent the belief in the power of the ancestors has persisted, in spite of missionary influence. If the rain fails to come, it is because they are displeased, and only the legitimate chief, their descendant, and his duly qualified representatives, have any chance of influencing their mood. The usurper, a stranger, powerful as he may be in mundane affairs, does not even try to influence them himself. He knows that they will not listen to him, and this is why, when an opportunity occurs for the tribe to get rid of him, they do not hesitate to do so. On another occasion, a chief was entreated by his people to stop an excessive downpour, and to ask his ancestors what was the meaning of it. "When we reached the spur of the mountains, it was raining so fiercely that we could get no further. We spoke to our chief, saying: 'Master, beg the ancestors to take the rain out of our way. Ask them to consent, if it is really a good thing for us to establish ourselves yonder.' [There was a trek in prospect.] Then the chief Maryego prayed to his ancestors, and said: 'O ancestors who are under the ground [he is invoking his father and grandparents by name], come to our aid! . . . Is it really *you* who have sent this rain? Are you thus preventing our departure? If it be so, I shall turn round and go back to Zumba, whence I came. But if not, then do make the rain to cease, that I may continue my way. And further, O my ancestors . . . if death in some form or other awaits us in the country whither we desire to go, make the rain stop me here on the spur of the mountain, so that I may not arrive there. If

¹ E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *Die Safwa*, II. pp. 237-38.

I need not fear death yonder, let the rain clear off a little, and give me a little light, that I may see my way.' . . .

"After this prayer of Maryego to his ancestors, the sky grew clear, and there was not a drop more rain." ¹

Everything that is out of the common is significant. This unusual rain which hinders the tribe in its trek to a new country—must it not be an omen, a warning? Must they renounce their plans of emigration, and return to the old spot? The men beg the chief to put this question to his ancestors, for such a rain does not fall without their permission, and the chief will learn from them what it means.

III

When the ancestors and those recently dead receive from the living all that they have a right to demand, and when the conduct of their descendants is satisfactory, they do not show themselves either indifferent or ungrateful. When favourably disposed towards them, they are ready to accord them help and protection whenever they need it. According to Junod—and other observers have noticed the same thing—the Bantu in his relations with the dead rules his conduct on the Bantim: *Do ut des*. If he offers them the food and drink they require, he reckons to receive its equivalent in some form or other. If he periodically presents them with oblations and sacrifices, he expects in return to be protected in all circumstances, and to emerge safe and sound from all dangerous situations.

Before leaving the country where his father was buried, a Safwa went to his grave with a full bottle of beer and a fowl, to take leave of him. "I began to pray, and I said: 'Father, I, your son, come to take leave of you.' And I said: 'Remain here, keep in good health; for I am leaving this country, and you will be alone here. We are going back with Maryego our chief to Asafwa, where we came from. . . . And now, father, I am going to ask you to pray for me while I am on my way, and not to be angry with me. In the country I am going to, be with me, and accompany me. Arrange with your parents who are underground with you [in the Land of the Dead], so that everything may prosper with me during the trek.' . . ." ²

It is the same thing with the Dschaggas. "The native when on a journey knows that his dead are accompanying him. With

¹ *Ibid.* II. p. 227.

² *Ibid.* II. 228.

brief prayers he commends himself to their protection, and they form an effective guard around him. There is one who goes in front to defend him against open attack; another follows him, to safeguard him against ambush, and two others are on right and left of him. The ancestors take a great interest in his earthly career. The tutelary genius of each home, that is, the first man who built a dwelling in that spot, especially loves all those who inhabit it, as a father cherishes his children, and he does everything in his power to secure their happiness. It is to him that they turn in times of distress.”¹ There is no reason to doubt Gutmann’s insight here, for he is an excellent observer, nor can we question the correctness of his expressions, but we may merely note that the circumstances he relates seem to be exceptional, for as a rule the ancestors are not credited with such warm, disinterested affection for their descendants.

Like E. W. Smith, Gutmann distinguishes three classes of ancestors, but he arranges them in a different scheme. He does not classify them according to the extent of the domain wherein their influence is exerted, but according to the length of time since their decease. There are: “1. the most recently dead, the known ghosts (*Geister*). These are the latest of the ancestors, known to some of those still living; their name, or at any rate, their rank, is still familiar. It is to these that sacrifices are offered in the courtyard of the house or on their grave, and it is to them that the natives on a journey, in battle, or in case of need, address their prayers.—2. The generations of the older dead, who are no longer remembered by any of the living . . . are called *warimu wangi induka*. . . . These dead try to maintain relations with the living, but, being feeble and aged, they are thrust far away from the sacrifices by the other ghosts, who do not even allow them to appear on our world. They therefore only enter it clandestinely; they no longer manifest themselves to men, but attack them from the rear, making them ill, so that they may worm sacrifices out of them.—3. Finally there is yet another class of dead called *walenga*, i.e. disintegrated, those who are merely fragments. These no longer have any connection with human beings and with the spirit-world. ‘They are absolutely dead,’ say the natives . . . ‘their life is over’; for when they can no longer obtain sacrifices, life itself is taken from them.”²

¹ Br. Gutmann. *Denken und Dichten der Dschagga-Negern*, p. 127.

² *Ibid.* pp. 144-45.

For his part, Charles Dundas has noted these three classes of dead among the Dschaggas. "The line of ancestry worshipped does not extend equally far back for all relationships; for instance, while the line of maternal uncle is worshipped up to great-grandfather's uncle, that of the father extends to great-great-grandfather's father. The spirits beyond these are known as the forgotten ones. The still more ancient spirits are known as *walenga*, meaning the disintegrated." ¹

Father Fridolin Bosch, in a study of ancestor-worship among the Banyangwesi which appeared in *Anthropos* in 1925, shows that the entire religious life of the Bantus makes this its centre. "Notwithstanding the clear knowledge and the conviction he has of the existence of God, Whom he calls *likube*, (He-Who-is), the Munyangwesi gives God only a minimum of worship . . . Ancestor-worship does not demand formal adoration, nor is it in any way latria worship; it is a veneration, a worship that is precautionary, placatory and propitiatory, a worship of thanksgiving. The native has no idea of addressing it to the manes as to gods, beings of a different nature from his own. . . . It is *essentially* of the family and the tribe. . . .

"We often hear scientists and even missionaries speak of maleficent spirits, spirits of the forests, mountains, springs, lakes, rocks, etc., as beings other than the manes of the ancestors. Despite meticulous research carried on for many years, I have not been able to find a single native who had any knowledge of such a being. To our natives these are not demiurges or indeterminate spirits: they are the ancestors formerly connected with these parts, and who, as a consequence, are revered here." ²

Be that as it may, and the closing remarks seem to demand profound study, ancestors here, as in South Africa, are distinguished according to whether their domain be public or private. "Kings, medicine-men or prophets, after their death, as during life, enjoy greater reputation than the rest of the dead, and take far more interest than these do in the events of this world and the affairs of their relatives still living. Ordinary *misambwa* look after the members of their families, either by helping them, or by injuring them when they have failed in their duty to them; and the manes of dead kings look after the

¹ C. Dundas. *Kilimandjaro and its People*. p. 126.

² R. P. Fridolin Bosch. "Le culte des ancêtres chez les Banyangwesi." *Anthropos*. XX. pp. 200-01 (1925).

country as a whole. On account of this all-embracing influence the worship offered them is greater. All the members of the tribe, above all the more highly born, plead with them for the general prosperity of the country and the public welfare; they ask them for rain; and they entreat them to put an end to epidemics, pests, and public disasters.”¹ To the primitive mind this means that, since the royal ancestors have brought about these conditions, it is to their mercy that appeal must be made, in order that these troubles may cease, and their descendants be spared. They, in their anger, have sent disease, drought, and the like; they alone can withdraw them. We shall find this unvarying feature of primitive mentality again in the chapter which follows.² It is only he who has sent the ill that can repair it, and conversely, to be able to cure the ill makes the one possessing the power suspected of having been its cause. The royal ancestors are the rain-dispensers. The rain does not fall; therefore it is they who are holding it back, and refusing it to the living. An epidemic is decimating the tribe, and the royal ancestors have supplications made to them. Since they have the power to stop it, it must be they who caused it.

It may happen that the ancestors, whether of the tribe or of the family, show themselves exacting and difficult to satisfy. Thus, the Akamba dead “expect constant attention from their living relations in the form of sacrifices. The sacrifice is a gift which the *aimu* need. . . . The least inattention in this respect is avenged by the sending of all sorts of misfortunes down upon the negligent ones, such as diseases of both men and domestic animals, and even death. Therefore, when an accident happens, it is feared that it is caused by the *aimu*. . . .

“The natives never know whether they have sacrificed enough, and so they live in a constant state of anxiety.”³

With the Basabei, “when a man brewed beer, he always poured a little out for the ghosts of his father and grandfather, for if this attention was neglected, they would be offended and bring illness into the family. People also offered cows to the ghosts of their ancestors, and kept them alive. There was a recent case where a man, pressed by hunger, sold first one and then the other of two cows which he had given to the ghost of his father. The ghost came to him, and seizing him by the

¹ *Ibid.* p. 202.

² Chap. VI, pp. 170-172.

³ G. Lindblom. *op. cit.* p. 214.

throat, until it nearly choked him, demanded why he had parted with the cows without first obtaining its permission. The man promised to supply the ghost with others, and, being released on this understanding, obtained two new cows as soon as possible." ¹

Among the Bakongo, "the beneficent influence of the ancestors is exercised only in their own domain, the ground belonging to the clan. Upon a foreign soil the Mukongo can expect nothing from his *bakulu* (ancestors) and has everything to fear from hostile spirits. On his own soil, these dread and formidable spirits are vanquished by the friendly *bakulu*. All the hopes and fears born of this conception of the spirit-world attach the Mukongo very closely to the clan and its own ground. How far this world is present, sensible and real to him, it is very difficult for us to form any precise idea, but we can understand somewhat how uprooted and desolate the Mukongo feels when he is suddenly transplanted to an unfamiliar spot. We can divine also the preponderating claim of the crowned chief, the priest accepted by the *bakulu*." ² He alone can effectively address them, appease them when they are offended, and entreat them to bestow on the tribe the favour essential to its existence.

To conclude this short study of ancestor "worship" among the Bantus, we cannot do better than reproduce the prayer addressed to them by a chief, which Father Van Wing has transcribed.

"We have come here [to the burial-ground] and this is the reason of our coming. You are dead; you are really dead. We remain here in the lonely bush, where the quail wings its way telling of all our troubles. You then, you have come to us in dreams—a sign that you desire this festival, and we have come to keep it in your honour. We had no money to celebrate it, and what we have used has been borrowed. Our labours are in vain. You who have gone before us here, you will say: 'Our subjects are in dire distress.' If then you see a snare set in a certain place, make the game unable to escape it. For the man who goes out hunting, start a fire animal. You, when you see us wandering here, arrange that we may encounter only peaceful things. Make the game and the palm wine abundant for us, let us find grubs in the wood, for the season is passing.

¹ J. Roscoe. *The Bagetsu*, p. 59.

² R. P. Van Wing. S. J. *Études Bakongo*, p. 152 (1921).

"Give us this day the white line of peace with the priest of our ancestors; let him bring peace to the village. Give us dreams of happiness, and keep those of a vexatious kind far from us. Make us fertile, that we also may produce human wealth, even as you have done, and thus our village will not perish, for now we hear nothing but 'To-day So-and-so is dead,' and if this goes on, there will be none left. Whence then are those to come who shall burn the incense in your honor? Therefore make us fertile; let us attain to maturity and be vigorous!"¹

It is a melancholy prayer indeed! They have seen the dead in dreams, a sign that they must heed, lest worse should come. But they had not the wherewithal to offer them a sacrifice, and they have had to get into debt. The chief, imploring the aid of his ancestors, gives them to understand that the distress of their descendants will end by attacking them also. This is an argument *ad hominem*, often resorted to when the ancestors must be made to listen to reason. Let them not forget that the living and the dead of the clan and of the tribe are strictly solidary. If the living all die, leaving no posterity, who will there be to celebrate the feasts, who will bring the indispensable offerings to the ancestors?—It may well be, however, that the chief has depicted the situation of his village blacker than it really is, in the hope of softening the ancestors.

Here is a final trait that is characteristic of the homage rendered to the dead by these same Bantus. Throughout their ceremonies, worship and praise are scarce distinguishable. Thus, in Bryant's dictionary, *bonga* means to praise, to extol a person or thing; the Zulu method of expressing gratitude being to praise the giver or the gift . . . therefore his thanks for something: his respect, his abject submission are shown in the same way . . . consequently to adore, offer a sacrifice to the *amadhlozi* (or ancestors), for instance. "Why was this beast killed?—It has given praise, it has been sacrificed, i.e., it has been killed for the *amadhlozi*." The same word thus serves for praise, worship, sacrifice to.²

"In reality," says Willoughby, "the Bantu do not distinguish between prayer and praise. 'Praise-names' and 'praise-songs' are a great institution. Every important person has his praise-names and praise-songs, and they are known to his friends. The Bantu do not allow praise to lie idle till the tombstone is ready. It is the key that unlocks the heart of a giver. And anything

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 150-51.

² A. T. Bryant. *op. cit.* p. 46.

that would have pleased the offended elder when he was in the village is thought likely to please his spirit. Few things jar upon inexperienced missionaries like the constant repetition of praise-names for God in the prayers of Christian converts; but it is no mere thoughtless habit, it runs through the very fibre of Bantu thought. Bantu worshippers approach the spirit [of the dead] in what is to them a perfectly natural manner. . . . They recite his praise-names and then content themselves with mentioning what they need most, as if talking to themselves. This is a subtle form of flattery; there is no need to ask, it is enough to mention what is lacking.”¹

In short, they act towards the ancestors exactly as they do to the chiefs and exalted personages when they are trying to obtain a favour. No doubt these are not insensible to flattery; neither are the ancestors. But it is a well-known device, and the praises are stereotyped: both chiefs and ancestors are not taken in by them, as a rule, unless they are willing to be. The natives know this, yet they persist in these methods, for they believe them to have an automatic effect. Praise acts on the disposition in the same way as a charm. Thus the ancestor worship, in the form that is essential to it, must be approximated to the processes the primitives employ for “disposing” in their favour the seen and unseen beings and powers whose support they crave. Praise forms a part of their arsenal of magico-propitiatory practices.

In New Zealand, “the act of repeating the words (of the sacred formula), the fact that they are recited, and in a proper manner, is supposed to affect the gods, and cause them to be complacent.”²

IV

It would be easy, though perhaps it is not necessary, to show that nearly everywhere, with the Australian natives, for instance, the New Guinea Papuans, as well as with the Bergdama and the Bantu, the ancestors and the dead are in the front rank of the powers whose offices the primitives try to secure. A few testimonies will no doubt suffice.

“It was a firm conviction in the mind of every Kiwai native that if they did not show their respect and gratitude to the spirits

¹ Rev. W. C. Willoughby. *Race problems in the new Africa*. pp. 75-6

² Elsdon Best, *op. cit.* I. pp. 262-63.

of their dead by gifts of food, the spirits would be displeased, and misfortune would fall upon their gardens and their fishing. One old man said to me: 'If no food were provided for a spirit, no preparation made for a dance in its honour, the spirit who was present and saw others honoured would return to Adiri [the Land of the Dead] disappointed and angry. It would say. "My boy did nothing for me; all right, I will do nothing for him."' The native idea seems to have been: the greater the amount of food presented to the spirit of the dead, the greater the pains taken in dressing for the dance, the greater would be the joy of the spirit, and the greater the favours that would be bestowed upon the givers of the food and upon the performers of the dance."¹

Speaking of another tribe of this same island of Kiwai, Landtman reports: "One of the great ceremonies of the Mawata tribe has reference to turtle spearing, and at the time of this ceremony the people carefully clear the burial place of their departed fathers, put presents of food on the graves, and pour out the contents of two coconuts over them, asking the dead persons to help them to spear many turtles. On one occasion the grave of one man only, named Bidja, was neglected. When afterwards the villagers went out to the reefs in their canoes, everybody speared many turtles, except Bidja's people. In the night his spirit appeared and spoke to them, and they heard a voice without knowing whether it came from the canoe or from under the water; it said: 'Oh! my friend, no fault belong me; you no been make my burial ground good, you fellow no can find him turtle, you fellow nothing go back. Next time you fellow look out my burial ground good, next time you see.' The people returned to the village and did as they had been told. When they went out again they speared a great number of turtle, and afterwards were careful not to neglect the graves of their dead parents."² This cleaning-up of the grave is again a magico-propitiatory rite which reacts automatically upon the disposition of the dead. If it has taken place, their disposition will be favourable, and the turtle will be caught, but should it have been neglected, the dead man's mood will be a bad one, and the turtles will conceal themselves, even if the dead man is not offended and has not tried to hinder them from appearing, "I did not wish it," he said.—It is thus that the Tahiti leper,

¹ E. B. Riley. *Among Papuan head-hunters*. p. 302.

² G. Landtman in W. N. Beaver. *Unexplored New Guinea*, p. 305.

abandoned by wife and children, gave them the disease, even if he did not expressly wish to do so. He could not prevent his bad disposition reacting on their conduct with respect to him.

It is the same thing with the Papuans of Geelfink Bay in Dutch New Guinea. "It is a prevailing idea that the dead always maintain relations with our world and with the living; that they are possessed of superhuman powers, and exert a great influence on the circumstances of terrestrial life; and that they are able to protect human beings when in danger, to help them fight their battles, preserve them from the perils of the sea, and make them successful fishers and hunters. These weighty considerations determine the Papuans to do all that is in their power to secure the affection of their dead. When they are setting out on a journey they must never forget to fasten their amulets on their persons, convinced as they are that in so doing they are ensuring the help of their dead. Again, when at sea, if they have stormy weather, they will beseech their dead to alter the conditions, and should the wind be against them, they entreat that it may be turned to another quarter."¹ This testimony is a confirmation of the preceding ones relating to the methods employed by primitives to secure the favourable dispositions they need. These Papuans, to obtain the good-will of their dead, have recourse to amulets in addition to the prayers and presents they offer them, for they attribute to both courses the same magical virtue.

With the Bataks in Sumatra, "the *begu* (dead) may be to their descendants—and to these alone—a source of benison and good fortune. But it is essential that they shall first have been honoured, and then they will bestow good health, a numerous progeny, fine harvests, and victory in warfare. They protect their descendants, too, from the other *begu*. . . . In all the circumstances of life, therefore, the natives must pay attention to their ancestors, and address their prayers to them, for upon their good-will the prosperity of the living depends. He who neglects them is certain to reap their vengeance."²—Consequently, adds Warneck, "to refuse to take part in the honours paid to the ancestors is to expose oneself to twofold retribution: on the one hand, from the justly-offended ancestors, and on the other, from the rest of the community, who will have to suffer the consequences of their anger." Such a defaulter will

¹ A. Goudswaard. *De Papoewa's van de Geelvincks baai*. p. 77 (1863).

² J. Warneck. *Die Religion der Batak*. p. 99.

bring misfortune on his fellows. He will thus be constrained to take part in these ceremonies, or else he will be ostracized by the tribe, excommunicated, and among the Bataks, "he can no longer own his plot of ground. The other members of the tribe will seize the plantation he has cultivated, his fruit trees, and even the tools in his house. It was thus that the first converts to Christianity were treated at Silidung."¹ It could not be otherwise, and after what we have found to be the state of affairs, the reason for it is clear.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 104.

CHAPTER VI

WITCHCRAFT

I

IN SPITE of the precautions taken by the primitive to avoid offending the unseen powers, and notwithstanding the efforts he makes to secure their good-will and obtain their favour and support, very frequently he finds from bitter experience that he has not succeeded. The game and fish become scarce, and no longer allow him to capture them. His crops fail, and the rain either does not fall, or is excessive in quantity. Sickness and death lay low people in the prime of life, and the infant mortality is too high, and so on. How is he to account for these misfortunes which at times seem to have combined to overwhelm him? How is he to set about parrying them, if possible, or at any rate stopping their ravages and preventing their recurrence?

He will indeed ask himself this question, but not as we should do, were we in his place. It is by other means than ours that he will try to answer it. Save in exceptional cases, when we meet with an accident or a misfortune, we discover the causes of it in the combined circumstances producing it. If the harvest fails after an incessant rainfall, we see the relation of cause and effect, and our minds are satisfied. If, however, we want to probe further, and find out the reason for such excessive rainfall, we shall seek an explanation in the combination of meteorological conditions prevailing at the time. . . . When it is a question of illness or the failure of an enterprise, we adopt the same attitude, and our minds follow the same course. We always try to arrive at the causes by analysing the connections between the phenomena without quitting the realm of verifiable data. We make no appeal to the supernatural. Even minds believing in Providence admit, with Malebranche, that it does not act haphazard, and never—except in the case of miracles, themselves pre-ordained—suspends the regular course of nature.

With the primitive it is quite otherwise. He is not entirely unaware of the actual connections between phenomena; on the contrary, he has noted some of them very carefully, and also successfully. He knows very well how to turn them to account in his "technique" of hunting, fishing, agriculture, manufactures, arts, etc. But such knowledge as this maintains its exclusively practical character. Although he profits by it, he never seems to reflect upon it. He does not realize that if he were to pursue such knowledge further it would contribute to an understanding of things and events, and would give him more control over them. His mind is oriented in another direction. It is immediately carried beyond the confines of what we call nature. In any occurrence that makes an impression on him he immediately recognizes that an intervention of supernatural forces has brought it about. When therefore, he experiences failure or misfortune, even if, like ourselves, he perceives its cause (as we understand the term), he does not stop short there. He asks himself what evil influence is being exerted upon him, and why this should be. The cause that is of supreme interest to him lies outside the shackles of circumstance.

Herein precisely lies our difficulty in comprehending the workings of primitives' minds. Given the way in which they picture to themselves the relations of unseen forces with the ordinary course of nature, they regard the supernatural cause as intervening in this course, but not as integrated with it. It dominates and modifies it, but it does not take any definite place in it, and accordingly they do not know when its action has begun, nor when its operations are completed. Since it is "supernatural," it is in a certain sense, outside time and space. To our minds, from the very fact that phenomena necessarily react upon each other, they have a definite existence in themselves and in their results. All that happens seems to be capable of explanation merely through the consideration of what has previously occurred. In every way an event is surrounded by a network of phenomena and, if it has any result, that will take its place there also.

To the primitive mind, on the contrary, the most serious part of a misfortune is not the misfortune itself, however disastrous it may be. It is what the misfortune reveals—that is, the evil influence which has just been exerted on the victim, which will no doubt be exercised again, and which makes fresh disasters imminent—who knows what may yet await the victim? Here

the affective category of the supernatural is brought into play in a direct and almost reflexive fashion. Thus every accident, misfortune, check, loss, failure, and the like, is regarded and interpreted as a harbinger of other accidents and misfortunes that will not fail to occur, as long as the evil influence that causes them has not been neutralized, paralyzed, or induced to adopt a more favourable mood. Immediately the blow has fallen, the primitive's mind is directed towards the world of supernatural influences, and he enquires of it so that he may know whether fresh blows await him. This unvarying attitude of his largely accounts for some of his proceedings which seem strange to us, and in particular it throws a little light on the tremendous importance so often assigned to witchcraft in the primitive's mental preoccupations.

II

In many of the primitive communities, when a serious illness or a death occurs, the evil influence which is immediately suspected, if it be not the anger of an offended ancestor, is certain to be the action of a sorcerer. To the Australian aborigines, for instance, death was never a "natural" occurrence, but neither was any serious illness—indeed how could it be? They would have needed to have some more or less elementary idea, at any rate some idea of the functions of the body, and of what might upset or suspend them. Now of this they had no conception. Illness, like death, could be nothing else, then, than the effect of some "supernatural" cause, some sort of bewitching. "The Basutos have the same word to express illness and death. . . . To tell you that they have a headache, for instance, they will say that they are 'eaten by the head.' So it is with other maladies; one is 'eaten by a tooth, eaten by the bowels, eaten by the ears,' all characteristic expressions implying that bodily pains make them think they are devoured by some maleficent influence, and they must hasten to remove it." ¹

In our country districts it does still happen that people believe that a witch has cast a spell over some person or animal, which has then fallen ill and died. Yet these peasants, in their own way, know what illness means. They readily admit that in most cases there is no question of witchcraft about it, and even where they do suspect it, the witch, according to them, has done no

¹ H. Dieterlen. *La médecine et les médecins au Lessouto*. p. 14. (1930).

more than bring the illness and start it in the victim. The disease then develops in his body just as it does with others attacked in the same way; it is merely that the pathological processes have been due to a different cause, and it is to this cause, however vague the idea of it in their minds may be, that the peasants refer the pains, the wasting away, and the ultimate death. Thus what the witch is responsible for is the setting the malady to work, and standing in the way of the patient's recovery.

But to the primitive mind, which knows nothing of pathological processes, to be seriously ill (not to be able to walk, or stand upright, or eat, for example), is actually to be bewitched. The malady is not only brought about by the witch: it is itself witchcraft.

Father Van Wing, enumerating the known causes of death among the natives, ends up with witchcraft. "This last cause, according to the Bakongo ideas is the commonest of all. It is nothing else than that which we call illness."¹ Consequently, as soon as a man is set free from the witch's spell, he is no longer ill. As a result of the experience he has undergone he may remain feeble for some time, but the disease itself has suddenly disappeared. Since the primitive has not the same conception of illness as we have, it follows that he does not view convalescence in the same way as we do.

Serious illness, therefore, like death, is very often the direct act of an unseen power. It is true that this power may not be witchcraft, and in order to be certain of this, there is frequent recourse to divination. With the Zulus, for instance, "the cause of illness," writes an observer, "may be threefold. Either the medicine-man declares it to be caused by the *amadhlozi* (ghosts), in which case a sacrifice must be offered to them . . . or it is the work of a sorcerer. . . . The third possibility is that the witch-doctor should declare it to be an *ordinary* illness" (or, as we should say, natural).² These Zulus, then, were advanced enough to admit, at least in certain cases, the connection between cause and effect in a definite pathological state and the facts which preceded it. In a similar way, among the Akamba, "illnesses are sent by the spirits, when they for any reason are angry with the living; or they are caused by black magic on the part of some evil-disposed person; or finally, they may be real

¹ J. Van Wing, S. J. *De geheime sekte van't Kimpassi*. p. 27.

² F. Speckmann. *op. cit.* p. 157

illnesses, contracted in a natural way. This last cause, however, seems to be regarded as the least usual." ¹ Junod says practically the same thing. "There are three great causes of disease: the spirits of the gods (i.e., the dead), the wizards, and the *mak-humo*, defilement from death or from impure persons. A fourth one not so common is Heaven." ²

When he is the victim of an accident or a misfortune, the primitive will often adopt the same attitude as when faced by illness. Sometimes he will be satisfied with a "natural" explanation; but in most cases, especially if the event has struck his imagination, the affective category of the supernatural plays its part, and he will not doubt that some evil influence has been exerted against him. To decide the question he will have recourse to divination, unless his suspicions immediately fall upon a sorcerer. With the Pondoland Kafirs, "do a man's cattle take the plague, some evil-disposed person has deposited charms round his kraal to cause their destruction. Do his crops fail, some neighbour is jealous, and has blighted them by the use of some powerful drug. Does the lightning strike his place, it is through the agency of some enemy who wishes to get rid of him. . . . Does a swarm of bees light upon a homestead, it has been brought there by the machinations of some neighbour. . . . Does a man lose a lawsuit—or a race—or fail in any object he desires to attain, it is because his opponent or rival had, and used, some charm more potent than he could command." ³ Such being the opinions held by these kafirs, it is not surprising that we should be told: "In all cases of illness or death, the first thing thought of is the *takati* (wizard)." ⁴ "Kafirs," wrote Colonel Maclean, "are firm believers in sorcery or witchcraft; and they consider that all the sicknesses and other afflictions of life are occasioned thereby, and that were it not for the evil influence of the wizards, man would die but in a good old age. This universal belief in witchcraft has led to the almost entire neglect of the art of healing by medicines." ⁵

In primitive communities there is an unflinching tendency to attribute the responsibility for a great number of accidents and misadventures to sorcerers. Here are some testimonies to the

¹ G. Lindblom. *op. cit.* pp. 269.

² H. A. Junod. *The life of a South African tribe*. II, p. 433.

³ W. T. Brownlie. *Witchcraft among the natives of S. Africa*. p. 34. (*Jl. of the S. African Society*. XXV.) (1926)

⁴ Dr. Wangemann. *Die evangelische Missionsarbeit in S. Afrika*. p. 80.

⁵ Colonel Maclean. *A compendium of Kafir laws and customs*. p. 88.

fact taken from Bantus; "Their crimes are said to prevent rain falling at a certain place; the garden yielding food; the herds, flocks, and women from being fruitful; and to cause the live stock and human beings to sicken and often to die." ¹ They can also cause them to be killed by wild beasts. "It is held to be possible for a sorcerer to 'give over' a certain man, who has gone to hunt, to a buffalo, or elephant, or other animal. The wizard is believed to be able to 'charge' the animal to put the man to death. If two men quarrel, the one will wait till the other goes to hunt, when he employs and pays for the secret services of some wizard, with the view of compassing his absent enemy's death while engaged in the hunt. And so, when it is announced that a man has been killed in the hunting field, some of his friends will remark: 'It is the work of enemies; he was *given* to the wild beast.'" ²

It is thus with the Basutos too. "To them a misfortune is never a natural thing. The death of a parent, hail, drought, cattle plague, disease—all are brought about by the malevolence of one man or of many. And since it is the white men who first raised the alarm about the cattle disease, and it is they who are trying to fight it, it is upon them that the suspicions of these unreasonable heathen rest." ³ Indeed, as we have already seen (Chap. V, p. 146), he who can cure a malady has this power only because he has been able to give it. He who has laid the spell is alone capable of raising it, and this must be the case with these whites who aim at curing the cattle disease.—When these same Basutos have an outbreak of influenza in the mission station, "the pupils believe that a spell has been laid upon them, and that by the school cook." ⁴ In Angola, "witchcraft is their principal or only belief; everything (disastrous) that happens has been brought about by it: all cases of drought, sickness, death, blight, accident, and even the most trivial circumstances are ascribed to the evil influence of witchery or 'fetish.'" ⁵ When Bentley was making a voyage of discovery on the Congo, he said that "the native never considers sickness and death as anything normal; they are in no way to be traced to natural causes, but always regarded as due to sorcery. Even such cases

¹ T. M. Thomas. *Eleven years in Central South Africa*. p. 292 (1872).

² Rev. J. Mackenzie. *op. cit.* pp. 300-01. (1871).

³ *Missions évangéliques*. LXXII, pp. 17-18 (1897) Diéterlen.

⁴ *Ibid.* LXXXVII. i. p. 101 (1912) H. Martin.

⁵ Monteiro. *Angola and the river Congo*. I. p. 61.

as death by drowning or in war, by a fall from a tree, or by some beast of prey or wild creature, or by lightning—these are all in a most obstinate and unreasoning manner attributed to the black art. Somebody has bewitched the sufferer, and he or she who has caused it is a witch.”¹ Lastly Dr. Schweitzer, in Gaboon, says the same: “It does not enter my patients’ minds that their illnesses have a natural cause. They believe them to be due to evil spirits, to the maleficent magic of men, and to the ‘worm’; to them the ‘worm’ is the incarnation of pain.”²

This conviction, rooted in the black man’s mind, is therein confirmed by a kind of counter-proof. As a matter of fact when, through stern repression it happens that the sorcerers are got rid of, accidents and misfortunes do diminish in number and even, for some time, entirely disappear. Thus, in Southern Nigeria, sometimes there are trials by ordeal in large numbers. According to Talbot, “from thirty to forty per cent of the population perish on such an occasion, the mortality depending upon the amount of witchcraft in the place. All the witches then die or leave the town as dangerous; the hoot of the owl is no longer heard, and the country has peace from sorcery for three or four years. ‘The women begin to conceive every day, and the crops grow in proportion.’ ”³

Such wholesale executions seem scarcely credible, but we have other testimony to them, for example, the following: “A ‘king’ in the neighborhood of the Bâle Mission at Ndaba, made all his subjects drink the ordeal poison so that he might discover which among them were practising black magic. Nineteen of our catechumens even had to undergo this ordeal. The medicine-man who had carried out these ordeals took to flight as soon as his work was finished. When Lochmann the missionary questioned the king, he replied complainingly: ‘Nothing prospers with us nowadays. When one of my people earns anything, it is as if he put his earnings into a bottomless sack, for in spite of all the trouble we take, the cocoa-trees will not bear fruit. If a child is born, it dies after a few days. Death is steadily lessening our numbers, and it was my duty to find out why we are thus cursed.’ ”⁴ By finding out he means making his subjects submit to the ordeal, so that he could discover who was

¹ Rev. W. H. Bentley. *Pioneering on the Congo*. I. p. 263 (1900).

² Dr. Albert Schweitzer. *A l’orée de la forêt vierge*. p. 51 (1929).

³ P. A. Talbot. *The peoples of South Nigeria*. II. p. 219.

⁴ *Evangelisches Missions Magazin*. 1913. p. 133.

working the mischief, for he had no doubt whatever that all the ills affecting his country were the work of sorcerers.

About all these peoples, then, we may say what Fritsch has written of the Kafirs: "Their belief in witchcraft is immense and widespread."¹ In many of the "lower" races—the aborigines of Australia, Papuans, North and South American Indians—it is hardly less so, and the repetition of the testimony to it would be tiresome. Here, however, is an example of ancient date, relating to the Ecuador Jibaros, and closely resembling those we have quoted. "Is there a storm brewing? . . . The Jibaro is looking all round to find out whence his trouble arises, and at once he concludes that the natives in a certain district are animated by hostile intentions and are planning some conspiracy against him. Does he find that his dogs and fowls and pigs, or other animals fall sick and die? . . . Then certainly such and such a Jibaro has bewitched them. . . . A member of his family has fallen ill, or is dying—it may be from the effects of an accident, or from old age. No matter; he has been bewitched, even if a tree fell on him, or a snake bit him, or he was drowned in the river, or even if the burden of his years dragged him to the grave."²

This obsession with regard to witchcraft is not everywhere as absolute as it is among the older Kafirs, the older Jibaros, and in some tribes of New Guinea, where the dread of *puri-puri* tinctures the whole life of the native. But even in the parts where primitives have learnt in many cases to connect death, sickness, accidents and misfortunes with natural causes, there still subsists a deep-rooted belief in the nefarious influence of the sorcerers. The fear inspired by them may have diminished, but it suddenly becomes universal and intense once more. And this is because it is interwoven with the deepest fibres of the primitive's mind. It arises spontaneously, as it were, out of his habitual orientation, which makes him seek in the world of supernatural forces for the cause of that which troubles him. It must, then, be as generally prevalent as the other beliefs and practices which originate in the affective category of the supernatural.

¹ G. Fritsch. *Die Eingeborenen Süd-Afrika's*. pp. 99-100.

² P. Fr. José Vidal, Mision de Zamora. *Historia de los misiones franciscanas*, XI, pp. 280-81.

III

It would be futile to seek for a definition, or even an exact description, of witchcraft which would apply equally well to all its forms. The primitive mind has not the need that ours would feel, to form concepts for itself. Moreover, in this case it is not so much a question of a concept, properly so called, as of a constant tendency, when faced by certain occurrences, instantly to connect them with the intervention of influences pertaining to the world of supernatural forces. Instead of trying to express this tendency, with all the imaginative and emotional elements that comprise it, in an abstract form, it would undoubtedly be better to show, by a few examples, when, and how, it operates.

“When times are favourable (with the Arunta) the black-fellow is as light-hearted as possible. He has not the slightest thought of, or care for, what the morrow may bring forth, and lives entirely in the present. . . .

“There is however in these, as in other savage tribes, an under-current of anxious feeling which, though it may be stilled and indeed even forgotten for a time, is always present . . . fear of evil magic, or of being pointed out by a medicine man in some distant group, as guilty of killing someone else by magic.”¹ Nobody is ever really safe. At a time when nothing would have led one to imagine it, a man may be the victim of a bewitchment, or find himself accused of having practised one himself. Diffused as it is throughout the social atmosphere, the suspicion of witchcraft may at any moment be concentrated upon one individual, who can however do nothing to prevent it.

A Papuan in Kiwai, coming to his plantation one day, sees that rats or wild pigs have made havoc in it. At once he thinks that some neighbour, jealous of his promising crop, has caused these animals to destroy it. Another native may spend days in his canoe fishing, yet catch nothing: no doubt, then, some one who is envious has used witchcraft to rob him of his luck and appropriate it for himself. Among the Kafirs of South Africa, a rain-maker finds that he cannot get the better of the drought. “When all his excuses of an ordinary nature have been exhausted, and the drought still continues, he does not hesitate to declare that sorcerers are exerting their evil influence to prevent the rain from falling, and recommends the chief to dis-

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *The native tribes of Central Australia*. p. 53.

cover them, and when found they are at once executed.”¹ It is the usual course, when suspicions have been aroused, to consult a wizard, and he usually confirms them.

“Witchcraft,” says Colonel Maclean, “is supposed to be an influence for evil, possessed by one individual over another, or others. This influence is said to be exercised through the instrumentality of evil spirits, enchantments, supernatural and natural animals, such as baboons, wolves or owls. By the above agencies, an influence is supposed to be exerted which may cause temporary, chronic or fatal diseases, death or sickness among cattle, blight and disease among crops, a drought.”² There are yet other methods by which witchcraft can produce its effects: by magical influence over the appurtenances of the victim, as for example, a piece of his clothing, his saliva, the remains of his food, his footprints, his likeness, and so on; by spells and glances; by formulas, incantations and gestures; and finally too, even without external operation, by a simple act of will, or by the intention alone, possibly unconscious. It matters little what means or instrument may be employed by this “influence for evil.”

To avoid confusion as far as possible, it will be best to discriminate between the principal aspects assumed by witchcraft in the primitives' imaginations. One of them, the best known, has been very clearly described by Junod, who says of it: “It is one of the greatest crimes which a man can commit. It is equivalent to assassination, even worse than murder, as a dim idea of anthropophagy is added to the mere accusation of killing. A wizard kills human beings to eat their flesh . . . this crime being committed in great secrecy during the night, in most instances even unconsciously.”³ This form of witchcraft has been discussed in *Primitive Mentality*⁴ and in *The “Soul” of the Primitive*,⁵ and I beg to refer the reader to these volumes.

Side by side with these wizards who are to some extent absolute and constitutional, wizards from birth, and often possessing hereditary powers, or acquiring them by training or special sacrifices (frequently at the expense of their own relatives' lives), in nearly all primitive communities there may be found men who do not inspire such sentiments of horror and hate,

¹ Col. Maclean. *op. cit.* pp. 104-05.

² *Ibid.* p. 122.

³ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I, pp. 416-17.

⁴ Chap. VIII, pp. 245-250.

⁵ Chap. V. pp. 172-180.

nor do they excite such outbursts of avenging fury. Yet these men, too, are practising the black art, though the forms it takes are less redoubtable and less revolting. They wish ill to their neighbour, and they work him harm, but not to the extent of assassination or cannibalism. They may be convicted of witchcraft, and be obliged to indemnify their victims, but they are not exterminated, and as a rule they are not expelled from the social group. They are not, like those Junod has just described, wizards *per se*, public enemies who would cause the whole tribe to perish if, after having been ferreted out, they were not immediately got rid of. They are wizards "on occasion," but the name is applied to them all the same, and in so far as they exert an influence on others they do effectively act as wizards.

"What is a witch?" Bentley asked the Congolese, "and how does he work his villainy? . . . We have often asked this question," he goes on, "and there is always a prompt reply. 'How should I know? I am not a witch. I must be a witch myself to know this.'"¹ The meaning of the word was only too clear to them, since they used it every day. But they could not explain it in any form that would make it intelligible to the white man. Perhaps they did not care to do so, for it might have been too dangerous.

An incident related by Junod will possibly throw some light on what they have in their minds when they speak of witchcraft without actually intending to describe the "absolute" wizards. "Thongas," says he, "are extremely sensitive in regard to a possible suspicion that they are *baloyi*. When I proposed to my pupils in the Shivulane Institution that they should move up for the bad season to the sanatorium which we had set up in the mountains in order to avoid the dangers of fever in the Low Country, they, not wishing to abandon their comfortable accommodation at the station, made great difficulties. I therefore said to them: 'But if your devoted teacher, Miss So-and-So, catches the fever on account of the heat and moisture of the malarial climate, will you not be responsible for whatever may happen?' This remark caused quite a commotion amongst the pupils. 'What,' they said, 'we are then *baloyi*? We have the power of killing people by witchcraft?'"²

These young blacks were disconcerted by the apparently very

¹ W. H. Bentley, *op. cit.* I., p. 274.

² H. A. Junod. *The life of a South African tribe.* (2nd ed.) II, p. 507, note 1.

simple reasoning that pointed out to them the danger their teacher would risk if she spent the malarial season in a moist, humid place. They know very well what malaria is, and have even learnt to avoid it in many cases. Yet to them illness is always due to bewitchment, and thus, when Junod gives them to understand that if their teacher, through their refusal to go up to the sanatorium, should have an attack of malaria, they would be responsible, they at once imagine that he is accusing them of witchcraft. They are very much disturbed, for the slightest hint of such a charge is very serious. They would certainly not be included in the ranks of those monsters who kill and secretly devour their fellows. But none the less Junod had told them that they ran the risk of bringing misfortune upon their teacher—therefore they were exerting some evil influence upon her which might possibly cause her death. It was a very mild form of witchcraft, if you like, but it was witchcraft all the same, with all the odium that attaches to the term.

Suspicion of witchcraft attaches, too, to all those who, like Junod's pupils, bring misfortune to others, even if quite innocently. To us this is a very vague definition, for there are so many ways of causing misfortune, and because when it really occurs it is often difficult to know who should be regarded as responsible. Such a definition is good enough for primitives, however, for it corresponds with one of their habitual subjects of thought, and gives them what they expect. An accident occurs and very soon they have a satisfactory explanation of it, for they discover that a particular person has brought ill luck to the victim. Whence came this ill luck? From an evil influence this person is exerting, from the injurious principle within him or her, although the person designated may be quite unaware of being a sorcerer.

Are other proofs of this inveterate tendency on the part of primitives required? For the first time in the history of the New Hebrides some white men, missionaries, desired to settle in Tanna. Immediately upon their arrival, "a few weeks of dry weather began to tell against the growth of their yams and bananas. The drought was instantly ascribed to us and our God. The natives far and near were summoned to consider the matter in public assembly." (It is decided that the missionaries must either depart, or cause rain to fall.) . . . "On the following Sabbath, just when we were assembling for worship, rain began to fall, and in great abundance. All the inhabitants believed, ap-

parently, that it was sent to save us in answer to our prayers, so they met again, and resolved to allow us to remain in Tanna. Alas! sickness and fever happened unexpectedly. Hurricane winds injured their fruits and fruit trees; another opportunity to lay the blame of everything upon the missionaries. Wreck of a boat. . . . For this also the ignorant natives gave us credit, as for every thing uncommon or disagreeable on Tanna.”¹ Nobody knew whence these white men came, nor of what they might be capable, and it was therefore natural to suspect them of witchcraft. When, after their arrival, one misfortune succeeds another, there can be no more doubt: these white men are bringers of ill-luck. A harmful principle accompanies and inhabits them, and it is exercising its pernicious influence—in short, these men are sorcerers.

When suspicions have once begun to rest on a certain person, everything as a rule tends to strengthen and increase them. These are the words of a witness in a case that was being tried in the court of Carnot in French Equatorial Africa. “Every time that something unusual happened in the village, they accused my brother Dagari. If a child accidentally set fire to a hut, they said: ‘It is Dagari.’ If a man happened to die, they accused Dagari. At last, one day the chief Dobele made him drink *banda* [an ordeal poison] . . . and he died directly after.”²

One accident following another, and particularly a quick succession of them attacking any one group, obliges it to find out who is responsible. When the wizard is discovered, he is got rid of as quickly as possible. But would it not be advisable to ferret him out before he commits his misdeeds and prevent his evil influence from being exercised? This very rarely happens, and as a rule when he is unmasked he has already done a great deal of harm. It does sometimes happen, however, that he betrays himself. There are certain almost unmistakable signs: for instance, if a man is found alone at night in the vicinity of dwellings, for he who has no evil designs will not be away from his hut at night alone. When one of the men is obliged to go out, others will accompany him, all carrying torches, for otherwise they would believe that he was trying to slip into a hut by

¹ J. G. Paton, missionary to the New Hebrides, *An autobiography* I. pp. 87-8. (1898)

² An unpublished enquiry into the Dobele affair, communicated by M. Prouteaux, the Administrator-in-chief.

stealth, to kill all its inhabitants, or else that he was about to transform himself into a tiger, leopard, wolf, etc., so that he might devour them when they issued from the hut.

Suspicion also attaches to the individual who refuses to take part in the ceremonies and sacrifices. Such an attitude will displease the unseen powers, especially the ancestors, and by offending them misfortune will be meted out to the social group. He must have been acting as a wizard. "He will be avoided by his friends and neighbours as a suspicious character, who must be trusting to the arts and powers of witchcraft, or he would never be guilty of such a heinous crime" (as the refusal to join in the ceremonies). "And should any misfortune befall the kraal, and some priest be applied to, to perform the *umhlalo* or smelling out, such suspicious person would, no doubt, be pointed out by the priest as the cause thereof, and punished as a wizard."¹

Another very grave sign of being in relation with evil powers is to enjoy unusual good luck, to amass wealth and become very rich, prospering in everything one undertakes. Success which is never belied can only be accounted for by pledges given to evil powers. Such pledges nearly always mean a brother, mother, child, delivered over to them. Those who practise this kind of witchcraft are the worst brand of sorcerers, and they are greatly dreaded.

IV

It often happens that the presence of the noxious principle which betrays the sorcerer is made manifest by the "evil eye." "There is thought to be something baneful in the direct glance; one who stares at another is considered as planning, or actually to be causing, some evil."² Hobley has given a detailed description of the Bantu beliefs with regard to the evil eye. "It gradually dawns upon the people that So-and-So possesses the power, owing to the fact that if that person audibly admires a beast belonging to a neighbour, the animal shortly after that becomes sick. If this occurs several times, the various owners compare notes and it becomes generally known that So-and-So is *kit-tamengo*" (has the evil eye). Hobley adds this significant re-

¹ Colonel Maclean. *op. cit.* p. 106.

² Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, I, 224.

mark: "It would therefore seem that the idea is not based on an evil glance but upon an envious thought."¹ The pernicious influence which brings misfortune does not then come from the eye itself; that is but its instrument, its vehicle. It arises in the disposition of the man who has the evil eye, the envy he feels for the owner of that which he covets. With the Shilluk "the power to harm is made operative by looking fixedly at the person to be made the victim. The person exercising the power is usually in anger when the deed is done. The person who is bewitched says: 'the eye went into me,' and if the person who did the deed speaks of it, he will usually say that his eye went into the other."² The eye conducts the harmful influence to the victim, but the influence emanates from the disposition of the person who desires to bewitch him. He is incensed at the moment, and we have already seen in Chap. II (pp. 72-74) that an angry man is particularly dangerous.

Thus the "evil eye" and the power to bewitch are often synonymous terms. He who has the evil eye is a wizard, and the converse proposition would seem to be no less true. Junod expressly says so.³

It is the same with the Azande. "By wizard the Zand means one possessing the evil eye, a *boro mangu*, who, by a power inherent in him, exerts a baleful influence, occasions misfortunes, brings about illnesses and deaths. The *aboro mangu* form, as it were, a separate caste. The *mangu* or evil eye is transmitted by heredity from sex to sex, (the males to the males, females to females). A person may be unconscious of possessing this power, but the *boru mangu* who is aware of the occult power at his command generally recognizes all the others who are possessed of it. In any case, nobody will lightly own that he is a wizard . . . for this class of persons, either real or imaginary, is the object of universal execration."⁴

To this observer the expression "evil eye" seems to have become metaphorical, signifying "witchcraft." He makes use of it even when the evil influence emanating from the wizard does not make the eye its vehicle. "If we apply the term wizards," says he, "to those who are given over to the practice of magic,

¹ C. W. Hobley. *Bantu Beliefs and Magic*. p. 177.

² Rev. D. S. Oyler. *The Shilluk's belief in the evil eye. Sudan Notes and Records*, II. 2. p. 124 (1919).

³ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* II, p. 505.

⁴ C. R. Lagae, O. P. *Les Azande ou Niam-Niam*. p. 97.

those who cast evil spells as if by nature, we shall find among the Azande only one class of persons reputed to deserve the name, and this comprises the people who have the evil eye, the *aira mango*. . . ." And yet again: "The evil eye is a power inherent in certain individuals which enables them to exert a nefarious influence, to occasion misfortunes, bring about illnesses and even death" (here we have the same words as before). "This power is of purely magical origin, for I am not referring to poisoning due to the absorption of actual poisons working through their physical properties."¹

There follows a description of the well known crimes of the sorcerer who is an assassin and a cannibal, and from the beginning to the end Lagae calls him "the man with the evil eye." He goes so far as to say: "The evil eye can leave an individual's body, or at any rate project itself to a considerable distance. Although it is material, since it is tangible in the person's body, it is endowed with certain properties that allow of its exteriorizing itself, and emitting a certain fluid perceptible in the form of light, able to exert special influence on the body of a stranger."² In short, the evil eye is synonymous with *mango*, and *mango* is the harmful principle which dwells in the wizard—an immaterial principle in a material form, or a material principle endowed with immaterial qualities. This is what we gather, even from Lagae's bewildering explanations. The primitive mind finds no difficulty in these dubious conceptions, for they reflect the perpetual intervention of the world of supernatural forces in the world of nature.

Therefore, seen from one aspect, to these Azande the harmful principle or "occult power" which inhabits the sorcerer is a bodily excrescence, the presence of which may be sought by an autopsy. Viewed from another, it is the disposition of the person who exerts an evil spell—envy, jealousy, covetousness, ill-will, anger, resentment, malice, etc. We can now better comprehend why it is that primitives are so afraid of arousing anger and ill-will among their fellows by a refusal, for instance. They fear that they may thereby provoke a bewitchment. And just as dispositions are not conceived as subjective states, something really psychical, but as partly physical, which may be changed independently of the subject responsible for them, so, too, the harmful principle inhabiting the sorcerer, a power of the same

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 106-07.

² *Ibid.* p. 109.

order as these dispositions, is also not conceived as either material or immaterial, but as participating of both.

These views find striking confirmation in the following remarks by an abbé named Walker, a converted native of Gaboon. "The practice of autopsy," he says, "has fallen into abeyance in Libreville and among the peoples on the coast, and it is not observed by the Pahuins except in certain cases, but . . . in nearly all the other tribes of Ngoma it was thoroughly active when I lived in that country; it is so still, I believe, and will continue to be. Without being able to affirm it positively, I think that it is the same among all the peoples of Upper Ogowe.

"What is then the reason for a practice so universal? I may tell you that (with very rare exceptions) an autopsy is never undertaken with a view to finding out the kind of illness from which the sufferer died, but so that the survivors may know who has 'eaten his soul,' and what other souls the same person may have eaten." In other words, its purpose is to find out what *endjanga* killed him, whether his own people's or his neighbour's.

"And what exactly is this *endjanga*? . . . For my own part I should be inclined to believe that this idea of *nedjanga*, *ignemba*, or *evous* is based upon the jealousy and envy attributed to certain persons who are of ill-repute or unpopular. It is very rarely that a person who is affable and kindly by nature is accused of *ignemba*, whilst an individual who is supercilious or disobliging in demeanour is readily suspected of it.

"Some say that it is a little insect with claws, a kind of spider which, when extracted from the body, seizes on flying ants, flies, ticks and mosquitos. Others think that it is a kind of vampire that goes off to suck the blood of the living.

"Certain people affirm that it is a cardiac nerve or an intestinal polypus inhabited by a spirit able to weave spells and to accomplish supernatural acts. And finally, there are some who maintain that it is the soul itself which exteriorizes itself during the night in the form of a ball of fire that it may do harm to its neighbours."¹

Here the author clearly affirms the identity (a matter so hard for us to understand) of this little insect, whether spider or vampire, with the disposition that is socially harmful—jealousy, envy, malevolence. We should be inclined to think that the in-

¹Abbé A. Walker. *Un enterrement chez les Ishogos. Bulletin de la Société de Recherches Congolaises*, No. 8. pp. 136-37 (1928).

sect is its vehicle, its material form, its symbol. But to the natives, as Walker expressly states, the *endjanga* or *ignemba* or *evous*, the evil principle compounded of envy and jealousy, is also the little insect that leaves the body of the sorcerer to go and commit crimes.

From all this we recognize once more how materially our symbols differ from those of the primitive mind, for what it pictures to itself is not a relation or a correspondence or even a resemblance between the symbol and that which it evokes or expresses. It is an actual participation, an identity in essence, a consubstantiality.

V

In support of these views of the essential nature of witchcraft, as the primitive mind usually imagines it, we can bring forward a vast number of facts in which the injurious influence attributed to envy, covetousness, malevolence and the like, appears. To the Bergdama the safety of the social group depends upon the sacred fire. "Should this be profaned it loses its virtue, and misfortune overwhelms the Bergdama. Now it may happen that the persistent good luck of a zealous and experienced hunter excites the envy of one of his companions who employs magic means to wrest it from him. . . . If it be ascertained that such a crime has been committed, it is essential that a fresh fire be prepared if the whole village, and especially the fortunate hunter, are not to be attacked by dire misfortunes, for the crime has defiled the fire in such a way that only its complete renewal can turn aside the calamities that are imminent. They do not need to look far for the guilty person, for it is assuredly a relative."¹ Envy has thus been the instigator of witchcraft, and the person possessed by it has become a sorcerer.

It is the same, too, in a case of difficult labour. The husband has "untied" all that he can, and has slackened his bow. "If this precaution has been of no effect, people become uneasy. Then they have to admit that the poor woman must have had a dispute with some man or woman, and that she has remained on bad terms with the adversary. At this time such a thing is a very serious matter. Accordingly the married men and women of the village are informed of what is happening, and summoned hither. Barefooted they come, one by one, towards the parturi-

¹H. Vedder. *op. cit.* I, p. 32.

ent who is crouching on the ground. They stroke her body with the right hand, moistened with saliva, for to spit upon anybody or wet them with saliva is not only excellent for the health, but is also a sign of peace and good-will.¹ If they know that any enemy of the parturient inhabits a distant village, but one which can be reached, a messenger is immediately despatched, and he will return with a rag moistened with the saliva of this individual, which will then be placed on the body of the woman.”²

What can be clearer? If this woman cannot bring her child to birth, there must be, somewhere in the distance, another woman with whom she no doubt has quarrelled, and who nourishes a grudge against her. From this fact, the other, even without knowing it, is acting the part of a witch towards the sufferer, and the proof of it is that they come to demand that she shall revoke her enchantments by means of the saliva, as the wizards do when they give up desiring the death of some individual. She does not refuse the demand, for if she were to do so she would no doubt be put to the torture and killed as a witch.

It is a curious fact that death, like birth, may be hindered, and then again the natives have recourse to the same method. “When the death agony is prolonged they endeavour to trace the cause of it. As a rule they find that the dying man has had a misunderstanding with somebody, and that they have not made up their quarrel. If this person lives in the neighbourhood, they send for him in haste. No verbal reconciliation such as might be expected, takes place. Both parties maintain absolute silence, but the visitor passes his hand, moistened with saliva, over the chest or back of the dying man. His influence will be still more efficacious if he takes his own urine, to spit upon the invalid. Then, it is universally believed, the death will be a peaceful one. Should the antagonistic person inhabit a distant village, or should it be impossible for him to come in person, he sends by the messenger who came for him an apron permeated by his perspiration, an old head-covering that he has used, on which the traces of perspiration are visible, or some other garment which is immediately put on the sick man. From these objects the same effect may be expected as from his personal visit”

¹ *Ibid.* I. p. 42.

² Should any one of them have laid a spell upon her, this gesture will remove it, and the ill-will is thus changed into good-will, which acts physically. The obstacle once removed, the child can be born.

(since they are his appurtenances, which, imbued with his perspiration, have become an integral part of his personality). "It is clear," adds Vedder, "that the Bergdama does not want to shorten the death agony and secure a peaceful end by any reconciliation in the ethical sense, but that he is trying to attain this aim by a kind of charm which comes from the perspiration, etc. of his enemy. As in the case of a difficult labour, the person appealed to never refuses."¹

In the light of the data we have already acquired, the significance of this last remark does not admit of doubt. Like the woman in labour of the previous case, the dying man has been bewitched, through the ill-will of an enemy, though the latter is unconscious of it. The victim can have the spell removed by him only, and therefore he is sought in haste. He will never refuse what is asked of him, and if he cannot come in person, his urine or his perspiration will fulfill the same office as the saliva in the preceding instance. The noteworthy point here is that in both cases it is enough that there should have been no reconciliation, that is, that the feeling of ill-will or hatred, in short, the hostile disposition, should be still persisting, for it to be able, even from a distance, to exert the evil influence which brings misfortune, and lays the victim under a spell.

Throughout South Africa we find ideas of the same kind, more or less distinctly expressed. Thus we read in Kropf's dictionary "*in-kèzwu*: a term of reproach signifying an ill-disposed person; one who is suspected of bewitching; a rascal."² In his, Bryant quotes the sentence: "There is somebody who is dying with envy of me' (insinuating that it is he who is causing my stock to die off)."³ The influence exerted by the envious man is bringing ill luck upon the cattle and making them die—in other words, he is bewitching them, and the effective principle working within him is his envy. "It is said of a certain man (well-disposed, light-hearted, joyous and kindly) that he has a white heart; of another (surly, malevolent, hostile) that his is a black heart."⁴

The Herero believe that "through anger that is dissembled and through the evil eye (particularly that of a sick person) the soul of one man can injure the soul of another, and consume its

¹ *Ibid.* I. pp. 128-29.

² A. Kropf, *op. cit.* p. 178.

³ A. T. Bryant, *A Zulu-English Dictionary*, p. 141.

⁴ K. Endemann, *Wörterbuch der Sotho-Sprache*, p. 369.

power.”¹ These are significant expressions, for they evidently denote bewitching, and suppressed anger is in the same class as the evil eye and the envy in the instance just cited. Sometimes an insignificant circumstance suffices to reveal the hostile disposition which brings misfortune and can entail the most serious consequences. “About a month ago there died at Nalilo a Barotse boy, a child of the king, about twelve years old. Now it was essential for the Nalilo people to find out the cause of this death, and last week they managed to explain it. A few days before the child fell ill, a man had asked him for some milk, which was refused. Whereupon he said to the boy, ‘And what will you do with your milk?’ It was quite enough: an evil spell had been cast on the boy by the utterance of these words, and the pretended sorcerer was killed the other day, and his body thrown into the river.”² An adult, if asked for the milk, would probably not have refused, for he would have known that he was exposing himself to danger. He would have feared exactly what did happen—arousing an anger which would bring misfortune upon him. It is not the words uttered that have bewitched the child, as the lady missionary seems to think. They have merely shown the hostile disposition, as redoubtable as the evil eye, which the refusal has evoked.

Very often the “occasional” sorcerers of whom we have spoken do not even know the effect produced by their ill-will upon someone of whom they are not thinking. Their victim sometimes lives far away; they may not be really thinking of being avenged on him, and his misfortune would not profit them in any way. It seems quite natural to differentiate them from the sorcerer by birth and profession, who is malicious, cruel, a temperamental assassin, a real enemy to the public at large. As a rule, primitives take this difference into account, but they are not always sufficiently calm and self-possessed to remember it. Reflection is scarcely compatible with the emotion that overwhelms them when they find that one of their number has been bewitched, especially if the “sorcerer” is in their hands. Their excitement is too great for them to be pulled up short by the circumstance (so important in our eyes) that the man who has brought misfortune had not the slightest intention of doing any harm to his victim. The evil is done; he is responsible for it. If there is yet time, they will force him to “undo” his work, but

¹ *Berichte der rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* 1914. p. 59 (Kuhlmann).

² *Missions évangéliques*. LXXV. I. p. 475. (Mme. Béguin).

if it is too late, he can hardly hope to escape the sorcerer's fate.

We know moreover that a man's moods and dispositions are not necessarily known to himself.¹ They are forces that we express psychologically, but the primitive imagines them as semi-physical realities, or as having a form like the excrescence *end-janga*, *evous*, *mango*, etc., which may be found in someone without his being aware of it. Now the malevolent disposition and the intention to do harm can scarcely be distinguished. A man, then, unknown to himself, may have the intention of doing harm. Primitives themselves sometimes notice this. Thus, in the Sotho language, "*nyaka* means: to look for, consciously or unconsciously, to have an aim (known or unknown), to tend towards, have the intention to, to seek after."² Father Van Wing states that the Bakongo know quite well how to estimate the difference between an act committed intentionally, and another that was "not done on purpose." In the first case, the doer of the deed is responsible; in the second, he may be excused. But that does not do away with the fact that evil intentions may remain unknown to the man who harbours them. And the writer adds: "You hear them say too: 'It was the will of my heart,' to show that they have been led away by their passions."³

We may be inclined to think that these beliefs rightfully belong to the Bantu and other peoples of South and Equatorial Africa, for it is there indeed that we most frequently find them, no doubt because, for these regions, we have at our disposal many testimonies that are valuable and confirmatory of one another. We do however find such beliefs elsewhere, for in nearly all the primitive communities in which witchcraft plays an important part, it is thought that evil dispositions are its main ingredient, if not its very essence.

In the Dieyerie tribe, for instance, "as no person is supposed, from whatever cause, to die a natural death, but is conjectured to have been killed; either by one of a neighbouring tribe, or of his own, men, women and children are in constant terror of having offended someone who may therefore bear them enmity (and 'point the bone' at them)."⁴ Therefore with these aborigines, as with the Bantus, people avoided exciting anger, envy, ill-will, for they were afraid of being bewitched. With the Kai tribe in Dutch New Guinea, when the crops promised to be ex-

¹ Chap. II, pp. 83-84.

² K. Endemann. *op. cit.* p. 328.

³ J. van Wing, S. J. *op. cit.* p. 24 (note 1).

⁴ S. Gason. *Die Dieyerie tribe*, p. 23 (1871).

cellent, they did not feel sure of success, for "at any moment an enemy or an envious person might compound a *sawe* charm, and thus bring into the plantation a few wild pigs, and they would very soon lay it waste."¹ Their neighbours the Bukaua, when confronted by a laborious accouchement, interpret it as the Bergdama do. "They agree that what causes the parturient's pain is the vengeance of some woman who is angry with her, or the spell put on her by a neighbour whose field she entered without knowing that it was enchanted. They send for the enemy and entreat her to have pity. As a rule, she then masticates some aromatic peel and some bulbs, and with their juice she smears the body of the sufferer."² Evidently the Bakaua, like the Bergdama, believe that it is her enmity that brings misfortune to the parturient, and they, too, demand that she shall free her from the evil spell. She cannot refuse to do so, and she sets about it very much like the Bergdama woman would do: her saliva, mixed with the juices of the plants she has chewed, produces the desired effect.

In New Zealand, according to the testimony of a very early observer, "personal misfortunes are suspected to arise from errors unwittingly fallen into: as, for instance, smoking from the pipe of an ill-wisher, dressing in his garments, eating or drinking from the same utensil as an enemy."³ To be able to diagnose correctly, "the doctor requests to know from whose pipe the patient smoked last, if he put on the garment of any other person, if he lay in the hut of an enemy, or lifted up the axe or any other weapon of any ill-wisher."⁴ (To these Maoris, as to so many other primitives, illness is tantamount to bewitchment.) And the author adds, a little later: "A person is supposed to be bewitched by smoking from the pipe of an ill-wisher, lying in his hut, putting on his dress, drinking from the same calabash, eating together from the same basket, paddling in the same canoe, and even bathing in the same river."⁵ Here we very clearly see that the ill-will, the harmful principle impregnates the appurtenances of the man who harbours it.

One final testimony, taken from the Pueblos in North America. "Envy is a very common motive in witchcraft. For some years before he died, Gawire of Laguna, popularly called the

¹ R. Neuhauss. *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*, III. p. 126.

² *Ibid.* III. p. 426.

³ J. S. Polack. *Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders*. I, p. 236 (1840).

⁴ *Ibid.* I, p. 263.

⁵ *Ibid.* I, p. 280.

Sun shaman, was blind, and his sister believed his blindness was due to the envy of other medicine men—"Gawire was always so successful in his cures!" When Tsatiselu of Zuni was dying of senile tuberculosis, a member of his own clowa society would come in to visit him. The next morning Tsatiselu would be worse. The visitor was an envious man. A Badger clan woman told Mrs. Stevenson she believed she had been made sick (i.e. bewitched) by a certain one-eyed old woman who was envious of the visits she had been enjoying in a white man's house."¹

VI

According to a good many of the instances related above, it would seem as if envy, jealousy, ill-will, from the very fact of their existence, are enough to bring evil upon their object. From other accounts we learn that dispositions may be expressed through "magical influences" on the victim's belongings—his plantations, his luck in hunting or fishing, etc. Sometimes we are merely told that misfortune has befallen a certain individual, and that it has been caused by a sorcerer, without specifying whether the harmful principle within him has acted directly, without any intermediary, or whether there have been operations of "black magic."

As a matter of fact, the distinction does not seem to be very important. Primitives do not seem to consider much more than the effect—the misfortune, the victim, the evil influence that has struck him down, the *terminus ad quem*, on the one hand; and on the other, the origin of this evil influence, the harmful principle from which it emanates, the individual in whom it dwells, the *terminus a quo*. What is intermediate interests them far less. In whatever method his influence may be exerted, this individual will be termed a sorcerer. It is a term of many meanings since, as we have seen, it frequently indicates something quite different from the calculated and cold-blooded crime of the professional and conscious sorcerer. This evil influence is sometimes quite unknown to the person from whom it emanates, and possibly, if he knew the ill he is bringing to those who are dear to him, he would be in despair. There are some very tragic cases in what I should prefer to call "home-bred witchcraft."

¹ E. C. Parsons, *op. cit.* p. 108.

Nevertheless there is no doubt a profound reason why primitives as a rule give the same name to these occasional sorcerers, wizards despite themselves, and to the veritable, professional sorcerers. When it is seen that the ill-will (or the evil eye) of an individual has brought misfortune—even if he did not know that he was exerting an evil influence, and even if he otherwise had never given grounds for complaint—no more is needed: he is hopelessly suspect. If they do not intervene, he will find other victims. He is therefore accused of witchcraft, like the malefactors who do not shrink from the worst of crimes. In the one case as in the other, the primitive feels himself confronted by an unseen and a deadly force, and the affective category of the supernatural is at work in him.

A man in full vigour, or a man who is quite young, falls seriously ill and dies. His relatives, greatly stirred, at once think of bewitchment. Possibly, however, the death may be due to the displeasure of an ancestor. One of their augurs, being consulted, declares that there is a sorcerer in the case. Who can it be? Very often (especially among the Bantus) suspicion first falls upon a near relative of the victim, a son, a mother, a brother, and this relative must be made to drink the ordeal poison. Strange and incredible as such a suspicion appears to us, it is fairly frequent, and we shall discover the reasons for it.

Among the Bushmen, wrote Kratzenstein the missionary in 1861, "a widow very rarely finds a second husband. If people do not actually consider her responsible for her husband's death, yet they think that to some extent it may be laid to her door."¹ She is suspected of not being altogether innocent. Kafirs often do not hesitate to make a formal accusation against one of the members of the family, in case of illness or death. Steedman collected a series of significant facts of this kind from the Amapondo kafirs. For example, a young girl is seriously ill, and an *umhlalo* has taken place, with the result that the girl's stepmother has been accused, and is in confinement. The missionary says: "I sent my interpreter to demand her as a servant belonging to the Station, and to warn the people of the kraal what would be the consequence if my servant should be punished without my consent. The people were very much enraged at this interference, and one of them said: 'The (mission) school is a bush for witches!' . . . This morn-

¹ Quoted by Dr. Wangemann, *op. cit.* p. 67.

ing before daylight my interpreter called me up, as he thought the sick girl was dying. By the time I was dressed I heard a loud scream, and going out, saw Gecani (the accused) running away, pursued by Jama (her husband). The girl was dead, and the old man . . . was anxious to kill his wife for having by witchcraft caused the death of his daughter.”¹ “Some time after, the doctress who had accused the stepmother now says that ‘Jama himself is the guilty person’ and that ‘he is killing all the people near.’ She says: ‘Jama is great, therefore I was afraid to speak out, therefore I accused *that thing*, Gecani, *that thing that is only a woman*.’ Then Jama, expecting soon to be condemned by an *umhlalo*, endeavoured to escape with his cattle in the night.”² Here we have, then, a father who, without any apparent reason, is supposed to have killed his daughter, and to be spreading death around. Another story tells of a chief bewitched by his younger brother.³ In a third, it is a son who is causing the illness of which his father is dying.⁴

These instances date from nearly a century ago, for Steedman had taken them, with others, from the journals of the missionaries W. B. Boyce and S. Palmer. But here is a quite recent one, reported by Mr. Brownlie, late Chief Magistrate of the Transkeian territories, relating to these same Ampondo. “An old woman was ill. Her son and her son-in-law went to consult a witch doctor, and he told them that the old woman’s malady was caused by the sorcery of her eldest son, who lived a short distance away. So at dead of night these two men, accompanied by a younger brother, a mere lad, proceeded to the hut of the eldest son. They roused him from sleep, and got him to open the door. . . . They asked him to accompany them to a doctor to ascertain what was the cause of their mother’s illness. He consented to go, and rose to dress himself. Before dressing, he stooped over the hearth . . . and as he stooped he was suddenly assailed by his brother and brother-in-law, who had weapons concealed under their blankets. One of them struck him a terrific blow on the back of the head with a hatchet, which sliced off a piece of skull. . . . He fell forward on to his bed, where his little infant son was sleeping. Then they did him to death. . . . The dead man’s wife . . . was mercilessly slain with many assegai wounds.” The Magistrate had

¹ A. Steedman. *op. cit.* II. pp. 227-29.

² *Ibid.* II. pp. 289-90.

³ *Ibid.* II. p. 302.

⁴ *Ibid.* I. p. 229.

to follow up the matter, and the two murderers were condemned and hanged for their crime. "But they felt a conscious pride in having rid the earth of one whom it was the duty of every right-minded being to destroy. Nay more, it would be the act of a madman to let such a one escape and further endanger the lives of the community by his evil practices."¹

As it so often happens, the more revolting the crime, the more violent the feeling it arouses, and the less need of proofs. The two executioners did not make any enquiries; they did not interrogate the accused; they did not even notify the chief. Their proceedings began with the death of the man whom the witch doctor had denounced. They did not pause an instant to consider that it was hardly probable that a son should have bewitched his mother. They knew that public opinion would approve their deed, would congratulate them, and unanimously declare in their favour against the white men who would judge and condemn them.

Perhaps we shall be told that such occurrences are exceptional. On the contrary, it would not be difficult to prove that they are quite frequent, and we never hear that they have excited special indignation or surprise in the natives' minds. With the Herero, "on the death of one of a married pair, the other is often accused of having destroyed the vital principle (*Seelenkraft*) in one way or another."² Junod, too, writes: "A man does not wear mourning for a child who was not yet of age; the woman alone does so. However, a husband is always grieved at the death of his child, and a sad event like this often leads to dreadful results. He will begin to think that his wife is a witch and has eaten her own child by her magical power. Such an accusation is almost sure to end in a divorce."³

So too, when a wife dies young "even if there be no difficult lobola matter in the way, uneasiness is felt, because the brothers of the deceased cannot help thinking that their sister has been killed by witchcraft. It was not yet time for her to die; so she must have been bewitched by the husband's family, probably by her co-wives, who were jealous of her. . . . (We have found that jealousy, from the mere fact of its existence, has the effect of bewitching.) Happily their nephew is there (the dead

¹ W. T. Brownlie. *Witchcraft among the natives of S. Africa*. J. A. S. XXV. pp. 35-6 (1925-6).

² *Berichte der rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft*. 1914. p. 63.

³ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I. p. 191.

woman's son). He has the right of teasing them, even insulting them. Seeing that they do not accept the money (offered by the widower, their brother-in-law) he stands and gives vent to his grief, throws sand at them, tries to drive them away, weeps: 'No! father has not killed mother. He is not a wizard! She died a natural death!' They see his tears, and then consent to enter the village."¹

In Mme. Kootz-Kretschmer's monograph on the Safwa, in which she often gives the natives' words, as dictated to her, we find many accusations of this kind.² They are apparently an every-day matter, sometimes formulated without being really believed, merely to see what happens, to oblige the husband, wife, or brother of whom one has some vague suspicions, to take the ordeal poison. I shall give but one instance only, a very characteristic one. A young couple had lost a baby, and shortly afterwards another child, that had just begun to walk, died also. They are trying to find out what has caused this misfortune. "We carried him to the burial-ground, we opened his body, and we found that the scrotum was missing; the evil spirits had carried off that organ. And then we buried the child.

"When we had found what was missing we said to each other: 'Who can the sorcerer be, the evil spirit that has bewitched our child, and deprived him of his scrotum?' We talked about it, my wife and I, and said: 'You and I, we will both drink the *mwamfi* (ordeal poison); we will find out who the sorcerer is.' Then I said, 'Perhaps, wife, you are an *unlozi*?' and my wife said 'Perhaps, husband, you are an *unlozi*?' and we both drank the *mwamfi*. I drank mine, and she also drank hers; we had agreed together to do so, for we said: 'Here is our child, dead; perhaps it is we, his parents, who have bewitched him? If it be so, *mwamfi*, then remain in our bodies; but if it be not our fault, do not stay in us, *mwamfi*, but leave our bodies.' After we had spoken thus, we both of us vomited the *mwamfi*, both my wife and I. Then we had faith in each other once more, and we said: 'It is not we who have done it; we are not sorcerers, we have not bewitched our child, for we have indeed vomited the *mwamfi* here in our hut.'"³

Thus this father and mother, desperate at the death of this

¹ *Ibid.* I. pp. 211-12.

² E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *Die Safwa*. II. pp. 183, 197, 202, 315-19, 335-37.

³ *Ibid.* II. p. 268.

second child, which cannot be a natural one, and having no suspicion of anybody, are anxiously asking themselves whether the harmful principle which has killed their baby may not be present in one of themselves. It has devoured one of its victim's internal organs; therefore it is a true case of bewitching. Should the harmful principle inhabit the body of one or other of them, the *mwamfi*, an infallible detective, will certainly discover it, for it will remain in the body, and the sorcerer will be put to death. These unhappy parents, then, do not think the idea that they themselves may have caused the death of their child at all strange, and they feel they must ascertain its truth or falsity at the risk of their own lives. It is therefore not surprising that when a suspicious death occurs, these people ask themselves whether it may not be the wife or son, the brother, or some other relative of the deceased who has bewitched him, that is, who bears within himself or herself the death-dealing principle. Sometimes the dying man himself starts the accusation.

In the south-west of Lake Nyassa, "if a man die, a relation commonly is accused of causing the death." As usual in such circumstances, they have recourse to divination, and the relative pointed out, or possibly all the next of kin, must submit to the ordeal by poison.¹ With the Lango, "a woman who, though fertile, is unfortunate enough to bear only weaklings who do not long survive, is considered to have some magic property in her which causes their death, either intentionally or unintentionally, and is consequently returned to her family. This inability to rear up a family causes great grief to a woman, and is, fortunately, a rare occurrence. A peculiarly poignant instance is remembered at Achaba. In this case the woman in question was married to three husbands successively and was divorced by each, as in each case the child that was born died shortly after birth. She was accordingly accounted an ill-omened woman with a curse on her, and though in no way ill-treated, she was driven by the frenzy of her despair and the belief that she was really possessed of a malign influence to commit suicide."²

Among the Bangala, "a person is very ill, and charges his family with bewitching him. They deny the accusation, and

¹ H. S. Stannus. *Notes on some tribes of British Central Africa*. J. A. I. XL. p. 301. (1910).

² J. H. Driberg. *The Lango*, pp. 164-65.

he thereupon challenges them to drink the water dipped in the *nganga's* bell (the ordeal poison). . . . Anyone who refuses to drink is regarded as guilty." ¹ And a little later: "It is this *nganga* (witch doctor) who discovers the witch in the family of the deceased one." ²

"The general belief is that only one in the family can bewitch a member of the family, and who would go to the trouble of bewitching one of his own family unless he was to benefit by the death of the bewitched person? Why, the son or another brother. Consequently when a father is ill, the son is regarded with suspicion." ³

On the Congo again, "when the imbecile chief died, a few years later, Lutete accused his own mother of the witchcraft which caused the death, and killed her." ⁴ Near the Wathen mission station, "one of Ndala's sisters was dying of sleep sickness, and Ndala was accused of causing it by sorcery. Her other sister was always abusing her, and the townsfolk did the same. When the poor girl went to market, the people would not buy or sell to her, and cursed her, and threatened violence. . . . She sought relief in visiting a relative in another town, but when she reached her house, the relative asked her whether she had come to bewitch her as she had done her sister, and she hounded her out of the town." ⁵

With the Azanda "one might say that there is a vague responsibility resting on the husband who has let his wife die, or the wives who have seen their husbands die before them. Such a responsibility must be extinguished through payments made, and these are always incumbent on sons-in-law, the men who have married either a daughter or sister or aunt of the deceased." ⁶ Yet more, in the Mayomb dictionary compiled by Father Bittremieux, we read: "He who is accused of having killed someone by witchcraft demands that one of the relatives of the dead shall first submit to the poison ordeal. . . . If he emerges scatheless, then the accused in his turn must submit to it." ⁷

¹ J. H. Weeks. *Anthropological Notes on the Bangala of the Upper Congo*. J. A. I. XL. 364 (1910). Cf. *ibid.* p. 389, 393.

² *Ibid.* p. 384.

³ W. H. Bentley. *op. cit.* I, p. 395.

⁴ *Ibid.* II, p. 435.

⁵ *Ibid.* II. p. 379.

⁶ C. R. Lagae. O. P. *op. cit.* p. 209.

⁷ L. Bittremieux. *Mayombsch Idiotikon*. p. 534.

Thus in the ordinary course, when a case of bewitchment is in question, it is in the family of the deceased that the man who has caused his death must first of all be sought.

In a Pahuin village, "the school children came at midday to tell the missionary that a woman had just been killed in the village; she had been accused of putting her husband under a spell and causing his death. The missionary hurried thither, and found the woman in her dying agony lying in the centre of the village. Despite his entreaties, they began to cut her up in pieces, so that they might cook some of the flesh, leaving the rest for the next few days." ¹ With the Kpando tribe of Togoland "a man who has lost his wife during her pregnancy, or who has lost several previous wives, is suspected of harbouring a malign spirit within him, and it is very difficult for him to contract another marriage." ²

In Westermann's notable work on the Kpelle he shows us, at the open grave of a king's son, who has just died suddenly, his kindred engaged in defending themselves from the accusations that are flying around with respect to the death. "The aunt now addresses the deceased, her brother's son . . . 'Who killed you? If I bewitched you and caused your death—take me before the moon is in her next quarter! If I charged anyone to cast a spell upon you—take me before this week ends! You are my brother's child, you are of higher rank than Tomba (her own son). If that is the reason why I have bewitched you (i.e., if my jealousy has brought evil upon you) take me! But if it be not so, then look with favour upon me!' She thus admits, while hoping that it is not so, that without knowing it, she may possibly have bewitched him through jealousy, and that this had caused his death; she is prepared, if such be the case, to die herself, and she begs her nephew to take her to the Land of the Dead. If she is innocent, she counts on his protection.

"In her turn, the mother speaks, and she, like the aunt, says: 'If I have bewitched you, take me!' and so forth. 'If it be not thus, be good to me, and seize the one whom you need, the person who bewitched you.'

"The dead man's father, King Hogbo, says the same thing 'If I have bewitched you . . . I have not done it; look favourably on me!' . . . He accuses his son's wife, who has not come to

¹ *Missions évangéliques*. LXXIV, I, pp. 128-29. 1899. (Allégret).

² P. E. Breitkopf. S. V. D. *Beiträge zur Ethnographie der Kpando-Leuten*. *Anthropos*. XXII, 3-4, p. 498. (1927).

the funeral ceremony, because she knows that she is suspected.

"The nephew of the dead now speaks. . . . He entreats the dead man to leave his own children in peace. . . .

"Later, the ordeals take place. . . . The dead man's widow had not appeared; the pair had not been happy together, and the people suspected her of having caused his death."¹

Thus nobody seems to doubt that the sudden death of the young prince was due to witchcraft. His nearest relatives, his parents among them, feel that they may be on trial. They do not say to the dead man who is listening to them: "It is not I!" (for how can they be sure of this? Would they not rather say, like the Safwa parents, "Who knows? Perhaps it is I?")—They simply say: "I cannot have done it, for I had no ill-feeling towards you." They do not demand the ordeal poison but if others venture to make them take it, they will not refuse to drink it. And since the wife of the dead man has not appeared at the funeral, and she was on bad terms with her husband, it is she who must first of all submit to the ordeal, for we already know that quarrels and resentment have the effect of bewitching.²

Finally, in Morovoay in Madagascar, "when a family finds that several of its members die within a very short period, they immediately become suspicious of one another, the family life becomes increasingly difficult, and it is not long before they suggest a trial by *tanghin* (poison) which every one eagerly accepts, so that they may show that they have nothing to do with the ills that have befallen the family."³

Do we need to prolong the list of these African instances? They appear to be convincing enough, and it does not seem to be necessary to bring forward similar ones from other parts of the globe. Here are just two. Formerly in Samoa, "when a man was ill there was a special inquiry made of his sister, and also of her children, as to whether any of them had cursed him and this caused his illness, and in all such cases the sister would take some cocoa-nut water into her mouth, and eject it towards or even over the body of the sufferer, by which action she expressed her own innocence, and also removed any other supposed spell. This was done on account of the fear which was always felt of the effects of a sister's curse."⁴ When this

¹ D. Westermann. *Die Kpelle*, pp. 534-37. ² Chap. II. pp. 66-73.

³ *Missions évangéliques*. XC, 2, p. 309. 1917. (Rusillon).

⁴ G. Brown. *Melanesians and Polynesians*. p. 224.

is compared with the facts already given, and especially the instances Vedder noted among the Bergdama, it is not difficult to interpret. The sister and her children are the first to be suspected of having caused the illness by bewitching the sufferer. The liquid which the sister spits on his body, mingled with her saliva, is the only efficacious means of freeing him from the spell and thus saving his life.

Finally, the Franciscan missionaries in South America have reported beliefs which are strangely like those found in South Africa. "When a much-loved person, a father, mother, husband, wife, son, etc., is found to be seriously ill, the family, after having tried the usual remedies without success, consults the sorcerer or priest (the 'witch doctor') to find out what must be done to save the life of the patient. . . . The doctor begins his magical operations, and ends them at one of the members of the family (usually one of the boys or girls who is most sympathetic and intelligent). He affirms that this young person is guilty, and has caused the illness." . . . Then follows an account of the harsh treatment, the actual tortures inflicted on this unhappy child, who is forced to unearth the charms that have helped in the bewitching of the invalid. The editor of this report adds: "What Father Sala speaks of here entirely corresponds with what other missionaries have noted among the Zamora Jibaros."¹ Similarly, with the Montana Indians, "when one of them dies, or falls ill, the natives believe that it is the result of witchcraft, and they accuse even the children and the nearest relatives of those thus afflicted of being the cause of the misfortunes."²

These very numerous cases of "home-bred bewitchment" are not therefore so difficult to explain as they at first appeared. We can understand that primitives, while as usual inveighing vociferously against them, are neither surprised nor shocked. It is enough to remark that in such cases to "bewitch" really means to bring misfortune, to exert an evil influence which causes the illness or death of a person. Now such an effect is automatically produced by hostile dispositions, and feelings such as envy, jealousy, malevolence, rancour, etc., and also by disputes and anger. If then we remember that such states of mind and such feelings may be active in a person without his

¹ *Historia de las misiones franciscanas*, XII, pp. 2-5.

² *Ibid.* X, p. 400.

even knowing it, we at once see that family life affords this malign influence constant opportunities for exercise. Who can feel certain that no feeling of jealousy or irritation or ill-will has ever been aroused in him with regard to the persons with whom he lives, even those whom he most fondly loves? Once aroused, this feeling operates after the fashion of the malign principle of the "real" sorcerers—it brings misfortune, and illness and death soon prove that there has been some bewitching. Search is made to discover from whom it originated, and then, to her utter surprise, a wife learns that she has thus brought misfortune on her husband, a mother finds that she has bewitched her child, or a sister may have dealt death to her brother.

All this becomes clear then, if we keep before us these two convictions of the primitive's mind: firstly, that serious illness and death *are*, most frequently, the result of bewitchments; and secondly, that malevolent dispositions of their own accord, and without the subject in whom they are present being conscious of it, may exert a malign, and even fatal influence. The individual who harbours them within him, like the man with the evil eye, disseminates misfortune about him. When a serious accident occurs, especially when there are several in succession, search for their author is first made in the victim's immediate circle. It is not because they are the nearest of kin that the wife, husband, brother, etc., are the first of all upon whom suspicion falls: it is because they are in close connection with the victim, and contact with them must have been fatal to him.

VII

Certain customs, which to some extent are to be found everywhere, help to confirm this theory. Frequently, for instance, if a sick man's state, instead of improving grows steadily worse, his friends remove him to a distance.

In New Zealand "a sick person was sometimes ordered what we should term a change of air. In such a case, the idea is to get the sufferer away from the beings who are afflicting him, to another district to whose gods and demons he is a stranger."¹

They do not allow the invalid to be accompanied by any of those who usually live with him; they even keep his new place of abode a secret, and sometimes they isolate him entirely.

¹ Elsdon Best. *The Maori*. II, p. 35.

Many motives, no doubt, may concur to make them take these precautions, and among others a desire to prevent him from contaminating others. But the illness is considered as a bewitchment first and foremost, and the fact that it is gaining the upper hand proves that the harmful influence exerted upon the victim is unremitting, and it is therefore probably from some one of his immediate circle that it emanates. To remove him from his vicinity therefore must be the best method of saving his life. It must be made impossible for the evil-doer who is killing him to get near him, and if it can be managed, this bringer of ill-fortune must not even know where he is being sheltered.

In like manner, when an accident or misfortune occurs, those who are near the victim of it at the moment are held to be responsible for it. In *Primitive Mentality* I have quoted some instances of this kind.¹ Here are some more, no less significant. In the neighbourhood of Sydney, a hundred years ago, "whenever a native meets with an accident or is killed, his friends call for the punishment of the person or persons who were present with him, conceiving that it was their duty to have prevented the accident, no matter whether in their power or not."² These aborigines are not so unreasonable; it is Dawson who gives the wrong interpretation of the fact he is reporting. The friends of the victim simply think that when an accident occurs to him it is because one of those with him has brought misfortune upon him, in other words, has bewitched him, and therefore they are demanding vengeance. Many similar instances can only be accounted for thus. In Kiwai Island, "if a boy is taken by some of his father's people on a hunting or other expedition, during which he loses his life, the father will be very angry, and a great quarrel will ensue. But if the same happens with the mother's people, the father is 'shame' to utter any reproach."³ In the latter case he has no demand to fear from the child's maternal relatives, because it was they who accompanied him, but had it been his own people, an indemnity would be claimed, and this accounts for the father's anger with those who, being in the child's company, had brought misfortune upon him, for they are responsible for what has occurred.

"Some years ago," writes the administrator of a district in

¹ Chap. I. p. 49.

² R. Dawson. *The present state of Australia*. p. 285. (1830).

³ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 177.

New Guinea, "when I first came to Buna, six or eight old ladies from the village of Surirai used to visit the station at least once a week, with large quantities of crabs. One day they were all down the coast in a large canoe, and when passing the village of Borio, a sudden squall springing up, not only smashed the canoe, but all their beloved cooking-pots. They came to me with tears in their eyes, and wanted the immediate arrest of all the residents in Borio, as they 'puri-puri' (bewitched) the wind, and made it come up strong. Unfortunately, I laughed, telling them I was afraid I could not grant their request. They were very indignant, and left at once for their village."¹ How could the administrator have refused their demand? The squall did not happen of its own accord; it was the act of people who had brought misfortune upon the old ladies, and since the accident occurred at Borio, who could these be but the inhabitants of that village? Their proximity gives them away, and there can be no possible doubt about it.

"According to custom," says Landtman, "a person is often held responsible for accidental deaths; for instance, if a man has invited somebody else to accompany him on a journey or a hunting or harpooning expedition, if his companion perishes—or if the same happens to a child whom the mother has left with another woman to be looked after in her absence."² Far away from that part of the world, among the Iglulik Eskimos, Rasmussen reports something similar. He tells the story of two men who went to the end of the ice floe together, and were carried out to sea. They arrived at an unfamiliar place. One of them showed himself, and was killed, but the other escaped, and in the end reached home again. His wife, who had believed him to be dead, had married again, and he left her to the new husband. "The man now settled in his own village, but it was not long before people began to whisper that he must have killed the man who had been with him when they were carried out to sea."³

The Bantus of South Africa believe the same thing. "To be the means of causing another an injury (1) if you call people to go and hunt a lion or leopard, and one of them gets wounded or killed, (2) if you take a youngster on a journey, and any harm befalls him, (3) if you deceive a person by ask-

¹ *Annual Report. Papua*. 1911. p. 132.

² G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 182.

³ K. Rasmussen. *The intellectual culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*. p. 295.

ing him to do something or go somewhere, and in doing so he meets with an accident, (4) if you get anyone in a canoe, and he is drowned—in all these cases you commit *buditahzi*," a very serious matter, entailing grave consequences. And E. W. Smith adds explicitly: "The reason in the preceding cases is that you are supposed to have bewitched the person whom the accident has befallen." ¹

In Azanda "two very old men, both of whom had lost their wives, were living together in a small hut . . . away from the rest of the village. They were great friends. One day, one of the old gentlemen saw an elephant damaging their little bit of plantation and, with more bravery than prudence, promptly proceeded to drive it away with a bow and arrow, with entirely fatal results to himself. The second old gentleman went to get help to bury his friend, and that mournful business being over, he settled down to a lonely existence.

"In course of time, however, a young man arrived, who claimed to be the son of the deceased. Having heard the particulars regarding the death of his father, he at once came to the conclusion that someone had 'put up' the elephant to kill his father, and suspicion rested on the latter's late companion. When I arrived on the scene, I found a poor old fellow very nearly dead of starvation, tied to an immense log in a half ruined hut. His tormentor was at once arrested, and seemed much hurt in his feelings, as he said that he had performed, at considerable expense to himself, a number of Bengies (divinatory rites) with chickens with a view to finding out the culprit for certain, and the last Bengi had *almost* declared that his poor old prisoner was guilty of his father's death." ² This is a very significant story. The dead man's son at once suspects the old friend, his father's daily companion, as he would have suspected his wife or sister if he had had one. Why is this? Because they were living together. It is the daily contact with his friend that has brought misfortune to the victim. Therefore this friend is a sorcerer, and it is he—perhaps unconsciously, but that matters little—who delivered him over to the elephant.

Dr. Schweitzer relates an equally convincing instance. "He

¹ Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. I, 373.

² Hawarden. *Notes on the Azende. Sudan Notes and Records*. II. 1. p. 26. (1929).

(the wounded man) died while I was hastily endeavouring to amputate the thigh (which a hippo had fractured).

"The man who had accompanied him on the fishing expedition so sadly terminated had come to beg me to attend to him; the brother of the dying man was casting threatening glances at this one, and then he said a few words to him in an undertone. Even while the corpse was growing cold, these two men were engaged in a hot dispute. Joseph took me aside and explained what the matter was. N'kendjou, who was accompanying the dead man in his fishing expedition, was with him when the hippopotamus charged them, and it was he who had proposed the expedition. According to native law, therefore, he was responsible for the accident. He had accordingly been obliged to leave his own village and stay for several weeks with the wounded man. Now as they would have to bring the dead man back to his village down the stream, he must go back with him, so that the legal question should be settled then and there, but this he was refusing to do, knowing well that death awaited him there."¹ To the dead man's brother, the hippopotamus (like the elephant in the last story) is only the instrument of the person who has bewitched his brother, and who should this be, if not the man who persuaded him to undertake that fatal fishing expedition? This man reasons exactly like those who, in the case of serious illness or death, suspect the persons of the victim's immediate circle.

Finally, one instance only will perhaps suffice to show that this belief is not unknown in North America. With the Dénés, "It was the will of God that a child should be drowned . . . while his companion in the canoe saved himself by swimming. This accident very nearly had the most disastrous consequences. As is usual in such circumstances, the survivor was suspected of having caused the poor child's death, and his maternal uncles—who to the Babine tribe are nearer of kin than his own father—swore to avenge the death of their nephew."²

VIII

This injurious principle which exerts a malign influence and spreads misfortune is not only to be found in persons of malevolent or hostile disposition, in those who have the evil eye, and

¹ A. Schweitzer. *op. cit.* pp. 98-9.

² R. P. Morice. *Au pays de l'ours noir*, p. 164 (1897).

finally in the "sorcerers," in whatever sense the word may be understood. It may also dwell in animals, plants, and even minerals. "Men are not alone in possessing the power to bewitch—animals also, plants, and even stones may effect enchantments. Chief among the first class are the manatee and the fox. When there is nobody especially disliked to denounce, it is these that the *mueranga* (witch doctor) in his madness points out."¹

So too, in the tribes of Central Celebes, they talk of pumpkins, coco-trees, etc., which bring misfortune. Nothing is more common than beliefs of this kind. In *Primitive Mentality*² some of them have already been noted. As a general rule, any living things or objects betraying anything unusual, extraordinary, abnormal, anything like what the Romans called *monstra* and *portenta*, are regarded as bringers of misfortune and sinister omens. For instance, "if the fruit of the banana appears, not at the end of the stalk but in the middle, it is *measa* (an ill-luck bringer). On such a case the plant is at once cut down and thrown away. This belief is prevalent everywhere in Central Celebes. . . . People usually say that it entails the death of its owner."³ "When a certain variety of pumpkin bears two fruits upon a single stem (a similar case to a twin birth) it is *measa*. It will cause a death in the family of the man who owns the field in which it is growing. The pumpkin-plant must be pulled up, for nobody must eat it."⁴ "When the coco-tree bears its fruit before the right season it is *measa*, and this belief does not apply to this tree alone, but to any tree that bears fruit before the ordinary time . . . Such trees are cut down."⁵

In all these cases, and in many similar ones—Kruyt has given a long list applying to Central Celebes alone—the circumstance that inspires the primitive with fear is, as we know, its abnormality. Directly he notices anything unusual, or out of the common, he does not need to seek for the cause of it. He sees and feels in it the working of an invisible, malignant force which thus reveals its presence. It brings misfortune in its train, it casts an evil spell. All these unusual, abnormal growths and objects, therefore, must be dealt with as if they were sorcerers.

¹ *Historia de las misiones franciscanas*, I, p. 316.

² Chap. V. p. 142 *et seq.*

³ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa* III. T. L. V. LXXXVI. p. 105. (1920).

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 107.

⁵ P. 108.

This belief is nowhere more clearly evident than among the Bantus. In the Sotho dictionary we read: "*mo-fefa*, an anomaly (which, according to pagan superstitions, brings misfortune to the country and its people).¹ *Mo-fefe* means: someone who gives an illness to another, that is, who bewitches him. In the Xosa language *isi-manga* means a marvel, an event which arouses astonishment, something contrary to the usual order; a phenomenon, an omen (of evil). *Isi-Helegu*: an event which is both wonderful and calamitous."² And in Bryant's dictionary, "*um-Hlola*: any strange, extraordinary, awe-inspiring thing or occurrence causing one to wonder, as an eclipse of the sun, or a railway train, to the natives; such thing or occurrence when regarded as a portent of evil, an ill-omen, as the alighting of a ground-hornbill upon one's hut."³ "Should a hornbill ever alight upon a hut, it is an omen so evil, that the hut-owner would at once consult a witch-doctor."⁴ He must know without delay whence this omen comes, or rather, who it is that is bewitching him, whether it is some dissatisfied ancestor taking his revenge, or a neighbour who has the evil eye, and is bringing him ill-luck.

Speckmann had already given facts which are quite in accordance with the preceding. He says: "The *amahlozi* (ancestors) . . . like meat and beer, and they insist on being honoured. Therefore from time to time they cause some sign of misfortune to become apparent—for example, a bird or a dog may alight upon a hut. Then some sacrifice must be offered to these ancestors."⁵ As E. W. Smith says, "it is especially strange, unusual things, uncommon sights, new-fangled habits, strange foods and ways of doing things that are regarded as manifestations of the hidden powers. . . . When, for example, bananas were first introduced by us at Kasenga, we offered some of the fruit to Mungalo. He turned from it with expressions of great horror. 'No! no! I have never seen that before! It is *tonda!*'"⁶ He means, this strange fruit will exert a bad influence on me, it will bring me misfortune, it will bewitch me.

Given such a mental outlook, we shall not be surprised to

¹ K. Endemann. *op. cit.* p. 74.

² A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 218, p. 142.

³ A. T. Bryant. *op. cit.* p. 253

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 654.

⁵ F. Speckmann. *op. cit.* p. 168.

⁶ Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. II. p. 88.

hear that Lindblom says: "Even in the simplest accident which may happen to him, the native may suspect the influence of an enemy or a rival, trying to injure him by means of *wosz*. The word may be conveniently rendered by witchcraft, magic, this conception being then taken in both good and bad sense (white and black magic). . . . When young persons suddenly die, this is usually ascribed to the *wosz* of some enemy. In such an unimportant case as that of the goats going astray and running off when they are grazing, one may go to the medicine man to find out if it was an accident, or brought about by some enemy; and if, for instance, some one happens to fall from the tree and hurt himself when occupied in hanging up beehives, it is certainly due to *wosz*. . . . It is considered very suspicious, and due to *wosz* on the part of some enemy, if one happens to be hit by excrement from a flying hawk or crow. The author heard of a person to whom an accident of this kind happened, and who at once destroyed everything he was wearing at the time, and was also purified."¹

Even when the actions are those of human beings, those that are unusual, contrary to habit, inexplicable, all produce the same effect as the animals, plants, things, and events, that are strange and unprecedented. Primitives are afraid of them, and suspect that there is witchcraft behind them. D. R. Mackenzie has fully noted this belief among the Konde people. "They have a word *kusikura*, which sometimes means to insult, but commonly to act as a pointer to coming evil. Such actions are mostly unnatural; many of them are in themselves evil, and their occurrence is regarded as a portent. Such are (1) unnatural anger. Anger in a child is a phenomenon of awe. If a grown-up person arouse it—not in his own child—that person has received warning that his death is near. How this comes about is not clear. Some natives say that the anger is a sign, which cannot be explained; others that the child has a disease, from which he does not himself suffer, but which passes over to the person who arouses the wrath." Perhaps this circumstance will seem less mysterious if we compare it with the facts we have already studied in Chapter II,² for there we saw how great is the fear that anger excites in primitives. In arousing it they run the risk of being bewitched, for it spreads misfortune all around it. Like envy, jealousy, covetousness, it is the manifestation of a malignant principle which has become

¹ G. Lindblom. *op. cit.* pp. 278-9.

² Ch. II. pp. 72-74.

active. Yet greater will be the reason for fear in the anger of a child, for that is something unusual.

"At Karouga, if two old men fight with their fists, and tear each other's garments, they have forecasted death for each other. The death of a friend of one or the other will shortly take place. . . .

"(2) Unnatural actions. To invite an old man to climb a tree may seem to us more laughable than deadly; but to the Konde it is a dreadful combination of insult and forecast; it is a forecast (of evil), because such a thing is an insult so great as to be in itself a portent. The number of things that come under this head is legion; but generally to ask an old person to do what is unnatural for the aged to do is *kusikura*.¹

"(3) Accusations against a man of good character come under the same heading. Some evil has been done, and the wrong-doer has not been discovered. Then, perhaps in joke, or it may be out of personal dislike, some one says that So-and-So did it. The person referred to knows that his days will not be long in the land. 'Did I ever do a thing like that?' he asks indignantly. 'Why then am I accused?' It can only be *kusikura* (a combined insult and fatal omen); and he expects to die, at the best, within a year or two."²

With Bantus, then, as with Dayaks, a false accusation brings misfortune upon the individual who is its subject,³ and this not, as we might suppose, because of the consequences it might entail on him, but because it places him in the power of a malign influence, and therefore in imminent danger of disaster. "There is nothing," Smith and Dale tell us, "about which a

¹ It is noteworthy that similar beliefs are found among the Dayaks. In Hardeland's dictionary we read: "*Badjea*, killed by lightning . . . *Djeadjea*, unseemly (words or actions by which one may attract lightning to oneself). . . . In this sense it is unseemly to give a man or an animal a name that is not suitable to him or it, or to say something about an animal that is contrary to nature, as for instance, to say that the tick dances, or the rat sings, or that a fly makes war . . . or of a man that he has a cat or some other animal for his wife or mother; to bury living animals *saying* 'I am burying a man.' (It is not in the burying alive that the wrongdoing lies, but in using these words); to skin a frog alive, *saying* 'Now it has eaten its cloak.' . . . All kinds of incest belong to this class of shortcomings, for they consist of actions that are contrary to nature, and they bring about death by lightning." A. Hardeland. *Dajacksch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, p. 25.

² D. R. Mackenzie. *The spirit-ridden Konde*. pp. 246-8 (1925).

³ Hardeland says the same: "*Patanah*: misfortune brought upon us by another; false accusation. . . . *Matanah*: to bring misfortune on somebody, to accuse him falsely." *op. cit.* pp. 427-28.

Mvila waxes more eloquently angry than a false accusation. There is a boomerang action about accusing another that forces a man to keep his mouth shut, or to be very sure of his facts; for should he fail to substantiate his charge, he is at once held to ransom, no matter how small the charge may have been.”¹

To put it in other words, to accuse a person falsely is the equivalent of: to bring disaster, to bewitch, and if, as in the case mentioned by Mackenzie, the accusation is made against a man of unimpeachable character, who cannot have done the deed in question, the unusual nature of the circumstance makes it a doubly serious matter—it is an act “contrary to nature,” and the death of the man falsely accused will ensue.

Thus while we are especially alive to the disgraceful character of a false accusation made against an honest man, primitives are particularly appalled by the misfortune which it will bring upon him, misfortune of which it is the fore-runner. What has happened to him is no less serious than the alighting of a hornbill on his hut. Such a “transgression” signifies that he is bewitched. His death is imminent, at any rate unless he can find some means of “purifying” himself, that is, neutralizing the evil influence being exerted upon him.

Now that we are at the end of this protracted study of witchcraft, we are scarcely better able than at its beginning to determine what it really means to primitives. But we do at any rate understand that we are not obliged to do it, and why we need not ask how they solve a problem which does not present itself to them.

It is we who, by analysing its essential characteristics, are trying to decide what witchcraft is. The primitive feels no necessity to set any boundaries to this concept. The common factor of all his ideas relating to witchcraft is to be found in the affective category that governs them all. Whether it be a question of the crimes committed by the “professional wizard”; of the malign influence exerted by persons possessing the evil eye, or by those who, through their maleficent or jealous dispositions, bring misfortune upon their immediate circle, it may be in spite of themselves; or again, of the evil wrought by persons, animals, and things, whatever they be, that harbour an injurious principle within them; or by unusual and abnormal actions and objects; or by the *monstra et portenta*; or by a

¹ Smith and Dale. *op. cit.* I, p. 371.

defilement that causes a state of impurity, etc.,—in all these cases, varying as they are to us, the primitive, I will not say “conceives” or “perceives,” but directly “feels” the working of unseen, baneful powers. The peculiar quality of the emotion he experiences at such a moment does not admit of his making a mistake, or of hesitating. Without any need to reflect or compare or judge—in short, without any really mental process—he divines at once what is confronting him.

However diverse the manifestations of these malign powers and influences, innumerable as they are, the feeling he has of their proximity and of their action always makes the same impression upon the primitive: he at once decides that he is being bewitched. Thus it is that while our logical methods of thought oblige us to try to define a witch and determine what witchcraft consists of, the primitive from the start possesses a knowledge of the subject that is essentially emotional (if this be not a contradiction in terms) and also more than clear, if one may say so, although it cannot be expressed in the form of a concept. This is what makes it so difficult for us to grasp, for the lack of such a form is embarrassing to our minds, but on the other hand, the essential elements in the content of these representations escape us, because we do not “feel” them.

A New Guinea Papuan one day told a British administrator that he knew nothing about the nature of *puri-puri* (witchcraft) and that only natives knew what it was. He might have found it very difficult to explain his statement. Perhaps, however, we may be allowed to interpret thus what he wanted to convey. How can a white man view the visible and the supernatural worlds with the Papuan’s eyes?

Here we are dealing with nothing less than the fundamentally mystic nature of these primitives’ mentality. *Puri-puri*, the witchcraft they perceive everywhere—most unreasonably, in the white man’s opinion—is in reality only one aspect of the constant intervention of unseen powers and influences in what we call the natural order of events. Hence the frequently preponderating position held by witchcraft in the life of primitive communities no longer demands special explanation, and at the same time we realize the futility of our efforts to define it.

CHAPTER VII

“TRANSGRESSIONS” AND INCEST

THE dismay that is created in the minds of most primitives at the appearance of unusual occurrences, or when their attention is arrested by strange doings on the part of animals—such as the crowing of a hen; a goat or dog climbing on to the roof of the hut, etc.—in short, what many of them call “transgressions” (*tololo*, *waheme*, and the like) is not, as we have already seen, really mental in character. In practical matters they, like ourselves, rely upon the regular order of natural phenomena, and their mechanical arts imply a confidence that it will not fail them. But they have never regarded the concept of this order of nature as something by itself, and still less have they a definite concept of natural¹ law.

Nothing seems to them to require less explanation than a miracle. They have no difficulty in admitting as possible and even actual the most improbable transformations. In *Primitive Mentality* and *The “Soul” of the Primitive* I have given many examples of this, and in this volume there are yet others, no less significant.

If then what is unusual, extraordinary, abnormal impresses them so strongly, it is not because their conception of the inevitable order of nature is suddenly disturbed and upset. On the contrary, they are less surprised than troubled, for we might say that they live in daily expectation of the unexpected. A “transgression” is one form of the constant intervention of the supernatural in the course of nature, but it is a form that they dread. The unseen power of which it is a manifestation is exercising a malign influence on the persons who witness it, or upon

¹ One observer went so far as to say recently: “Nothing happens that is purely natural. Even behind the most natural fact there is something supernatural to be found, although I do not know and cannot define it in every special case. Therefore it is always wise for me to pay attention to everything that is unusual, and try to avoid all contact with it or get any advantage out of it. . . . Behind the unusual there may lurk something dangerous, therefore look out!” P. A. Witte, S.V.D. *Der Zwillingskult bei den Ewe-Negern in Westafrika*. Anthropos. XXIV (1929) p. 943.

the entire social group. Like bewitchments (to which transgressions are akin), like evil omens, among which they might be ranked, they are at once bringers of ill-luck, and in themselves misfortunes. Such is the fear inspired by them that sometimes a man hardly ventures to defend himself against them.

To give an example of this, in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, there is an interesting legend entitled "The young man of the ancient race who was carried off by a lion, when asleep in the field." This young man is overtaken by sleepiness, and falls asleep. (It is evident, from another version of this legend, that the unusual sleepiness is supposed to be caused by the lion.) The beast approaches the young man, who wakes up and perceives it. He does not move, but pretends to be asleep. Before tearing him to pieces, the lion, being thirsty, goes off to drink, and the young man, profiting by this respite, hurries away and takes refuge in his own village.

"Very soon the lion pursues him thither, and nothing will satisfy it. Children are thrown in its way, but it will take no notice of them; it is the young man it wants. Then an old man said: 'Don't you see that this lion is a wizard? Let the young man's mother give him to the lion!' This was done; the lion kills the young man, and is itself killed by the Bushmen with its prey in its grasp."¹ Thus, as soon as the people understand that it is no ordinary lion that confronts them, they no longer resist. They deliver the young man up, since it wants him, for it possesses a supernatural power which their fear forbids them to oppose; who knows what misfortune it might draw down upon them all?

Similarly, in the unpublished epic of Chaka, the celebrated kafir king, in one of the characteristic episodes we find a hyena entering a hut, carrying off a man, letting him fall, seizing him again, letting him fall once more and taking him up again, and so on, and none of those standing by ventures to attack it, for, they said, "it was a hyena 'sent through witchcraft.'" A "natural" hyena would never have been so bold, especially in the daytime. This one therefore must have some "supernatural" principle within it, and it would be too dangerous to deprive it of its victim. We remember the Abipones Dobrizhoffer tells of, usually so courageous, who dare not kill tigers "that are not like the rest," that are "wizards."²

¹ Bleek and Lloyd. *op. cit.* pp. 175-93. (1911).

² *How Natives think*, p. 100.

E. W. Smith noted facts like this among the ba-Ila. “Certain animals and birds are peculiarly manifestations of occult powers. They are called *mupuka* (a monster) or *muntu* (a man) or *mulohzi* (a witch); some are said to be *makweza* (bad omens, unlucky). A tree not to be used as firewood is the *mabanga*. . . . The corpses of certain persons (sorcerers in particular)¹ are burnt, and a Mabanga is used for the purpose because it burns fiercely, so much so that it can destroy not only the body but the spirit.

“The owl is another *mulohzi*.

“The nakansakwe (secretary bird) is another *mulohzi*. If it crosses the path in front of you, you must abandon your journey.”² An evil influence of which it is the instrument will be exerted against you, and you are in imminent danger of disaster.

In East Africa, with the Waschambaa, “the power of exercising witchcraft is attributed not only to men but also to animals, and those which are especially suspect are the domestic animals (with the exception of cats, which are ‘sacred’). All these witch-animals used formerly to be killed immediately, but now people content themselves with selling them, with the understanding that the purchaser shall kill them.”³ The author proceeds to enumerate the “transgressions” by which the hen, cock, sheep, goat, ox (or cow) betray that they are witches, and in the same list we find also men who possess the evil eye, sorcerers, and those who commit incest.

In his detailed work entitled *Measa*, Kruyt made a study and analysis of the evil omens, the ill-luck bringers and the transgressions which the natives of Central Celebes dread. In the long catalogue of events and actions of all kinds that exert a baneful influence and bring disaster, he, too, includes sexual aberrations and incest.

We are therefore unable to separate incest from the other facts which to the primitive mind are of the same kind and produce in him the same dread impression. Our study of the testimony will establish the fact that they regard incest above all as something abnormal, unusual, contrary to nature and entailing disaster—in short, a “transgression.” It is not, according to

¹ *The “Soul” of the Primitive*, ch. IX, pp. 265-68.

² Smith and Dale. *op. cit.* II, pp. 86-8.

³ A. Karasek. *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Waschambaa*. *Bässler-Archiv*. VIII. p. 31. (1923-4).

the meaning we should be inclined to give to this term, the violation of an interdict that our duty commands us to respect, an action to be condemned on moral grounds—but an act contrary to custom and against nature, which reveals that a malign influence is being exercised, like the act of the goat that eats its own excreta, the ox that thumps the ground with its tail, the child whose upper teeth come through first, and so on; in short, like all the “manifestations of unseen malignant forces” which immediately arouse fears that some disaster is imminent. Hardeland, too, in the passage we have quoted above,¹ ranks incest among the acts “contrary to nature” which bring about death by lightning, and which are really equal to bewitchments. Accordingly we shall often find that incestuous persons are treated like wizards, and they are, as a matter of fact, in the same class as the goat, the ox, etc., that “transgress.” And just as people hasten to get rid of these dangerous witch-animals, so too, as soon as an incestuous act has been ascertained, vigorous measures will be taken against those guilty of it. Their transgression is pre-eminently terrifying, and it arouses in the social group not only horror but a desire for instant and vehement reprisal.

Before beginning to study the data which establish that such is indeed the conception of incest in many primitive communities, it may be well to make one preliminary observation. We already find it clearly enunciated by an observer of many decades ago, Munzinger, in his book on the customs and the laws of the Bogos of Abyssinia. “We must,” he says, “discriminate between acts that are punishable because the doer has infringed a custom or law, written or unwritten, and acts which arouse the most intense anger and indignation—not because they are forbidden by a custom or a law, but because such a thing ‘is not done’; it is abnormal, unheard-of, inconceivable.” Acts of this kind are called *serê*. For instance, “a woman would rather be unfaithful to her husband than pronounce his name aloud. To be unfaithful is no doubt a grave fault (*Sünde*), but to utter his name aloud is *serê*, i.e., something unheard-of.”² “A person of the female sex will never venture to milk. . . . A man never sees the face of his mother-in-law . . . and so on. . . . Customs of this kind are *serê*, which means that everyone would regard

¹ Chap. VI, p. 194 (note 1).

² W. Munzinger. “Ueber die Sitten und das Recht der Bogos,” pp. 94-5. (1859).

their infringement as the greatest of crimes, as provoking disaster."¹ In another place Munzinger, defining the offences that are *serê*, speaks of them as "contrary to nature" (*Unnatürliches*).

What he has thus pointed out here is the difference (very marked among the Bogos, as among many other peoples) between two kinds of transgression. Those with which we are familiar consist of such acts as adultery, theft, etc., for which custom has provided reparations and penalties. The others are "the greatest of crimes," bringers of ill-fortune, unheard-of acts, contrary to nature. We shall find that incest belongs to the second class of transgressions and that, like them, it is very closely akin to witchcraft.

II

That this is so, for example, in Central Celebes, is clearly shown by a number of facts reported by A. C. Kruyt. I shall quote only a few of the most significant.

In the first place, the sexual aberrations of animals are comparable to incest, and "punished" exactly like it. "When dogs copulate indoors, it is *measa* (brings ill-fortune). It is a general belief that when such a thing occurs the master of the house, or one of his family, is bound to die. It is absolutely necessary then, that the animals shall be killed. They are killed by a cudgel.² Such copulation is regarded as similar to incest. . . .

"It appears that dogs sometimes copulate with pigs, and that of course brings disaster. In such a case the animals are killed, and their carcasses are thrown down-stream."³ Other "transgressions" of the same nature are—"when a pig tries to copulate with a goat or a sow jumps upon another sow, etc. The guilty animals must be slain, and their heads are thrown into the river."⁴ "Should a cock bird, when flying, pass over a goat, bitch, or sow, it is considered to be a copulation, and it is a very serious case of *measa*. I have heard it spoken of only by the Bare's Toradjas, and they say that it portends a terrible epidemic or a war. The animals concerned are always killed. . . .

¹ *Ibid.* p. 63.

² The natives avoid shedding their blood, which would desecrate the ground.

³ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa*, III, T.L.V. LXXXVI. p. 45 (1920).

⁴ p. 45.

Other tribes, the To Boejoe, for instance, seem to regard such cases as incest. They kill both animals and throw the two carcasses down the stream.”¹

Like sexual aberrations in animals, cases of bestiality in human beings are terrible “transgressions,” and these are put on a par with incest. They are regarded as “magically dangerous,” (that is, as a kind of bewitchment). “They are likened to incest, and it is feared that a prolonged drought or an excessive rainfall will be the result.

“In a case that occurred at Pebato in the beginning of my stay in the Posso district, they killed the buffalo with which a young man had committed an act of bestiality. The animal’s blood was made to flow into the river, for otherwise, it was declared, there would be a prolonged drought or excessive rains, or else the rice-fields would be laid waste by pigs and rats. . . . In some other parts, people are more indifferent to things of this kind.² I have heard of another case of bestiality (with a bitch) which occurred about twenty-five years ago. At that time it was treated exactly like a case of incest. . . . An epidemic which broke out shortly afterwards was regarded as the result of it.”³

Without needing to lay further stress on these sexual aberrations in animals and human beings, we shall remember that to the primitives’ minds incest is a transgression of the same order. It excites the same horrified surprise and terror, and it brings in its train the same disasters. “The fatal consequences of incest are above all manifested in the fact that plantations will no longer yield their produce.”⁴—“This crime,” says the same author in another work, “is followed, as the Toradjas believe, by an interminable drought, or else floods of rain, so that in any case the rice crop is a failure. The crime is committed when there are sexual relations between parents and children, uncles and aunts and nephews and nieces, brothers and sisters. Since these family relationships are very complicated (the family is here of the classificatory type), the crime may have been committed without having been suspected. . . . This is the reason that, for greater security, there is a yearly sacrifice offered, in case there should have been any incest in the district. The in-

¹ *Ibid.* p. 76.

² p. 38.

³ p. 55.

⁴ *Ibid.* II, T.L.V. LXXV, pp. 78-9 (1919).

tion of this sacrifice is clearly evident when we learn that its other name is 'to ask for rain.'"¹

And again: "One thing that arouses the anger of the gods (the ancestors) to the highest pitch, at once manifested by violent storms and tempests, or else by a very prolonged drought, is incest or bestiality."² (We should note that here again these two "transgressions" are paired.)

"Like all the natives of the Malay Archipelago, the Central Celebes people believe that sexual relations between two people too nearly akin set free a magical influence so potent that either excessive rains or persistent drought ensue . . . Before the advent of the Dutch administration, if these relations occurred between parents and children, or brothers and sisters, the guilty parties were put to death, either with cudgels, or by being drowned. It was essential that their blood should not be shed upon the ground, lest it should render it sterile."³—In Tinompo, still in Central Celebes, but more to the east, "when a man and woman, too nearly related, have sexual connections, people expect devastating events to occur—such as floods, storms, tempests. . . . The guilty pair will at once be put to death, preferably by strangling."⁴

Conversely, when these meteorological disturbances occur, they infer that there must have been an act of incest somewhere. "At Palande, people say that when a pumpkin or a gourd bears fruit in some unusual way, such as having two on the one stem, for instance, it proves that two persons within the prohibited degrees have been having sexual relations. . . . When bucks, wild pigs, buffaloes constantly break through the hedge surrounding the plantation and do damage to the field, they say the same thing."⁵

Wilken had already noted this belief. "If their rice crop is a failure," writes Kooreman of the people of Macassar and Boegin, "it is a sure sign that incest has been committed there, and that the spirits (ancestors) are angry. Thus, when in 1877 and 1878, the western monsoon entirely failed and the rice accordingly did not ripen, and when, too, the buffaloes succumbed by dozens to the cattle plague, it happened that in the prison at

¹ *Idem. De Bare sprekende Toradja's*, II. p. 247.

² A. C. Kruyt. *Regen lokken en regen verdrijven bij de Toradja's van Midden Celebes*. T.L.V. XLIV, p. 4. (1901).

³ *Idem. Measa*, II. T.L.V. LXXV, pp. 74-5 (1919).

⁴ J. Kruyt. *De Mariers van Tinompo*. T.L.V. LXXX. p. 81 (1924).

⁵ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa*. II. T.L.V. LXXV. p. 81 (1919).

Takalar [the station which he was then superintending] there was a prisoner who had formerly been accused of incest. Some of the population of the district to which this man belonged demanded that he should be given up because they were all convinced that as long as he had not paid the penalty for his crime, these misfortunes would not come to an end.”¹ Von Brenner says also: “When it has not rained for some time the Bataks think it is a certain proof that a crime of this kind (incest) has been committed. Several of the villages meet for deliberation, in order to discover which persons may be suspected of it, and they are at once obliged to submit to trial by ordeal.”²

In Borneo, to the Dayaks of Koelakapoeas, incest is “the blackest of crimes. It endangers the community because it arouses the gods (ancestors) to the very highest pitch of wrath. The chastisement of the guilty parties is essentially designed to appease the gods. . . . As a general rule they used to drown the guilty pair . . . nowadays they banish them.”³ The author, like Kruyt in the *Measa* articles, lays stress upon the fact that incest is a particularly dreadful transgression, because the disaster it predicts and brings about will strike everybody. The scourges it lets loose will spare no one, for famine, epidemics, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc., are calamities that none can escape. Hence the necessity for concerted action.

As the same author points out, with these people, as long as there has been no complaint, the crime is not followed up. This rule admits of a small number of exceptions only, the most important of which is incest.

“Immediately they hear of a case of this kind, action is taken. We may assume that the reason for this is that we are here dealing with a crime which is not directed against a certain person, but against the whole community, an insult to the gods.”⁴ To express this in a less juridical method, we may say that the horror inspired by incest is of twofold origin. On the one hand, like other transgressions, and especially the sexual aberrations of animals and men, it reveals the presence and the action of a malign principle which will bring disasters. On the other, it irritates and incenses the dead, the “unseen members” of the clan,

¹ Wilken. *Huwelijken tusschen bloedverwandten. Verspreide Geschriften*, II. p. 335.

² J. F. Von Brenner. *Besuch bei den Kannibalen Sumatras*. p. 212.

³ J. Mallinckrodt. *Ethnographische mededeelingen over de Dajaks in de afdeeling Koelakapoeas*. T.L.V. LXXXI, p. 86 (1925).

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 287.

and their anger will make itself felt by the whole group. It is therefore essential, not only to “neutralize” the effect of this transgression as they always do in similar cases, but also to offer to the “gods” sacrifices which will allay their wrath. The chastisement of the guilty parties, and the purification that is its concomitant, are therefore measures that the public interest demands. “When incest has been committed, the whole country is defiled, and we must stone the guilty pair (that is, they will be put into a wicker panier weighted with stones, and drowned).”¹

III

There are however degrees of guilt in this very serious “transgression.” In many parts of the Dutch East Indies, the natives distinguish between greater and lesser incest (*soembang besar, soembang ketjit*). With the Koeboes of Palembang, for instance, “the greater incest is punished with death (by drowning); the lesser, by a sort of perpetual penal servitude.”² Among the Karo-Batak, “they call incest (*soembang*) every union of a man and woman which violates the law of *adat* in this matter, an unwritten, but sacred law. Nevertheless, if they are not very closely related, and the union is merely with a distant family or ‘tribal relatives,’ the matter may be arranged by payment of a fine, after which a marriage of this kind is regarded as perfectly legal, and no dread consequences are to be feared.”³ Schadee, too, writes: “A marriage of this kind (between fairly distant relatives) is permitted after the payment of a fine. This fine consists of a goat which must be sacrificed in order to keep away evil influences from the kompong, for it is thought that in such a marriage the order of nature is upset.”⁴ This sacrifice appeases the ancestors upon whom the beneficent rains depend, who make the earth remain steady, and cause animals and plants to increase, etc.

Finally Hardeland had already noted the distinction between the two kinds of incest. “*Tululah*: almost incestuous (the lesser

¹ A. Hardeland. *op. cit.* p. 616.

² G. J. Van Dongen. *De Koeboes in de onderafdeeling Koeboe-streken der Residentie Palembang*. T.L.V. LXIII. p. 293-4 (1910).

³ R. Römer. *Bijdrage tot de geneeskunst der Karo-Bataks*. T.L.V. L. p. 206 (1908).

⁴ M. C. Schadee. *Het familieleven en familierecht der Dajaks van Landak en Tajan*. T.L.V. LXIII, p. 439 (1910).

incest). If a man marries his aunt, the sister of his uncle, or of his father's brother-in-law (and therefore his aunt by marriage) it is a lesser incest. The sacrifice of a buffalo is necessary, in order that the country may be purified through the blood of the animal."¹

The fine, the sacrifice, and the purification ceremonies have a double aim: first of all, as we have already seen, the ancestors must be appeased, and at the same time the malign influence whose working the incest has revealed must be neutralized. The main characteristic of these "transgressions," the quality that makes them so immensely moving and terrifying to the primitive, is that they "bewitch," i.e. they bring disaster. Directly this menace vanishes, the emotion subsides, and the act that aroused it becomes a matter of indifference. The greater incest always arouses horror, because there is no known method of "neutralizing" the evil influence it exercises. But, provided that the necessary precautions have been taken, the lesser incest will be tolerated; since it no longer entails disaster, it ceases to be even shocking. Among the Bantus we shall find the same attitude.

This distinction helps to account for the lack of agreement so often found in the testimonies relating to incest. At times it is represented as something extremely rare, which never, as it were, actually occurs, and which one cannot imagine having to repress. In this case it is the greater incest, and that alone. In other places we are told that marriage between persons of the same totem or the same clan is prohibited as incestuous, but that as a matter of fact such marriages do take place in the case of persons who scarcely know of their relationship, and who are not blood-relations, and this is the lesser incest. Such unions can be atoned for, whereas in cases of the greater incest, there is no hope of redemption.

The dividing-line between the two kinds of incest is never very clearly defined; it remains uncertain and fluctuating. Doubtful cases present themselves, and it is according to the traditions and customs of the place, and the personal influence that may be brought to bear, that these border-line cases are placed in the one class or in the other. Malinowski has truly remarked that, with primitives as with ourselves, actual practice with respect to sexual matters is far from being at all times in conformity with the rules accepted in theory. Among the West-

¹ A. Hardeland. *op. cit.* p. 616.

ern peoples, sexual relations apart from marriage, and marital infidelity are explicitly condemned by the churches, and on the ground of morality, but as a matter of fact, current habits and customs are somewhat lenient to misdemeanours of this kind. Conduct which contravenes these rules is often, in the case of a man, backed up by self-satisfied vanity, and occasionally even adds to his social prestige. Malinowski has ascertained that similar cases occur in the Trobriand Islands. Although the natives have but one word for incest (sexual relations between members of the same clan) they too do actually distinguish between the lesser incest which the customs of the day tolerate and even, in certain cases, seem to encourage, and the greater, which at one time entailed the suicide of the guilty pair.¹

In his book on the Banáro of New Guinea, Thurnwald asserts that "their conception of incest is something quite different from our own. Incest depends entirely upon the matrimonial and sexual regulations of the clan. Any infringement of these is penalized, whatever the blood-relation between the guilty parties may be."² And he says further: "The fact obtrudes itself upon our notice that in this community real blood-relationship takes a secondary place compared with sexual relations, and the fact of belonging to a certain group. A common ancestry is no bar to sexual relations, as we see in the initiation ceremony of boys by women, for instance. No doubt it cannot be denied that when they constructed their scheme the natives may have had in their minds the idea of avoiding marriages between persons too closely connected by blood ties. At any rate that is the impression I have received in questioning them. But whether their system has been fortunate enough to attain an end held vaguely before them, is quite another question, and I am inclined to doubt whether the term 'incest' is really the right one to denote the infringement of the various regulations relating to sexual inhibitions and to marriage. What the natives have in their minds is not an 'impurity of the blood' (*Blutschande*) but a 'social impurity' (*Gesellschaftschande*), an infringement of the system upon which the life in common rests, the notion of incest, properly speaking, is there, but only in a latent condition; it has not yet become conscious of itself."³

¹ Dr. Malinowski. *Sexual life of savages in North-western Melanesia*. pp. 388-89.

² Dr. R. Thurnwald. *Die Gemeinde der Banáro*. p. 255.

³ Dr. R. Thurnwald. *Die Gemeinde der Banáro*. p. 148.

These words once more remind us that the concepts most familiar to us cannot, as a rule, be well applied to the life of communities so very differently constructed from our own. Among the Banáro the sub-groups of the tribe are not defined by a relationship that we should call natural, by ties of blood, but on the contrary, relationship depends on the sub-group to which the individual belongs. Every male child as he gradually grows up becomes alive to the fact that the women of a certain group may become his wives, while women of another are forbidden him except on certain specified occasions, as, for instance, during a special ceremony. This is the very framework and foundation of the community, and the young man has no idea that it can be otherwise. To run counter to that which is not so much a rule to be observed as it is the social entity itself in the form of established fact, never occurs to his mind. Should it happen however, it is a more than unusual event: it is abnormal, contrary to nature; a "transgression" that threatens the whole group with the most dire misfortunes.

We find then that, in primitive communities like those of the Australian aborigines, the violation of the matrimonial laws would as a general rule entail the death of the guilty parties; it would really correspond with what the tribes of the Dutch East Indies call the greater incest. If some arrangement seemed to be possible, and frequently was finally adopted, it was because the rules that had been violated were not very essential, and the case could be compared with the lesser incest.

IV

In New Britain, in the near neighbourhood of New Guinea, the tribes are divided into two exogamic classes. "Intermarriage in either class is absolutely forbidden. Any such marriage would be considered incestuous, and would bring speedy punishment; in fact, the whole population would be horrified at such an event, and the parties would almost certainly be killed."¹ The author adds—and this throws a valuable light on the nature of the horror that incest (the greater incest, understood as it has just been explained) inspires in the natives of New Britain and of so many other primitive communities: "They also called incestuous (*knou*) anyone who killed or ate any portion of a person of the same class as himself: for example, a Maramara

¹ George Brown. *Melanesians and Polynesians*. pp. 28-9.

who killed or ate a Maramara." Further on, George Brown relates a circumstance cited by Rev. W. E. Bromilow, who had witnessed it in Dobu in New Guinea, in which we see very clearly the horror occasioned by a case of cannibalism of this kind. "An old woman died in one of the villages near us, and a week or two after a most horrible report was circulated. The grave had been disturbed, and on inquiry it had been found that the deceased woman's own sister had taken up the body, and with some of her fellow-witches had partaken of a cannibal feast. Some of her male relations wished to strangle her right off and throw her into the sea, but our presence prevented them. There is certainly real horror at the affair, and as soon as the report began to get about, no one would eat from any pot this woman had been boiling, and many would not even touch any fruit or other edible she had handled."¹ To eat someone of the same class as herself (her own sister) seems to these natives a terrible "transgression," the one most "contrary to nature" that they can imagine. But is it not significant that to denote such a crime they use the same word as for the act which is no less revolting, no less contrary to nature, which consists of having sexual relations with a person of the same exogamic class as oneself? In both cases, alike unprecedented, they use the word *knou*. We may equally well affirm that to the New Britain native this horrible form of cannibalism is akin to incest, or that incest is akin to this form of cannibalism.

Now it is possible to arrive at the reasons for the horror the latter inspires. The persons belonging to the same class—to the same clan, besides—are bound up with one another in an almost organic solidarity, which makes them as it were members of a single body. (Cf. *The "Soul" of the Primitive*, ch. II. pp. 87-89.) Thus for one of them to eat another is, literally, to devour oneself; they are feeding on their own flesh.² It is the most enormous of "transgressions," the most inconceivable—real autophagy. If then, incest is denoted by the same word, it is because they see in it a "transgression" that is no less enormous or inconceivable. To have sexual relations with a person of one's own class or of one's own totem is not a feeding on one-self,

¹ *Ibid.* p. 144.

² This repulsion may also be seen between members of the same tribe. "In the feud between the Aiga clans on the right and left banks of the Kumusi, there was eating of corpses on both sides. But this was spoken of as a horrible thing, that speakers of one and the same language should eat each other." F. E. Williams. *Orokaiva Society*. p. 163.

certainly, but it is pollution of the body of which one is a member; it is self-pollution.

A missionary who spent many years in New Britain, has just remarked incidentally that among the Gunantuna of the Gazelle Peninsula the rule prohibiting a man from eating his totem was on all fours with the rule prohibiting him from having sexual relations with a person of that totem. "When the totemic system forbids the members of an exogamic class to eat their totem it purely and simply means (as an old native who knew more about the matter than any of us, explained to me), that these persons might not have any sexual relations with one another, since carnal intercourse is symbolized by the act of eating. Consequently, just as the members of a totemic class are bound to abstain from eating their totem, so too they must renounce all sexual intercourse with persons of that class. This is what is aimed at in the abstention from eating the totem, and nothing else. The totem is taboo (as food) in order to express through this abstention that all persons of the same totemic class are taboo to one another, where sexual relations are concerned. What can be more comprehensible than such an explanation? It soon becomes evident to every native child. In other words, the restriction imposed upon the desire to eat, as far as the totem is concerned, directly inculcates the limitation of the sexual desire, that is, abstention from all sexual relations with members of the class to which one belongs. The first restriction at once implies the second, and it was instituted for that purpose."¹

Without attempting to criticize this old native's testimony, and the explanation of the circumstances that he gives, we may remark that it confirms and throws light on what George Brown reported. It shows us how it is that the same word is used by these tribes of New Britain to describe both incest and the feeding upon a person of the same totem as oneself. To the native mind, what we have termed "self-pollution" would be the same as "self-devouring." The two transgressions would be but one to them, for from infancy they would have learnt not to make any distinction between them. It is therefore quite natural that they should give them the same name, and regard them with like horror.

George Brown reports that in Samoa "a person who had committed incest (*knou*) would be horribly tormented and

¹ J. Meier, M.S.C. *Kritische Bemerkungen zu J. Winthuis' Buch "Das Zweigeschelechterwesen.* Anthropos, XXV, p. 104. (1930).

killed by his own friends, who would say that they were killing themselves in the action which they were taking." ¹ This is an expressive instance of the solidarity of the family group. The incest was a self-pollution, and the killing of its originator by the members of his own group is a sort of partial suicide.

If we look at things from this angle, that is, regarding them from the primitives' point of view, one important result ensues. The capital problem of the prohibition of incest, the vexed question for which so many ethnologists and sociologists have sought a solution, does not require any. There is nothing to propound. In the communities of which we have been treating, it is useless for them to ask themselves why incest is prohibited, for the prohibition does not exist. Not that it is legal or tolerated, (save, as we shall shortly find, in some exceptional circumstances), but they do not think of prohibiting it, for it is a thing that does not occur. But if, against all probability, such a thing does happen, it is something unheard-of, a monstrosity, a transgression that arouses universal horror and dread. Primitive communities know of no prohibition of autophagy, or of fratricide, neither have they any occasion to prohibit incest.

Should the unheard-of thing take place, it is, like witchcraft, "the blackest of crimes," the one most dreaded of all those that bring disaster. But in normal circumstances, they have not to provide against it. And here I may call to mind the opinion uttered by a careful observer. "From my own observation, I am inclined to think that in the less civilised tribes, it is often the case that the custom simply never is broken, and no one could tell you what would happen if it were. Thus, some time ago, I asked the natives of one of the Koriki villages on the Purari what would happen if a woman went into one of the men's houses, but all they could say was that no woman ever had done so, and a Rossel Islander, when asked what the penalty would be if a woman spoke while in a canoe . . . could only suggest that if a woman did such an utterly unheard-of thing, she would probably be eaten." ²

It may possibly be argued that these few instances observed in New Britain do not suffice to establish a general theory, and that the facts presented therein as similar are in reality very different. The temptation to eat the flesh of a person of the same class as oneself can only be very rare, whilst sexual im-

¹ G. Brown. *Melanesians and Polynesians*. p. 411.

² J. H. P. Murray. *Papua*. p. 202.

pulses are a normal and ever-recurring condition. Since the children are, as a rule, very soon acquainted with all that has to do with sexual life, and at a very early age, they imitate what they see adults doing, the temptation to indulge in the prohibited sexual relations must be of frequent occurrence. Possibly the horror that is aroused by incest arises precisely because a very formidable social check has been found necessary to prevent persons from succumbing to it.

To take the second point first, considerations of this kind do in fact explain why the lesser incest does frequently occur, (as Dr. Malinowski, for instance, has noted), and that means have been sought and found, in more than one community, to neutralize and atone for it, and even to "regularize" it. But these are of no avail when the greater incest is in question, for in cases where the two persons interested are like members of the same body, sexual relations between them are of the nature of self-pollution. In *The "Soul" of the Primitive* (ch. II. pp. 89-90) I have related a certain number of facts which help us to understand this solidarity, such as the relatives of a sick man gulping down the remedy that they have had brought for his use; the brothers who regard themselves as "interchangeable" and possessing marital rights over each other's wives; the custom which allows the vendetta due to some murderer to be carried out upon his father, brother, child, or even some one belonging to his clan. When the Australian aborigine, the Papuan, Melanesian, and the rest take their revenge thus, it is because the subject of the vendetta is not, from their point of view, the author of the crime as an individual, so much as is the group of which he is a member whether it be he or his brother or some other member of the group that has to die, the desired result will be attained, in the opinion of those who execute judgment and also of the group whose member suffers the penalty.

Dr. Malinowski says that this solidarity, upon which he lays stress, is peculiarly in evidence at the time of a death. "The underlying idea is that the maternal kinsmen are hit in their own persons; that each one suffers because the whole sub-clan to which they belong has been maimed by the loss of one of its members 'as if a limb were cut off, or a branch lopped off from a tree.'" ¹ And again: "Humanity is divided into four clans. The fact of belonging to one of them is as deeply ingrained in

¹ B. Malinowski. *op. cit.* p. 128.

the substance of the individual as sex, colour, stature. . . . When a European arrives in the Trobriands, the natives simply and sincerely ask to which of the four classes he belongs." ¹

To persons accustomed from infancy to imagine, or rather, to feel thus the almost organic solidarity of the members of the same group, and to whom moreover the difference between the sub-clans depends entirely upon the sexual relations that are permitted or prohibited, it is natural that relations with persons of their own sub-clan are considered something inconceivable and unheard-of, something that does not happen. The greater incest therefore will be exactly comparable with autophagy and fratricide, and no less improbable. In other words, since sexual relations with these persons are not considered possible, the desire for them does not exist, nor is there as a consequence, any temptation, apart from the unheard-of cases that we have found to be put on a par, in Celebes and in Sumatra, with sexual aberrations and bestiality. We are not dealing with an act that is forbidden, "prohibited" by custom and by law, but with a "transgression," an occurrence that is abnormal and contrary to nature, and consequently making manifest a malign influence that is being exerted upon the group, threatening it with the most terrible disasters.

Regarded thus, this idea of the greater incest—and this is our answer to the first objection—is not peculiar to New Britain. We found it, according to Kruyt and other observers, throughout the Malay Archipelago. Incest, like bestiality and the sexual aberrations of human beings and of animals, takes its place in the long list of transgressions. We shall find that in most African communities it is regarded in just the same way.

V

Colonel Maclean observes that Kafir law does not punish acts that with us would be termed incest, thus confirming the fact that it is not, properly speaking, the subject of prohibition. He saw clearly that there was no need for it to be. "They have a far more powerful preventive in their superstitious fears, which teach them to dread that some supernatural evil will befall the parties committing such acts; they lose caste, as it were, and are considered in the light of sorcerers: hence such crimes are seldom committed." ² Sorcerers—i.e., concealing within

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 416-17.

² Colonel Maclean. *op. cit.* p. 62.

themselves a malign principle, which brings disaster, and as such they are enemies to the public at large. We remember the hatred and horror excited among most Bantus by sorcerers, and the cruel methods by which they often rid themselves of their presence, and to liken the incestuous to the sorcerer is saying a good deal in a few words.

In Kropf's dictionary we read: "*i-gqwira*, a person who acts malevolently with the view of injuring and destroying health. He is a criminal of the deepest dye, hence the extended meaning, including any one guilty of an infamous deed, such as incest."¹ Malevolence and misdeeds—here we have the two main characteristics of the sorcerer in whom a harmful principle dwells. It is noteworthy that the word used to denote him is also applied to the man who commits an act of incest. In another work, speaking of a chief named Ngqika, Kropf writes: "For a long time, his subjects were displeased with him, because Ngqika, having seduced the wife of his uncle Ndlambe, had assumed the aspect of a sorcerer in their eyes."² His incestuous act had laid the country under a magic spell, and who could predict what calamities might ensue?

With Kafirs again, after circumcision, "should a boy not be healed at the time fixed, or be still un-healed when the others already were, the men of the tribe assemble in consultation, and decide that this boy must confess his misdeeds before a number of people, so that his body may be able to heal. Should he refuse, they beat him so long and so severely that he ends by yielding. . . . The Amaxosa all believe that a boy who has had sexual relations with a near relative cannot be healed in the right time after being circumcised. 'Confess your incest!' they say to him, when the healing is delayed. . . . In former times this ceremonial confession, called *ukubula*, did not take place except in cases of incest."³ This remark is of importance in more than one respect. It is clear that a young boy might become guilty of incest before he had been circumcised, i.e. initiated, and the sexual liberty allowed the non-initiated did not go so far as to permit them to ignore the social laws. Moreover, this young boy, more than suspected of an incest that was pro-

¹ A. Kropf, *A Kaffir-English Dictionary*. p. 129.

² *Idem*. *Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern*. p. 49.

³ P. Albert Schweiger, O. C. *Der Ritus der Beschneidung in der Kaffraria*. Anthropos. IX, pp. 61-2. (1914).

claimed by the unusual delay in the healing of his flesh, was treated exactly like a sorcerer. Among kafirs the custom was to demand confession from a reputed sorcerer, and to torture him until he made it. Now the proceeding is exactly the same in the case of this child, and therefore if he is guilty of incest he is regarded as a sorcerer.

What Bantus understand by the word we translate “incest” does not entirely coincide with what the term means to us. Incest consists of violating the exogamic law of the clan. Thus, with the Bakaonde, “the prohibited degrees are far more numerous with the Kaonde and similar tribes than with us; in fact, some of the marriages lawful to us would be considered grossly incestuous and immoral by the natives. . . . Not only can a native, for example, not marry his aunt’s daughter, but when we write ‘a man may not marry his mother,’ this implies to the native that he may not marry, nor have connection with, either his natural *or his inherited mother*, who might be a young second cousin, or the numerous relations whom he calls ‘mother’ even when his mother is alive. The prohibited degree, to trespass on which amounts to incest, goes still further than this; all within the same totem are within it, even if they are of a different tribe, and entirely unrelated (as we understand relationship). . . . It is not easy to say to what extent this holds good; as a man incurs death for himself by incest with the comparatively near degrees; but only incurs barrenness for the woman if she is a distant connection, or an unrelated totem-mate.”¹ (Here we recognize the distinction between the greater and lesser incest.)

E. W. Smith has drawn attention to the close connection in the ba-Ila mind between incest, “transgressions” and witchcraft. Speaking of the term *malweza*, he says: “*Kulweza*, the verb, means: to strike with amazement. It is the proper word to use when you first see a thing that astonishes you. Hence the special meaning: to be struck with horror and amazement at seeing something contrary to the taboo laws—something atrocious. A *malweza* is an atrocity, a horrible thing; an infraction of a taboo. Thus incest is *malweza*.”² In other words, it is not merely the violation of a taboo; it presents also the characteristics of an exceptionally serious transgression; it is an unheard-of, monstrous, horrible and terrifying event. The same author

¹ F. H. Melland. *In witch-bound Africa*. pp. 143-4.

² Smith and Dale. *op. cit.* I. p. 346.

says again: "We have not heard among the ba-Ila a word that is equivalent to 'incest,' but there can be no doubt as to their abhorrence of it. In one respect their idea of incest is wider, in another it is narrower than ours. . . . For relations to cohabit is 'to be like dogs and animals.' One who should cohabit with his sister (except in the case which we shall shortly quote) would be put to death as a warlock."¹

Here is the strange exception to which Smith alludes. "If a man wants very special luck, he not only gets the charm, but under the doctor's instructions he commits incest with his sister or daughter before starting on his undertaking. This is a very powerful stimulus to the talisman."² And so too in another passage: "The incestuous person is expressly called a *mulohzi* (warlock, a trafficker with forbidden powers). But incest under certain conditions, i.e., when a man is wishful of special good fortune, is not only permitted, but enjoined."³

How are we to account for this strange exception, which is met with in other Bantu tribes? It is no doubt to be explained, as the writer seems to suggest, by the need of having at command the dread powers that the sorcerer sets to work. In ordinary circumstances, if a man becomes guilty of incest he is a *mulohzi*, that is, a man intimately and secretly associated with the world of unseen evil powers, and himself harbouring a malign principle pertaining to this world. But in the exceptional case in question, it is not because he is a sorcerer that the man commits incest. On the contrary, he does it only on the explicit advice of the doctor, and so that, having been incestuous, he may become a sorcerer. He will thus, like the professional sorcerers, become connected with this forbidden world of supernatural forces and, like them, he will have these at his service. Their support will ensure success for him. In any case, he does not definitely and completely transform himself into a sorcerer. When his enterprise is completed he will become once again a man like the rest. The act of incest has merely had the effect of an extremely powerful philtre or charm. In such exceptional circumstances it is no longer a transgression.

The Thonga, whom Junod has studied, have much the same ideas about incest. "A young man who has the courage to think of marrying a near relative is a wizard. *Alowa*: he bewitches!

¹ *Ibid.* II. p. 41.

² *Ibid.* I. p. 261.

³ *Ibid.* II. p. 83.

This term, which is applied only to proper witches, is not too strong to designate his action! He was not allowed to *gangisa* her [this means rather more than flirt with her] and now he will take her as a wife!”¹ Junod then relates in detail the ceremonies by which one may make permissible, or “regularize” a union which in theory is prohibited.

He mentions also an exceptional circumstance in which the greater incest is expressly committed in order to obtain success in a perilous enterprise. “There are a few villages near the Nkomati or other rivers, whose inhabitants are regular hippo-hunters and possess the special science or art called *butimba*. The hunters themselves are called *batimba*. These men have a particular drug by which, when the hunter is inoculated, he acquires a special power over the hippo: should he wound one of them, the beast will not be able to go very far, and it will be possible to follow it and soon to find it. But these inoculations make that man very dangerous for his fellowmen. . . .

“During the day, the hunter fishes, watching the movements of the hippo all the time. When he sees that the propitious season has come, and when he is ready to undertake a hunting expedition of one month, he first calls his own daughter to his hut, and has sexual relations with her. This incestuous act, which is strongly taboo in ordinary life, has made of him a ‘murderer,’ he has killed something at home, he has acquired the courage for doing great things on the river! Henceforth he will have no sexual relations with his wives during the whole campaign. On the same night, immediately after the act, he starts with his sons . . . and attacks a hippo.”²

The end in view here is evidently the same as with the *ba-Ila*. The Thonga hunter commits incest so that he, like the sorcerers, may be able to command the magic power needed to strengthen the charm with which he has been inoculated, and thus subdue the hippopotamus. Smith has told us that incest makes a man a sorcerer; Junod says that he becomes a murderer through it. The terms are synonymous, however, for one of the essential characteristics of the sorcerer is that he kills. There is the same custom with certain tribes on the south-west of Lake Nyassa. “A man wishing to have medicine to make himself bullet-proof would be told to have coitus with his sister or mother . . . after which, ‘medicine’ is given to him. A man

¹ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I, pp. 244-6.

² *Ibid.* II, pp. 60-2.

known to have done this near Mponda's village was threatened with death by that chief, and therefore fled."¹ Here the incest, although committed in an exceptional circumstance, seems to have given the man a kind of brevet rank as a sorcerer, and he runs the risk of being treated as such.

It is thus, too, that the Waschambaa of East Africa regard it. "To them incest seems to be absolutely contrary to nature, and they can only account for it as the effect of witchcraft."² In other words, in their eyes it is a transgression, something unheard-of and atrocious: he who commits it has within him the malign principle that bewitches.

Father Van Wing noted similar ideas in the Bakongo people. "*One does not marry his own blood*" (a remarkable expression which recalls in another form the 'self-pollution' hateful to the inhabitants of New Britain). This forcible injunction states the most essential law, that which the king of Kongo, according to the traditions of several clans, taught to the ancestors, and which these have most strictly inculcated when the tribes were separated through emigrations. This law forbids any sexual relations between a man and a woman bearing the same clan-name. Whatever the degree of relationship may be, such relations constitute incest, and this, with witchcraft, is the most deadly crime according to Bakongo views. . . . This crime inevitably entailed Nzambi's punishments on the tribe—a recrudescence of mortality and disease among its members, barrenness in their women, loss of their domestic cattle, and drought in their land.

"If a crime of this nature remained concealed, and were only discovered some years later, and if the 'elders' then ascertained that neither the guilty pair, nor the child, nor the tribe had been visited by the chastisements noted in similar cases, they concluded that the guilty section no longer was of the same blood. This section was no longer a part of the tribe and had to adopt another clan-name. An instance of this kind was reported to me, as having happened in the Mbanba Kalunga of the Kimpâko district."³

This argument of the elders shows us very clearly where it is that their idea of incest differs from our own. It is not a relationship, as we know it, but a "clan-connection" that is in ques-

¹ H. S. Stannus. *op. cit.* J.A.I. XL. p. 307 (1910).

² A. Karasek. *op. cit.* *Büssler-Archiv*. VIII, p. 31 (1923-4).

³ J. Van Wing. S. J. *Etudes Bakongo*. p. 122 (1921).

tion. If at the end of a certain time, no fatal consequences of an incestuous union have resulted, they conclude that there has not been any actual incest—not that the persons who were thus impeached were not related (as we understand the term), but that, despite appearances, they belonged to different clans.

“All sexual connections between members of the same clan connote the idea of incest,” writes Lagae; “the natives do not dispute this law.” Nevertheless, Calonne-Beaufaict notes an exception with the Azande. “Only the Avungura family . . . does not admit the exogamic law, and in it endogamy is frequently practised, without any degree of consanguinity seeming to entail the idea of incest. It is seldom that an Avungura has not one of his own daughters as a wife, for instance. When I expressed surprise at this, Bavungura, Bitima’s son, proudly bade me note that with a race so illustrious as theirs, the blood could not degenerate by admixture.¹ Certain old men affirm, however, that this is a recent custom, and that before he had acquired so much authority, the Avungura family had to defer to the common law.”²

To conclude this part of our subject, we should have no difficulty in finding in West Africa similar conditions to those prevailing among the Bantus. On the Ivory Coast, M. Prouteaux, apropos of the ritual crimes of the leopard-men, noted that these sorcerers practised incest, for the strengthening of their magical powers, no doubt. “Sexual relations occur very frequently during these ‘sabbats,’ and I have reason to believe that the public performance of them is one of the rites of membership of the society, like the feast that is shared. It is curious to note that in this respect as in many others, the *vihibi* seem to enjoy transgressing the laws of their tribe; thus, Pié Salé was, I was told, greatly admired for having committed incest with his sister during one of these gatherings.”³ Finally, Captain Rattray has clearly demonstrated that incest, which is very severely punished, frightens the natives mainly because of the dread consequences which it entails on the whole country. It is a transgression that announces and effects the most dreadful public disasters. “We see in such severe sanctions that the breaking of the laws of exogamy is not considered in the light of an of-

¹ A. de Calonne-Beaufaict. *Azandé*, pp. 185-6 (1921).

² Compare with this the tendency to similar exceptions in one of the Trobriand clans. Dr. Malinowski, *op. cit.* p. 432.

³ M. Prouteaux, *Procès des sorciers de la tribu Pié*, (unpublished).

fence as affecting the guilty parties alone. The whole clan to which the delinquents belong would expect the wrath of the unseen powers to be wreaked upon it, were the violation of these time-honoured laws not punished severely. . . . I am inclined to believe that the drastic punishments imposed for this and other crimes which come under the category of incest are due to the belief that such outrages are 'hateful' to the great powers upon whom the fertility of all things depends. The Ashanti think that, should they pass unpunished, nature would cease to be prolific. This crime, to a people whose whole creed seems summed up in the command, 'be fruitful and multiply', would be a calamity of the first magnitude."¹

VI

Like some of the tribes of the Dutch East Indies, the Bantus have made no explicit distinction theoretically between the greater and the lesser incest, but in actual practice they take the difference into account. When it does not appear to be a very serious case, they find some way of regularizing a marriage which, strictly speaking, is incestuous. "There is no intermarriage between persons of the same clan-name (among the Zulus), even though there may be no directly-traceable relationship between them; such a marriage would be regarded as incest; although cases of this description do occur, whereupon, to cover the stigma (though for the moment, of course, accentuating it) a new clan-name is formed."² Here we recall the proceedings of the Bakongo, reported by Father Van Wing.

So too, among the Kikuyu, "it sometimes happens that a young man unwittingly marries a cousin; for instance, if a part of the family moves away to another locality a man might become acquainted with a girl and marry her before he discovered the relationship. In such a case the *thahu* (result of the violation of the taboo) is removable. The elders take a sheep and place it on the woman's shoulders, and it is then killed, the intestines are taken out, and the elders solemnly sever them with a sharp splinter of wood . . . and they announce that they are cutting the clan, by which they mean that they are severing the bond of blood-relationship (of the clan) which exists between the pair. A medicine man then comes and purifies the

¹ Capt. Rattray. *Religion and Art in Ashanti*. pp. 79-80.

² A. T. Bryant. *op. cit.* p. 47.

couple.”¹ Insomuch as there was clan-relationship between them, their union was incestuous, but when this relationship is ended, the incest disappears. The marriage being “regularized,” no fatal consequences are to be feared.

In a doubtful case, then, everything depends upon whether the “relationship can be *killed*,” to use a Bantu expression. When there is a possibility they proceed in a formal way, and as a rule by means of sacrifices and purificatory rites. “If a man unintentionally commits incest—and it is quite conceivable that a man might not know his fourth or fifth cousin, for instance, should the two live in different districts—he has to present a cow to the girl’s relatives in order to ‘kill the relationship.’”² On the Lower Congo, with the Basundi, “in many families, the Mazinga family in particular, marriage between the free members of the same family is at all times punished by death. The law is now obsolete, but such marriages are still considered very improper. In other families such marriages have been permitted, but only after the chiefs have killed a young pig and thus caused the relationship to die.”³ This observation is somewhat vague, but we find in it the incest formerly punished with death, the “greater” incest, and also that which can be nullified by means of the payment of what these natives call atonement, which “kills” the relationship.

Writers have frequently compared the “prohibition of incest” with the taboos denoted by the English word *avoidance* (which has no satisfactory equivalent in French), such as the forbidding the son-in-law to speak to his wife’s mother, and often forbidding him to come into her presence or even encounter her. If he should perceive her on his path, even at a distance, he must not proceed along it, but hide so that she shall not see him, and so on. In other places, engaged couples must sedulously avoid each other. . . . Such taboos are very frequent, and many different attempts have been made to account for them. According to the theory most often propounded, *avoidance* helps to forewarn against temptations to incestuous sexual relations; but such an explanation does not apply to all cases,

¹ C. W. Hobley. *Kikuyu Customs and Beliefs*. J.A.I. XL. p. 438 (1910).

² A. Hollis. *Notes on the Masai system of relationship and other matters connected therewith*. J.A.I. XL. p. 479 (1910), quoted by Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*. II, pp. 141-2.

³ Dr. G. Palmeer. *Les conditions sociales des Basundi au Bas-Congo*. Congo. I. p. 23 (1927).

and would not account for the avoidance of persons of the same sex, for instance.

This is not the place to study the problem as a whole, or try to find out whether there is one single solution of it. We may, however, consider certain instances of "avoidance" in the same way as we have been doing with other data—for instance in the following case, which occurred among the Akamba. "Kisese, an elderly man, living north of Machakos, took part in a drinking-bout close to his mother-in-law's village. When very drunk, and incapable of recognizing people, he went to her hut in the evening, where he crept into the *wœ*, and went to sleep, not waking until the following morning. The consternation of the people at this event was indescribable, and even Kisese must have felt sheepish at first. Having been a leader in the time of the wars, however, he was equal to the occasion. He at once sent a messenger home for a fat ox and some goats, which he presented to his mother-in-law, saying, 'From this time forth all *ndoni* is over between us two.' (There would henceforth be no need for them to avoid each other). If he had been a youth, it would probably have cost him dear, but as he was a rich and influential man, he got his own way."¹

From this story we see that the violation of an "avoidance" not only is important for the parties interested, but for the whole group. The "indescribable" consternation felt by the people at the unheard-of act of the drunken old man who went to sleep in his mother-in-law's hut can only be accounted for by the dire results it may entail for them. It is a more than exceptional act, it is an inconceivable one (that the doer would not have performed at any price, had he known what he was doing) and there may be dreadful consequences for the whole group—is it not this that makes the transgression so remarkable, and renders it comparable with evil portents and bewitching?

Avoidance, at any rate in cases of this kind, seems then to be of the same nature as the prohibition of certain sexual relations. If, however, its breach does occur, it seems like a transgression similar to the other unusual and abnormal events that cause fear and bring disaster. Thus he who fails to observe the rules of avoidance acts as a sorcerer, and from this point of view it is as if he committed incest. In fact, in order to get out of his difficulty, Kisese acts exactly as those who desire to "neu-

¹ G. Lindblom. *op. cit.* pp. 91-3.

tralize" the lesser incest would do. To prevent its evil consequences he offers his mother-in-law victims for sacrifice, and thus the unseen powers incensed by his act will be appeased, and no misfortune will ensue. In the same way as, in regularizing a lesser incest, the offering "kills" the relationship, the sacrifice will "kill" the *ndoni* between Kisese and his mother-in-law. In the same passage Lindblom notes that many other "avoidances" are regularly "killed" among the Akamba; for instance, in return for a fine, a recompense, a man can speak to the wife of his younger brother.

In support of this analysis I shall remind the reader that the Bogos (cf. *supra* Ch. VII, p. 200) include the infringement of "avoidances" among the things regarded as *serê*, i.e., unheard-of, unimaginable, bringers of misfortune, in short, transgressions; for instance, such a thing as the wife's uttering the name of her husband aloud; for both husband and wife to be in the presence of the parents-in-law, etc. With the Kafirs, one very rigid form of avoidance, called *hlonipa*, places on the young wife a certain number of abstentions with regard to her husband's parents—not to touch them, not to speak to them, for instance. Now Colonel Maclean, speaking of this *hlonipa* expressly states that the woman who consciously takes no notice of it is regarded as a witch, and treated as such.¹ Should the violation have been unconscious, some arrangement is possible, but in the contrary case, it is a bewitchment, revealing in the doer the presence of a malign principle that will bring disaster on her circle.

Without attempting to account for the origin of the *hlonipa* and other similar "avoidances," we may yet draw attention to the following points.

1. Given the direction which primitive thought always follows, and the primitive's perpetual tendency to see in all transgressions the intervention of some force pertaining to the supernatural world, whenever an important avoidance is violated, the affective category of the supernatural at once comes into play, both in those who witness the occurrence and those directly interested. They are terrified by the unusual event that has just taken place, and also by the consequences that it will entail. The transgression itself is an evil, but the disasters it announces, and the presence and the activity of the malign principle made manifest through its means, are a yet greater evil. It is this as-

¹ Colonel Maclean. *op. cit.* p. 96.

pect of it which pre-eminently engages the primitives' attention and excites their emotion, and this will play the chief part in determining the measures by which they will endeavour to protect themselves.

In a "crime" like incest, like the infringement of an "avoidance," we cannot help seeing, above all, the violation of an actual law, and regarding reparation of the misdemeanour as essential; we see in it nothing that is outside the world of ordinary experience, unless the actual law be regarded as emanating expressly and directly from the Divine wisdom and will. The attitude of primitives, whose mentality is intensely mystical, is quite different. When a "crime" of this sort is committed, they ask first of all: "How can this unheard-of event have occurred? Is an unseen, malevolent force about to exert its evil influence on us? What disasters does this transgression portend, and how shall we parry the blow?" The act itself and its doers are of secondary importance. They do not trouble about them more than is necessary to find a satisfactory answer to these questions.

We are thus naturally led to the second point. The terms "crime" and "punishment," like the term "transgression," run the risk of misleading us. To us a transgression signifies the violation of a rule, the infringement of a material or a moral law. To primitives, it is an abnormality, something unusual and unheard-of—a sinister omen, the manifestation of a malign and unseen power. So too, when we are told that sorcerers, incestuous persons, violators of certain taboos, etc., are "punished" with death or some other penalty, we see in this (and it is thus that most observers have understood it) the "chastisement" of their crime. We are introducing here the concepts that are current among us; our point of view is juridical and ethical; that of the primitives is above all mystic. When the dog that has climbed on the hut, the goat that has eaten its excreta, the ox in the kraal that strikes the ground with its tail are put to death, is it for the "crimes" that they have committed? Is it a punishment, a chastisement? The primitive wants to put a stop to the influence of the malign principle that the transgression has revealed, and he can think of no surer method than that of killing the animal in which it has been made manifest. But, if it be possible, he will sell the animal instead of killing it; and the desired result will be attained just as well. So too, in many communities, children that are

born with teeth or cut their upper teeth first are put to death; are the primitives punishing criminals in these cases? Certainly not; but they are “Jonahs.” They get rid of them by killing them, because they believe that they can thus put an end to the malign principle within them, which otherwise would draw down upon the group all sorts of disaster. Yet if the opportunity to sell such an innocent “sorcerer” to the Arabs, occurs, they will do it, for by this method the group will be no less surely protected against misfortune.

Confronted with sorcerers, incestuous persons, and other “guilty” ones of the same kind, primitives act as they do when face to face with other transgressions. It is not punishment that they consider first; it is protection for themselves. But, since they cannot secure this without, as a rule, ridding the group of the person manifesting the malign principle, their method of defence assumes the air of chastisement. Van Ossenbruggen, in his careful study of the treatment meted out to men who have committed incest in the Dutch East Indies, had already come to the conclusion that it is incorrect to say that they are punished.¹ According to him, they make a kind of scapegoat of them; they are expelled, so that the malign principle they harbour may be removed also, and with it the calamities that they and their crime draw down on the group and on the country. Thus it is that very often instead of killing them they banish them, or else they are sent adrift down the stream, or left alone in a boat without oars, and so on. Details differ with the tribes, but the main idea is always the same—self-protection against the consequences of the transgression, and, to accomplish that, the getting rid of those who manifest the evil principle. Where, instead of expelling or exposing them, etc., they strangle them or beat them to death with cudgels, it is not a chastisement either; it is only another way of attaining the same end.

In the front rank of the consequences of the particularly dread transgression of the greater incest we often find upheavals of nature—hurricanes, high tides, drought, excessive rainfall, earthquakes, barrenness in plantations and in women, etc. Incest has irritated the gods (the ancestors), these primitives think, and these disasters betray their anger; therefore

¹F. D. E. Van Ossenbruggen. *Het primitieve denken, zoo als dit zich uit voornamelijk in pokkengebruiken op Java en elders*. T.L.V. LXXI, 117 (1915).

they must be appeased. They hasten to accomplish this in the usual ways, by offerings, sacrifices, purifications. We are often told that the "chastisement" of the incestuous is the compensation offered to the ancestors offended by their "crime." No doubt it is so in communities in which this, like the interdict, tends to acquire a moral aspect; but in most of those we have mentioned this consideration does not hold. The ancestors, dispensers of the beneficent rains, fertility, etc., refused their favours to the living members of the group as long as the malign principle dwelling in the "criminals" was at work. When these have been eliminated, and the group purified, the ordinary course of nature is re-established, and the group once more begins to live in peace under their protecting care.

Whether it be by arousing the anger of the ancestors or "spirits" or "gods," or by the mere presence of a malign principle in the one who commits it, the greater incest, when it occurs, always seems the direct cause of the most terrible disasters to the primitive. Accordingly it is with good reason that he ranks it among the transgressions that in their turn play so important a part in the great business of witchcraft. All his ideas regarding it, intimately bound up with each other as they are, have their origin in the affective category of the supernatural.

CHAPTER VIII

DEFILEMENT AND PURIFICATION

I

"INCEST, as we know," says Van Ossenbruggen, "is the greatest defilement imaginable."¹ Moreover, its results, as we have seen in the last chapter, are scarcely to be distinguished from those that follow a bewitchment. He who commits incest, say the Thonga tribes, is behaving like a sorcerer. From one point of view, at any rate, therefore, bewitchment, impurity, defilement, are not very different things, and when we examine the data at our command we shall be able to see how far the primitives maintain the likeness between them.

In his study of the religion of the Herero, Irle the missionary shows that the word *húhura* means both to purify, to remove the magic spell, and also to cure. One day in the year 1862 the chief Maherero was the guest of a missionary. "The latter, who was not yet acquainted with the laws of the country, had some mutton served, the flesh of a sheep without horns (which to the chief was taboo). Maherero ate a little of it, then sprang up suddenly and fled from the table, crying out 'I am a dead man!' He went to a doctor, had himself purified (*húhura*) and his life was saved. Later he accused the missionary of having wanted to kill him by making him eat that meat. Even fifteen years later he had not forgotten it, and again in 1888 he accused him of causing people's deaths."²

By eating the flesh of an animal that was taboo, the Herero chief had contracted fatal impurity, and he had to be disinfected at once by a doctor. The Herero word for this purifying process is *húhura*, which Irle translates by *entzaubern*, to disenchant, to break the spell. We say that Maherero has contracted impurity, but we might just as well say that he has been

¹ F. D. E. Van Ossenbruggen. *op. cit.* p. 114.

² J. Irle. *Die Religion der Herero. Archiv für Anthropologie*. N.F. XV. p. 356. (1915).

stricken with a mortal disease, for we know that to these people such a disease is the result of bewitchment. In short, to Maherero's way of thinking, the missionary, by giving him this mutton to eat, had overwhelmed him with the most terrible impurity, had made him contract a deadly disease, had laid a spell on him. In his very highly emotional thought, there is a mingling or combination of these three ideas which, though clearly distinct to us, are not so to him. We do not mean to say that he confounds them, but that they are not differentiated in his mind. The proof of this is that the operation that saves him is expressed by the word *húhura*, which means to purify, heal, and dis-enchant all at once. These are not three interpretations that are closely allied, and derived from one another; one single meaning includes them all. "This is why the essential function of the doctor (healer and magician both, and healer because he is a magician) is to diagnose illnesses that may have been caused by bewitchment (*huha*), or by a curse, and to arrest the ill-effects of this by a counter-charm (*húhura*). . . . Thus in our times the name doctor (*anganga*) would be applied to the white healer, and often, too, to the missionary."¹ The natives attributed to these the same powers as to their own "medicine-man," for they had no idea of a doctor as we understand the term.

In the same passage Irle goes on to explain that those who violated the food taboos drew down upon themselves misfortunes of a very definite kind; "therefore the natives said of the forbidden foods: '*ovio mavi eta ovihuhua*': they bring misfortune, i.e. they bewitch." It could not be more explicitly stated that the violation of this taboo, while making a person "impure," is the equivalent of bewitching him, or rather, is an actual bewitchment, since it effects the same results.

"Throughout the sacrificial worship," adds Irle, "it is always a question of animals that are pure or impure, or of pieces of meat that are allowed or prohibited, sometimes to men, sometimes to women, or sometimes to children. Should a sick person have ever sat down (even if a long time previously) beside a fire, or even a cold hearth, where the foods forbidden to him had once been cooked, his illness was sure to be due to such imprudence."² The fact of his having done it had defiled him, made him ill, bewitched him. "When the chief used to come

¹ *Ibid.* p. 359.

² *Ibid.* pp. 354-5.

to see us, we offered him coffee. One day he refused it, on the pretext that it was not sweet enough for him. Our servant had told him that we had on our fire some meat that was taboo to him, and that was quite enough to make him suspicious of the coffee that had been standing near the stewpot.”¹

Irlé finally concludes, “Generally speaking, the Herero believe that certain illnesses are the result of enchanted maledictions uttered by malevolent persons. The witch-doctor sacrifices a goat, examines its entrails, and in this way discovers the cause of his patient’s illness. According to whether it proceeds from the ill-will of a certain person, or from the violation of one of the food-taboo, he selects his counter-charm.”² (*Húhura*: he dis-enchants, purifies, cures.) According to what is said here, whether the illness proceeds from the action of some sorcerer, or from the violation (involuntary or not, it matters little) of a food-taboo, it is always a defilement, a bewitching. Its effect is the same, but it is necessary to know what has caused it, so that it may be neutralized. Irlé gives details of the treatment, too lengthy to reproduce here. He ends with the words: “All these things . . . they called *húhura* (dis-enchanting).”

Junod writes in the same sense: “The native regards illness, not merely as a physical disorder, but as the result of some sort of curse, of a more or less mystical nature, and this is why the doctor must not only treat his patient for such and such a symptom, but also counteract the general impurity that he has acquired. When he performs this second cure, the doctor has become what is commonly known as a witch; hence his efforts to appear a supernatural personage . . . (his costume, accessories, dances, etc.). Sometimes he brandishes a hippopotamus tail, and all this paraphernalia inspires both fear and confidence in his patients.”² But Junod himself leads us to believe that this second cure is not really a different and distinct thing from the first, and that “natural” and “supernatural” are not here separated in the primitives’ minds.

To show that impurity and bewitchment are regarded by them as on a par, here is another instance related by Irlé which seems to be decisive. “On certain occasions . . . the Herero used to sacrifice a fat ox called *ojomaze*, ‘him of the fat.’ The fat of this animal was kept by the chief in a special case, and it was used to purify and to dis-enchant, as, for instance, when

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 360-61.

² Junod. *Les ba-Ronga*. p. 375.

people returned from a perilous journey, or again when they had contracted some impurity at a burial, etc. Then the chief would anoint the breast and arms of the person who needed to be purified."¹

Thus the same operation both "purifies" and "dis-enchants," "removes the magic spell." In the one case as in the other, its end and aim is to make the person submitting to it safe from the misfortune which the impurity or the bewitchment had brought upon him. This shows us very clearly what "impurity," "defilement" mean to primitives, at least in a large number of cases, and certainly in those most important to them. To become impure, suffer a defilement, is to be in the power of an influence which places them "in imminent danger of disaster." To be purified, cleansed from their defilement, is to escape from this influence, to be free from the dangerous position in which they have been placed.

Hence we see why, as far as the effect produced is concerned, there is no distinction between "impurity" and "bewitchment." The influence which the sorcerer brings to bear on his victim consists precisely in conveying misfortune to him. Now what is the effect of the impurity if not to convey misfortune? It is quite natural then, that one and the same operation should serve the Herero, many other Bantu tribes, and even many other communities, either to purify or to disenchant. In both cases, the object of the operation is the same—to parry a blow that is imminent.

With the Zulus, for example, "this medicine, which is associated with the practice of witchcraft, is not only used in cases of disease in human beings and animals (disease is almost always considered bewitchment), but also for purifying, as when a death occurs. When someone has died, the people in his kraal cannot go to the homes of others without having first taken the medicine specially prepared to purify them.

"Sometimes too, a sinister omen is also nullified by means of the medicine concocted according to magic formulas.

"If lightning has struck a kraal, it must be purified throughout by the doctor, and his magic remedies alone can free it from disaster. The people not only drink his medicine and are sprinkled with it, but the entire kraal and its surroundings must be sprinkled by the doctor likewise."² Whether there are any victims of the lightning or not, it is enough that it should have

¹ J. Irle. *Ibid.* p. 359.

² F. Speckmann. *op. cit.* p. 158.

struck the kraal to have made it impure. The doctor purifies it, and by this operation, to use Speckmann's striking expression, he "frees it from disaster." Impurity signifies imminent disaster, and to purify is to remove the menace which is itself disastrous.

II

Since he is exposed to a multitude of evil influences, known or unknown, which may exert their power upon him at any moment, the primitive is ever in dread of being either attacked by some misfortune, in other words, bewitched, or else rendered unclean, which to him is pretty much the same thing. We have already seen (Ch. I, iv, v) the succour he seeks, the protection he implores, and the precautions he feels himself obliged to take against these unseen powers. We can now better understand why all contact with unfamiliar beings or objects inspires him with fear, for who knows what influences may emanate from them, and whether he may not find himself contaminated, that is, bewitched, by their means? Hence, if contact has been established, the necessity for purification arises.

This custom is almost universal. "If blacks go visiting, when they leave they make a smoke fire, and smoke themselves, so that they may not carry home any disease," Mrs. L. Parker tells us.¹ This is a magic disinfection; through purifying themselves by the smoke, the blacks get rid of the evil influences which might bewitch them, that is, make them ill, for the idea of these is to them both material and immaterial. With the Dusuns of Borneo, "not only do people going to live in a new place have to make offerings to propitiate the spirits of the soil, but natives of a village returning home after a stay in another district require to undergo a sort of 'religious disinfection' in order that any evil influences they have brought back with them may be dissipated."² "The Kayans have a special ceremony (*blaka ajo*) to dispel evil spirits. . . . It is celebrated on the return from a prolonged expedition; those who have taken part in it must be isolated for four days before entering their homes."³ This isolation, away from their ordinary dwellings is, as we shall see, a constant practice in cases of impurity.—So, too, in Central Celebes, "persons coming from a village

¹ Langloh Parker. *The Euahlayi tribe*. p. 41.

² J. H. W. Evans. *Among primitive people in Borneo*. p. 155.

³ A. W. Nieuwenhuis. *In centraal Borneo*. I, p. 165 (1900).

in which there is illness, are obliged by the priestess to pass beneath a basket containing rice and bananas, to destroy the contamination which adheres to them.”¹ This is, as it is with the Euahlayi and the Dusuns, a magical disinfection, a mystic purification.

The same dread of evil influences proceeding from dangerous contacts, and the same methods of defence against them are found in South Africa. Thus, the men accompanying Merensky, when in a place where an epidemic of smallpox had broken out, say to him: “If one of us should get this disease, none of us can go home again. For fear of our bringing this disease with us, they will forbid us to set foot in the country.”² Apparently they reason as we do about contagious diseases, but what they really are afraid of assumes the aspect of defilement, bewitchment, in their eyes. Junod has laid stress on the ambiguous nature of contagion among the Bantus. “They are quite alive to the physical contagion in eruptive maladies, especially smallpox . . . But the diseases in which contagion is especially dreaded are *phthisis* and *leprosy* . . . Here their conception of infection is confused. It seems at times to be a bodily contagion; for instance, a consumptive person must always eat his portion from the common pot *after the others* and, if there is then any of it left, it is thrown away. But most of the taboos that relate to these two dreaded diseases seem to reveal another conception of contamination. The uncleanness of *phthisis* resembles that of death, and of the lochial discharges, and it is treated in the same way. Thus, grave-diggers are not allowed to eat with their fingers until they have completed their purificatory rites. They must make use of special spoons, or else they will become *consumptives*. . . . So too, the woman in childbed . . . must have a special wooden spoon . . . for if she touched the food, *it would make her phthisical*. This ritual conception of contamination, which would result, not from physical contact, but from the infringement of a taboo, probably accounts for the strange law according to which the infection is to be dreaded for the members of the invalid’s family, but not for the other inhabitants of the district.”³

¹ A. C. Kruyt, *Measa*. III. T.L.V. LXXVI. p. 114 (1920).

² A. Merensky. *Erinnerungen aus dem Missionsleben in S. O. Afrika*. p. 173 (1888).

³ H. A. Junod. *Conceptions physiologiques des Bantou Sud-Africains*. *Revue d’Ethnographie et Sociologie*. 1910. p. 153. Cf. H. A. Junod. *The life of a South African tribe*. II. pp. 433-4.

Junod is right in saying that, despite appearances, the ba-Ronga do not think that phthisical infection is the result of mere physical contact. As he bids us note, it is a question of an "impurity" comparable with that which comes from death or from the blood lost by a woman in childbed. The taboos are protections against the evil influences emanating from the corpse, or from this blood, or from consumptives, or lepers, etc. If the taboo is not observed, there will be no protection, and the evil influence can work its will. He who has to submit to it becomes impure, and falls ill. In any case the illness is not a punishment, a penalty; it does not attack the man *because* he has infringed the law, but occurs automatically. From the circumstance that the taboo has been violated, the man finds himself defenceless against the evil influence which threatened him in case of contact.

In East Africa there are the same beliefs. "The fear of *thahu*" (a state of impurity which brings misfortune) "is always present, and a man may be subject to it without knowing the cause. When anyone goes on a journey he cannot tell whether he may not have contracted *thahu* in strange houses and villages, and therefore when he returns he will kill a goat for purification before he enters his village. This was done on one occasion by a number of elders who had been on a journey with me."¹ Here is a Safwa native's own idea of contagion, apparently an entirely material one. He relates that his wife had been ill for a long time with yaws (framboesia). He got another woman to come and look after her, and she caught the disease. The latter spent a year and a half in the isolation hut, was cured, and returned to the village. "As compensation I gave her a goat, but this woman and her daughter said to me: 'You must pay us with a cow, and pay a man to work in the place of my mother' (there was still a trace of the disease on her hands, and her weakness had made her less able to do the work). . . . The man then offered two goats, but the women refused them. . . . The dispute goes dragging on. . . ." ² The man speaking is concerned with the responsibility he has incurred, and the indemnity to be paid to the woman whom his wife has infected. But from what we have already gathered as to the way the Safwa regard illness, the infection is not really a "physical" one, as Junod puts it. The evil influence, the species of bewitchment that was working on the wife of this native, has

¹ C. W. Hobley. *Bantu beliefs and magic*. pp. 142-3 (1922).

² E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *Die Safwa*. II. p. 186.

been extended to the woman who came to look after her, and therefore the man who summoned her is responsible. It is in the same way that if misfortune occurs to anyone who is persuaded by another to accompany him on a journey or out hunting, etc., the other is as responsible as if he had bewitched him; and this is because he has brought misfortune upon him. In the Safwa's case, the same argument holds good. The physical phenomena are only the expression of what is occurring on the plane of the unseen powers and supernatural forces.

Finally, on the Congo, during Bentley's voyage of discovery, the natives, who had never seen white men before, were as a rule terribly afraid, and dared not come near. Who can these extraordinary men be? Are they really men? They cannot be, but probably, like everything else that seems monstrous and unheard-of, they are "transgressions," and assuredly they will bewitch, they will bring disaster. Therefore the natives will avoid them as much as possible, and especially will they try to make them depart as soon as they can. So, to quote but a single instance only, "we sent again to tell the chief (of Nkasa) of our arrival, and to request a house to sleep in. After a long delay, two men presented themselves as chiefs. We gave them a ring and a gilt necklace each, our mark of friendship. They feared some sorcery on our part, and dared not take them. They pointed out an old, dilapidated house. We protested, but they would do nothing for us." ¹

The witchcraft these natives are dreading, which does not even allow them to touch the presents offered them, is clearly not the practice of black magic. It is defilement that they dread, the evil influence that Bentley and his companions may exert upon them. Beings such as they have never seen before are sure to bring misfortune. If these undesirable guests had accepted the shelter grudgingly offered them, the natives would have purified it after their departure in order to dispel the menace of calamity; very probably even, they would have abandoned or destroyed it, and accordingly they had purposely chosen a dwelling that was no longer good for anything.

III

The words "clean, unclean, defiled" have many meanings for the primitive's mind; they have a figurative sense, a deriva-

¹ W. H. Bentley. *Pioneering on the Congo*. I, p. 317.

tive (moral) sense, and yet others. The original meaning, according to the foregoing instances, seems to be: "exposed to an evil influence, under the threat of misfortune." "Purified" means "placed out of reach of such an influence, fortified against such a threat." As a direct consequence, "unclean and sullied or defiled" also signifies "that of which the vicinity or the touch is dangerous." We have already noted (Ch. I. pp. 55-57) the spontaneous, ever-present tendency of primitives to shun what is unfortunate, and to connect themselves with what is successful. Proximity, and even more, contact, are causes of participation.

Their conceptions of defilement, impurity, purity, purification, and the like, then, are very closely bound up with those of the hostility or the favour of the unseen powers, the good or evil influences that begin, or else cease, working upon them, and hence their ideas respecting happiness and misfortune. E. W. Smith has brought this out clearly. He says: "*Insambwe*, with the *ba-Ila* is a talisman, active in bringing to the possessor *cholwe*, i.e., luck, prosperity, good fortune, presumably by transferring to him peculiar energies or qualities inherent in itself. The word is related to *kusamba*: to wash, bathe, and appears to mean etymologically 'that in which one is bathed.' Good luck is always associated with cleanness, whiteness. The whitest thing they know, *impemba*, is a talisman smeared on their foreheads by hunters. In accordance with this idea are the sayings: 'he is clean as to the forehead,' i.e., is fortunate; 'he is clean in the hand,' i.e., he is rich. On the other hand, of an unfortunate person they say 'he is black in the forehead.'" ¹

The various meanings given to *clean* and *unclean* in several Bantu dictionaries, confirm this view of things. It is originally due to the purificatory rites, the necessary object of which, as a rule, is to dispel misfortune or the threat of it, by appeasing the unseen powers, in making what had offended them disappear, and thus regaining their favour. In Kropf's dictionary, *uku-Hlambúluka* means to become clean, to be clean. . . . "It refers more to the cleansing of those who have been suspected of or charged with evil deeds or crimes. Hence: 'my heart is cleansed, free from guilt' . . . 'Their father died, and they became clean today,' (i.e. came into the company of others, from which they had been excluded for a time)." ² In reality,

¹ Smith and Dale. *op. cit.* I. pp. 251-2.

² A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 147.

to be in mourning for a father, or other near relative, is to be in danger of imminent misfortune, through the contact with death, and at the same time to be dangerous to others; hence it means to be defiled and needing purification before being admitted again into the society of others. So too, a false accusation makes the object of it "unclean" (cf. Ch. VI, p. 195) and he therefore needs cleansing. But by this we understand that his innocence must be clearly brought out, and that he is shown to be free of blame. To the Kafirs, however, it has a different meaning. It means that the accuser must pay an indemnity to the man whom he has falsely charged. This "compensation" will effectually dispel the threat of misfortune overhanging him—in other words, it will purify him.¹

Similarly, in Zulu, "*uku-hlanza* means to cleanse, to remove filth, to purify—to purify from guilt or other defilement, e.g., he paid me money in order to make me clear from accusation, (i.e., the accuser having failed in his charge, paid the money to the person accused)." ² Col. Maclean also writes: "After a person charged with witchcraft has satisfied all legal demands, and is set at liberty, he has the right of applying to a priest, who offers a sacrifice for him, and performs some other rites; after which he is pronounced clean, and again becomes as honourable a member of society as though he had never been punished for witchcraft."³ For the man who is accused, whether wrongly or not, as for the man who is in mourning, the ceremony of purification is essential, and until it has taken place, both of them are "defiled, unclean," i.e. in imminent danger of misfortune, dangerous to others, and consequently shunned. There is a special word in Xosa to express this exclusion. "*I-Nq-ambi*: anything which is ceremonially (Leviticallly) unclean, despised, or which causes loathing; an animal unclean for food, as a horse; any animal or person separated from others on account of uncleanness."⁴

To classify, or even enumerate the circumstances in which a man may become unclean, is hardly possible. There are as many of them as there are of the evil influences that may bring misfortune upon him, and their number is infinite. The primitive probably never concerns himself with them as a whole; he

¹ Upon the magic virtue of compensation, cf. *infra*, Ch. XII, pp. 000-0.

² J. L. Döhne. *A Zulu-English Dictionary*. p. 128 (1857).

³ Colonel Maclean. *op. cit.* pp. 91-2.

⁴ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 266.

does not envisage them *en masse*, but he is haunted by a fear of being assailed by one or other of them, and he defends himself as best he can by means of his charms, amulets, talismans, etc. He knows, however, that "one cannot provide against everything," and that at any moment, from some unexpected quarter or other, defilement and misfortune may break upon him.

Incomplete as the list must necessarily be, then, I shall confine myself to an examination of the most frequent and most serious forms of impurity, those that the primitives of most communities themselves consider most essential to combat and dispel. Here, for example, is a list compiled by Lichtenstein, one of the first observers who ever lived among the Kafirs. "All children are unclean until the moment when they are admitted to the number of adults (which, for boys is by their circumcision with its numerous rites); all women in childbed for the first month after their confinement; all women during menstruation; all widowers for a fortnight after the death of their wives; all widows for a month after the husbands' deaths; a mother who has lost a baby, for two days; all persons who have been present at a death; the men on their return from battle, etc. . . . When any persons are thus unclean no-one may have dealings with them until they have washed their bodies and anointed them afresh with a colored unguent, and rinsed out their mouths with milk, and it is not permitted to them to do this until after a certain time (fixed by common consent in each case) has elapsed. Until this period has expired, they are not allowed to wash or colour themselves, or to drink milk." ¹

This interesting list takes no note however of some important cases of defilement; for instance, it does not mention any violations of taboos, voluntary or involuntary, and these are an ever-recurring cause of uncleanness. On the other hand, we may perhaps be surprised to see among the "unclean," children, the living symbols of innocence to our minds. But this inconsistency is accounted for by the different meanings given by primitives and civilized peoples to the words "clean" and "unclean." When Kafirs say that children are impure, unclean, they are not thinking of any moral qualification; the uncleanness in their minds is akin to that of mourners, fighters who have been killing enemies, women in childbed. It implies a definite state of

¹ H. Lichtenstein. *Reisen im Sud-Afrika*. I. pp. 417-8.

weakness and danger, from which initiation will free them. They are dispensed from the food taboos to which adults must submit. "According to an old Kafir custom, men who have been circumcised are not allowed to eat a certain muscle and tendon of the hinder thigh of the animal sacrificed. This portion is separated, and it is left for the uncircumcised, who are still regarded as unclean."¹ This, adds the author, is a noteworthy argument in support of the theory that the Kafirs are related to the Jews. But would he be prepared to say as much about the Bahau of Central Borneo, among whom the same custom is to be found? "Until puberty," says Nieuwenhuis, "children enjoy the privilege of freedom from the rules which prohibit adults from eating bucks, grey apes, snakes and groundbills; in the religious festivals they are not subjected to the regulations which grown-up people must obey."² Among the Ao Nagas, also, "very old people, boys before they enter the *morung* (house of the men), and girls before they are tattooed, can eat anything they like; they are hardly reckoned as full members of the community. But if anyone else partakes of forbidden food, he or she falls ill."³ Children are not subject to these taboos because, being unclean, they run no risk in not observing them. But in what respect are they unclean?

To be able to get a clear idea of this, we must first rid our minds of any derogatory implication as to moral character in the term, and refer to what has been written in *The "Soul" of the Primitive* (Ch. VIII. pp. 212-13) about the non-initiated. Since the obligatory ceremonies have not made them full participants in the tribal life, they are as yet only imperfect members of it; they do not, as the adults do, enjoy consubstantiality with the ancestors. Consequently they are less protected, more fully exposed to all kinds of dangers, and therefore an easier prey to the evil influences continually roaming around the group in quest of victims; i.e., they are "unclean" in the Kafir sense of the word.

Primitives, it seems, are never surprised at the appalling infantile mortality which is so common in their communities. As a rule, more than fifty per cent of the babies die, and very often there is a still higher percentage. If primitives were to ask themselves why this should be so, they would have an answer

¹ Dr. Wangemann. *Ein Reise-Jahr in Süd-Afrika*, p. 199 (1868).

² A. W. Nieuwenhuis. *op. cit.* I. p. 66. Cf. I. p. 148.

³ J. P. Mills. *The Ao Nagas*. pp. 145-6.

quite ready. How is it possible that babies should be able to survive, when there are malign agencies assailing them on all sides, and they have no strength to resist them? This is the reason for the meticulous precautions taken in so many communities for the safeguarding of infants, especially those who are of noble blood or of royal birth. To cope with their "uncleanness," that is, the menace of the evil influences to which their defenceless state lays them open, their relatives not only have recourse to all the amulets, charms and talismans that can be devised, but they also take measures to prevent these influences from reaching them. It is hardly possible to isolate these infants, as they would certain sick persons, for they must be left with their mothers and their attendants; but they are sequestered and confined, so that as far as possible they shall be sheltered from the glance of the evil eye and other malignant powers.

With the Barotse, for example, Coillard, writing about a little two-year-old prince, says: "No one but his near relatives and the slaves who wait upon him has yet seen his face. Nobody seems to know his name, or even whether the child is a boy or girl. For two years no one except the attendants has entered the court in which he is growing up, and if he has had to be taken out of it, he is always muffled up in furs, enough to stifle him. If he is obliged to go by canoe, they take him to it quite concealed from view, and when he has once been placed inside his tent of matting, they close the opening. This is the fate of all the royal children. . . . You realize that it is the 'evil eye' they are afraid of, even when the poor little prisoner is hung all over with amulets."¹ In the same year Adolphe Jalla wrote: "You are aware that all the children of royal blood are sedulously concealed from the eyes of the public until they are about three or four years old."² Twenty years later, in this same court, the same conditions were observed. "Since the birth of her baby, the princess has been shut up with him in her room; she will not be able to go out or show herself to the public for three months. . . . The other day Mbiemba said to me: 'Give me some medicine to make my baby strong, make his bones harder, and make him a little fatter!' Whereupon I said: 'Give your baby the open air and good baths, and he will soon get strong.' 'Oh, that's not possible,' she replied; 'you know we

¹ *Missions évangéliques*. LXX. pp. 153-4.

² *Ibid.* p. 475.

have to remain shut up for three months.' ”¹ To this Zambesian princess the lack of air was of little importance compared with the risk of the danger to her baby if he were allowed to be out.

When at last it is decided that the child may be seen, how many precautions have to be observed! We have learnt of some of them from Coillard. In other places, similar beliefs give rise to like customs. Here is an instance from Central Celebes. “In Onda, when a child is taken out of the house for the first time, the mother puts some ashes and some ylang-ylang grass on every step of the stairs. The ashes neutralize any uncleanness that the steps may have suffered from the many people passing up and down them, and the grass checks the evil by smothering it. By these two methods, the magic power which may be lurking there is prevented from injuring the baby.”²

As soon as the children are a little bigger they are generally allowed to play and frolic about as they like; they spend their time happily with their companions until the day comes when they are to be made useful and given more serious occupations. But, for the reasons already indicated, as long as they have not changed their state, that is, until they have been initiated, they remain “unclean,” in a condition of “nonage” and, consequently, of feebleness. The white lady missionary advised the Zambesian mother to observe the elementary rules of hygiene so that her child might become robust. But the latter knew better upon what the health of her baby depended. What it needed was the charms and the medicines, of which the white people had many, very powerful ones; they would both effectively protect it, and at the same time, by “cleansing” it, they would make it stronger.

IV

To the primitive's mind, indeed, to cleanse or purify is frequently the same thing as to fortify. Every defilement entails a state of inferiority. The man who has become unclean for any reason whatever, whether he has been bewitched, or been present at funeral ceremonies, or been accused of a crime, or for any other cause, finds himself *ipso facto* under a sinister influence. The misfortune which has befallen him announces, and will cause, others. Not only is he more exposed to danger than

¹ *Ibid.* XCII, I, p. 152 (1917) Mlle. Dogimont.

² A. C. Kruyt. *Measa*. II. T.L.V. LXXXV, p. 128 (1919).

before, but he is also less able to resist it. As long as he remains unclean, he will be in a precarious state, because he is weak, and cleansing him will be the means of rescuing him from his dangerous position. To use the expression which the natives themselves so often employ, it will neutralize the evil agencies that are sapping him of his strength, in short, it will make him more vigorous.

Thus, in a Xosa story, "it was thundering so much that the men were trying to protect themselves with their shields, and when the army at last reached home, the doctor was at once summoned to cleanse and strengthen them."¹ And again, in the unpublished epic of Chaka, the African Napoleon: "When all had departed, Malunga (a medicine man) commenced his doctoring work of purifying and strengthening the village, the house in which Chaka slept, the kraals of the cattle, and everything else which doctors consider necessary to protect."

In this similitude of "clean" to "strong," we may perhaps find one of the reasons for the ascetic practices—mortifications, fasts, abstentions of all kinds—so frequently observed in primitive communities. Nearly always before the celebration of any important ceremony, and before addressing the unseen powers with some entreaty, as well as before undertaking any expedition—hunting, fishing, warfare—upon which the safety of the group may depend, it is deemed indispensable to purify, i.e. strengthen, themselves, and to submit for a longer or shorter time to the practice of asceticism. Sometimes a man who, for this occasion, assumes a sacred quality, will personify the whole group. He will fast for them, and act as an intermediary between them and the unseen powers whose favour they are endeavouring to secure. We have already noted examples of this in New Guinea, in Kiwai Island, on the Wanigela River, and in the Truk Islands in Micronesia (Ch. III. pp. 104-107).

Practices of this nature are extremely prevalent, and we may perhaps not always have realized why they are deemed indispensable. It seems to us that such fasts and abstentions and severities can only weaken those who undergo them. But the primitives regard them from another point of view; they place them upon the magic plane. We merely see men whom the deprivation of food and sleep have exhausted to such a degree that they can at times no longer stand upright, and who are most terribly emaciated. But the primitives themselves are con-

¹ A. C. Kropf. *Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern*. p. 34.

vinced that all such experience strengthens them, for, by abstaining from food, exercise, sexual intercourse, etc., by mortifying themselves, in short, they are cleansing and purifying themselves, they are making themselves less liable to attack from hostile unseen powers, and commending themselves to the powers whose favour they seek. The greater the purifying effect of these austerities and abstentions, the greater, too, will be the magic force endowed by means of them. Their physical weakness—after all, but a passing state—cannot possibly outweigh this advantage, and if success in their enterprises can be obtained at such a price, they will not shrink from the severest mortifications. Their endurance will be stretched to its utmost limit, for it is not physical strength that is most necessary to secure success. Before aught else they must gain the good-will of certain unseen powers, and neutralize the evil influences prepared to work them harm—in short, they must be made clean.

V

“Uncleanness” or “defilement” endangers him who, perhaps unwittingly, has contracted it, and almost always others with him, for in primitive communities, as we know, the individual is never really separate from the other members of his group; he is united with them by a kind of organic solidarity, something after the fashion of the organs, tissues, humours, of the human body. Whatever affects him strikes at the same time at the others of his circle, and so it is with them. Should he be “unclean,” the uncleanness will spread, often, if not always, to those who form but one being with him.

What we term *infection* is thus implicitly contained in this solidarity. From the primitive’s point of view, it is a direct consequence of it, but not always a necessary one. We may recall the explanations furnished by the Tahitian hermit (cf. Ch. II. pp. 81-84). At the same time, we are dealing with one of those material representations of immaterial qualities, or immaterial representations of material things familiar to the primitive mind, which we do not succeed in grasping easily, and which it is still more difficult to explain. Seen from one aspect, to be “unclean” is a kind of essentially mystic quality, which makes a person find himself in the power of an evil influence and in imminent danger of disaster. From another aspect, it is a material defilement, a blemish that adheres physically to the

unclean person or object, which can be transferred, or communicated through contact, or removed by cleansing, etc. The primitive mind does not choose between these two representations, nor does it make one the symbol of the other. It has never disjoined them, but neither can one say that it confounds them.

In many primitive communities, lightning makes what it strikes "unclean." In Kiwai, "people shun a tree which has been struck by lightning, and do not dare use it for firewood, for when ignited it is sure to attract more lightning. It is dangerous to bring such a piece of wood into the house, for the 'smell' or 'smoke' of lightning causes illness. No one cares to use a sago palm damaged by lightning, or to eat the fruit of any other tree injured in the same way."¹ What these Papuans fear in the "uncleanness" that adheres both mystically and physically to anything struck by lightning is the threat of disaster. It is the same with the Lhota Nagas. "Even if no one be killed, a house struck by lightning is abandoned with all it contains. A tree struck by lightning cannot be cut up for firewood, or used for any purpose whatever. Should a field be struck, no crop is cut that year from the place where the lightning fell. The rest of the crop may be eaten, but no seed is kept from that field."²

In South Africa we find similar beliefs and practices, among the Bantus for instance. "Even when there is a great scarcity of wood, a Kafir would never dare to use any that came from the house of a dead man, or of any wood left of a house that had been damaged by lightning; it must be left to rot where it lies."³ "When lightning strikes a kraal," wrote Lichtenstein long before, "it must at once be abandoned by all its inhabitants, or at any rate the hut that has been struck must be pulled down entirely, and the site purified by the sacrifice of a certain number of oxen. Until this has been done, nobody must enter the kraal or have any intercourse with its people."⁴ The fear that the uncleanness and, with it, disaster may be communicated, is already to be seen here, and the following passage brings it out very clearly. "When the lightning kills either man or animal, a priest is sent for immediately, who in the first place ties a number of charms round the necks of every individual belonging to the kraal, in order that they may have power to dig the

¹ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* pp. 62-3.

² J. P. Mills. *The Lhota Nagas.* p. 163.

³ Dr. Wangemann. *op. cit.* p. 186.

⁴ H. Lichtenstein. *Reisen im Süd-Afrika*, I. p. 420.

grave (without danger to themselves); for animals, as well as human beings, are always buried when struck by lightning, and the flesh is never eaten. After the body, or carcase, has been buried, the sacrificial beast is killed; a fire is then kindled, in which certain charms of wood, or roots, are burned to charcoal, and then ground to powder. The priest then makes incisions in various parts of the bodies of each person belonging to the kraal, and into these incisions he inserts a portion of the powdered charcoal; the remainder he puts into a quantity of sour milk, and gives each individual to drink thereof; and from the time the lightning strikes the kraal until this ceremony has been performed, the people thereof are obliged to abstain entirely from the use of milk. Their heads are then shaved. Should a house have been struck, it must be abandoned, together with every utensil belonging to it. Until all these rites have been performed, none of the people are allowed to leave their kraal, or have any intercourse whatever with others; but when they have been performed, they are pronounced clean, and may again associate with their neighbours. Nevertheless, certain restrictions are continued for several months; such as, that none of the live stock, and a few other things belonging to the kraal, can be allowed to pass into other hands, either by the way of war, gift, or sale.”¹

Among the Xosa Kafirs, “there is a sacrifice of reconciliation, which is at the same time a sacrifice of purification. It is celebrated:

“1. for a family in which a death has occurred and thus made them unclean;

“2. for women in childbed;

“3. for the circumcised;

“4. for all persons accused of witchcraft, when they cannot prove their innocence” (*sic*). [I think that there must be a printer’s error here, and that it should read “when they *can* prove their innocence”.] “for if they cannot do it, the natives get rid of them, usually putting them to death. If they can, the false accusation has brought misfortune upon them (*vide* Ch. VI pp. 194-95), they are then unclean, and a sacrifice would be necessary for their purification;

“5. for those who own a site which the lightning has struck.”²

¹ Colonel Maclean. *op. cit.* pp. 85-6.

² A. Kropf, *Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern*, pp. 190-1

In all these cases, which it is interesting to see on the same list, the object of the sacrifice is to "reconcile" or conciliate the unseen powers, or (and this amounts to the same thing) to dispel the uncleanness which is nothing but evidence of evil influence, and a menace of disaster sent by these powers—in short, it is designed to "purify." At the same time it will prevent the uncleanness and the disaster from extending to others. This testimony of Kropf's confirms what has gone before. He adds that, when a house has been set on fire through the agency of lightning, "its inhabitants, in sorrow and dread, must, when the sacrifice and the dance are over, go to bathe in the river, and then smear themselves with fat."

Among the Safwa in East Africa we find the idea, expressed by a native, and frequently confirmed in other places, that lightning, in striking down a man has executed justice on the guilty. "When the lightning strikes, they at once think of witchcraft, for should it kill a man, the others turn the matter over in their minds, and come to the conclusion that he was a *unlozi*, a sorcerer, he was bewitching them, and through his witchcraft he was devouring the fruits of their plantations. And now this *unlozi* had dared to defy the power of the storm, but the storm had vanquished and killed him. And if the storm killed several men at once, they would say: 'One of these men was a sorcerer, and he infected the others, and they united together against the rain (the storm). Then when the *unlozi* defied the power of the rain, it grew angry, and it punished all those who were with him.' So when the lightning strikes a tree or withers a field, they think the same; there always must have been evil spirits in it." ¹

Thus in the opinion of the Safwas, the victim of lightning is one whom the unseen powers have doomed; he is a malefactor, a sorcerer. They had not known this before, but the manner of his death shows it unmistakably. Those who were with him at the time and shared his fate deserved it no less, for they were all "unclean," and their touch would have been highly dangerous.

These very prevalent ideas and these fears confirm what was said in *Primitive Mentality* (Ch. IX, pp. 274-9) on the subject of "bad death." In the terror it inspires, the precautions it renders necessary, the way in which the corpses are treated, the purifications it entails, the dominating idea, together with the be-

¹ E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *op. cit.* I, pp. 161-2.

lief that the dead man deserved his wretched fate since the unseen powers had struck him down, is the fear of seeing the defilement and disaster extended to the survivors.

Kruyt has clearly shown this with the natives of the Dutch East Indies. With the Toradjas of Celebes, for instance, "when they bring back to the village the skull of an enemy they have slain, they address it somewhat as follows: 'We have put you to death, but do not be vexed about it. You have fallen because you had committed some sin; otherwise, we should not have been able to kill you.'" ¹ Later, Kruyt adds: "Among the people of the East Indian Archipelago whom I have become acquainted with, if some one dies a violent death, they say of him: 'he was guilty.'" ² I do not wish to lay any stress upon this well known belief, nor upon the maleficence of these dead, who are so greatly dreaded, but we must remember that the defilement is very serious for the group, and they cannot be too careful in cleansing themselves of it.

Thus in Central Celebes, "when a woman dies in childbed, all the women still capable of bearing children go first of all to bathe in the river. . . . When the purification ceremonies come to an end, each man returns home through the window and as soon as he is inside he eats a bowl of rice which has been prepared during the ceremonies. These are so many methods of removing the defilement from himself, and of strengthening his powers by magic. (To become clean is equivalent to growing strong again.) This is done by all the inhabitants of a village in which someone has died a violent death. In such a case very special terror is inspired by the corpse, because the influence emanating from it is much more powerful than from the corpse of a person who has died of illness or old age." ³

Nowhere, possibly, are the consequences of "bad death" and the strong measures it demands more clearly manifest than among the Nagas of the northeastern provinces of India. To describe the practices in detail would take too long, and I shall confine myself to the most characteristic features only.

With the Ao Nagas, "any man dying *apotia* (a bad death) brings disgrace and ruin upon his family. However rich he may have been, his name can never be recited with those of the

¹ A. C. Kruyt. *Het animisme in den indischen archipel*. p. 256.

² *Ibid.* cf. p. 366.

³ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa* III. T. L. V. LXXVI. p. 70 (1920).

mighty dead, and all his property has to be abandoned. . . . If the man be killed in the jungle his companions wrap the body in a cloth, and either bury it or put it on to a platform hastily made on the spot. . . . All weapons and clothes carried by the party are thrown away, and before they enter the village they must walk through a fire lighted . . . by a village priest. Before entering their houses they must wash.

“If the man die in the village . . . the corpse is treated as just so much carrion. The household of the dead man, on hearing the fatal news, kill all their fowls, pigs, and cattle . . . remain indoors for six days, eating all they can of the animals and fowls killed. At nightfall on the sixth day they break all ornaments and utensils, slash all cloths, and throw away all money. Next morning before dawn, a clan priest throws a stone at the house and the family come out and leave it and all it contains for ever. . . . All, men and women, walk in at the front of the *morung* and out at the back and straight out of the village,—the only occasion that I know of on which a woman may enter the *morung* (house of the men). In the jungle close to the village they find a little hut of leaves built by a clan priest, containing old *lengt*as skirts and cloths given out of charity by members of their clan. They change into these, and walk through the hut, which has a door at each end, six times. They then go on to a little house in the jungle, which has been built for them by the clan, and live there six days. Every day members of the clan send them food by a clan priest, who leaves it outside the door and goes away without speaking. Then they move into another little house, nearer the village. By this time there is less danger of evil contagion, and they can go out and about. They therefore set to work to build a house in the village proper, which they occupy as soon as it is ready. They are now free from defilement, but are reduced to utter poverty, and have to live on the charity of clansmen and friends, which is never-failing. All property is simply abandoned and will be touched by no-one; nothing can be claimed from the debtors of the dead man, and nothing is paid to his creditors, etc. . . . After an *apotia* death no woman in the village may spin, and no man may have his hair cut for a certain time. . . . Even then, an old man must have his hair cut first, and an old woman must spin first.”¹

Thus the unusually serious defilement of the man who has

¹J. P. Mills. *The Ao Nagas*, pp. 283-86.

died a violent death is first of all extended to all his belongings without exception, from his clothing and his weapons to his house, his domestic animals, etc. Since it adheres to all this, it would be too dangerous even to touch it. But at the same time, by virtue of the solidarity of the members of the group, it has attached itself to all who form part of his family. As they are now "unclean" in the highest degree they are themselves under evil influences, and a danger to their neighbours. They cannot be simply abandoned, however, like the dead man's house and belongings. Therefore they will have to be cleansed and purified, which means strengthened, so that they may be able to resist the agencies of evil, "neutralize" them, and escape the disaster that threatens. The group begins therefore by isolating them, so that they may not infect others. They are made to live outside the village, so that no one may see or touch or speak to them. People give them food, but when it is delivered the house they are in is not entered. Only after a certain lapse of time, and when all the necessary rites have been carried out, do they come back to take their place in the village life once more. They are no longer in peril themselves, nor do they endanger others. The defilement has vanished, and their uncleanness is at an end.

VI

The terrible effects resulting from a "bad death" in the communities of which we have been speaking—the intense dread, fear of infection, necessity for purifying the group, and all the rest of it—are occasioned, although to a lesser degree, by every death, whatever it may be. This serves to account for the spirit pervading mourning customs in general, for these are practically universal. But nowhere is this horror of death and of the defilement which it brings in its train more clearly evident than in the very lowest and least civilized class of primitives, those to whom death is hardly ever "natural." To them, every death is more or less what the *apotia* death is to the Nagas. Since these natives have no conception of the functionings of the body, any serious illness, and still more, the actual suspension of life, is always, in their opinion, due to the action of a sorcerer who has "doomed" his victim, just as the Nagas, when they see a man struck by lightning, at once conclude that some unseen power has "doomed" him thus.

Even in the communities where primitives do distinguish between deaths that are "natural" and the others, between "bad death" and the mere ceasing to draw breath, death still remains the King of Terrors. It is an extremely serious defilement, possibly the greatest of all impurities, and it demands the most meticulous cleansing. Briefly, it retains, though in a slighter form, the characteristics of the death that is not natural, or is "bad."

Undoubtedly the terror it excites is not always so naïvely expressed as it is among the Sakai of the Malay Peninsula who, when one of their number dies, take headlong flight, abandoning the corpse where it lies, their sole concern being to avoid all sight and touch of it. But even with the attentions paid to the dead man (who, during the first few days after his decease remains near his relatives, although invisible) terror still actively persists. Even when the death is regarded as natural, the group feels itself defiled and in imminent danger, for this death has announced it to be so, and it will be the cause of other disasters, since it reveals that evil influences are being exerted upon the group. If they cannot put an end to this, such evil will continue to work them ill. This death, which made manifest its presence, becomes itself a nefarious influence, and will create other sinister results, and these in their turn will produce others, as long as the defilement lasts. These are intensely emotional ideas which we, by expressing them in concepts in our own way, inevitably distort, whereas the primitives, in whose view they are related to the affective category of the supernatural, scarcely interpret them save in their feelings and their actions.

Accordingly, when a death occurs in a group, the defilement it suffers thereby is one with the impending disaster it threatens, and the measures taken to purify and cleanse itself are at the same time attempts to neutralize the malign influence and remove the approaching calamities. Mrs. Parker, for example, after having been present at a funeral ceremony in the Euahlayi tribe in Australia, writes thus: "After the grave was filled in, Hippi made another big smoke, thoroughly smoked himself, calling to all the men to do the same. An old woman made a big smoke behind where the women were sitting; she called them one by one and made them stand in the thick of it for a while.

"Hippi said something to her. I caught the word 'Innerah'—

they called me Innerah—literally, a woman with a camp of her own. The old woman gave the smoke-fire a stir, and out at once came a thick column of smoke circling round my guest and myself. . . . Going home, Bootha told me that the smoking process was to keep the spirits away, and to disinfect us from any disease the dead might have; and she said that had we not been smoked the spirits might have followed us back to the house. The natives would at once change their camp; the old one would be *gummarl*—a tabooed place.”¹

It is the same thing in the Kakadu tribe in Northern Australia. Three days after the burial “every one, men and women alike, in the little camp in which the dead woman lived brought up all his or her belongings. The women had their mats, baskets, dilly-bags and digging-sticks; the men, their spears, spear-throwers and tomahawks. . . .” All these things are purified by water and by smoke, and the things that had belonged to the dead woman were burnt. “After the water-pouring was finished the men took the charcoal and rubbed themselves and the children all over with it, until they were all as black as soot, and shone with the water.”² This purification ceremony is just like that of the Euahlayi; the latter exposed themselves to the smoke, while the Kakadu made their belongings pass through it. Both are endeavouring to neutralize the evil agencies which the death has made manifest, and those which may emanate from the dead body. We have already noted (p. 231) that the Euahlayi make use of the same process to protect themselves against possible bewitchment.

To nullify the evil influence of the defilement caused by death, primitives as a rule resort to the disinfecting virtue (in its magic sense) of fire and water. The Ao Nagas make the relatives of a man who has died a violent death pass through fire; the Australian aborigines have recourse to smoke. In very many communities all the belongings of the deceased are burnt. To touch them would be to set up contact with the dead man himself, and would cause very serious defilement. Moreover, fire has a potency of its own, and this removes evil influences and maleficent spirits. As for water, nearly everywhere it is a sovereign protection against bewitchment and hence against defilement, for we have already found that primitives hardly

¹ L. Parker. *op. cit.* pp. 88-89.

² B. Spencer. *Wanderings in wild Australia*. pp. 772-73.

make any distinction between "dis-enchanting" and "cleansing."

We find accordingly that very often, after the first funeral rites, all who have touched the body or the bier, or even merely been present at the obsequies, undergo disinfection by means of water. Here are a few among the many examples of this. In Kiwai Island, "when returning from a burial, the people swim in the sea. Those who have carried the body spit ginger over their hands, and afterwards rub them with leaves of a sweet-smelling herb. Before this purification no one will touch his own body with his hands. . . . The people burn the bed of a dead person, and spit ginger and sweet-scented leaves over the place he occupied in the house. The fireplace is washed, after all the old ashes and embers have been thrown away."¹ In Borneo, "the funeral guests have to undergo purification. This is what they do. The jawbones of the pigs that have been eaten at the burial feast are thrown into a receptacle full of water. In it the medicine-man dips a hen's feather, with which he sprinkles all those present, muttering incantations meanwhile. By this means disaster and illness are expelled (i.e. the defilement is removed). Then they make a fire beneath the bier, and at once the gathering hastily disperses; all take a very prolonged and thorough bath in the river, and then return to their homes."²

At Lage in Central Celebes, "when people were returning home from a funeral feast they would stop at the first river they came to, and throw water over one another, or else they would bathe in it, so that they might remove any impurity with which the dead had contaminated them. After this, one of the elders would rub the foreheads of the rest with a coconut, and this was afterwards inserted in the cleft of a pole which was driven into the ground. In this way the nut became a kind of scapegoat into which had passed all the evil that the visitors to the funeral might have contracted."³ The following curious custom which Kruyt relates, well illustrates the realistic symbolism which I have had occasion more than once to note. "At Posso, in Celebes, they called the evil influence, the defilement proceeding from a corpse *bata*. 'This man has a good deal of *bata*,' they would say of any one who looked yellow and sickly,

¹ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 265.

² E. Mjöberg. *Durch die Insel der Kopffäger.* p. 322

³ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa.* III. T. L. V. LXXVI. p. 114 (1920).

and at once people thought of the humours emanating from corpses. . . . Sometimes they confined themselves to sprinkling with water, wherein healing leaves have been steeped, anyone who had been 'defiled' (made ill) through the noxious influence of the dead. Often too they try to get rid of the defilement in a way that can be seen, and this they do by massage. A woman who is expert in these matters rubs the belly of the sick man, and from it she extracts the *bata* in a material form. It consists of a shaving from the wood of the coffin, a piece of the rattan from the fastenings of its cover, a bit of sago-palm leaf taken from the roof of the hut that served as tomb, a fragment of the torch that was burning during the wake, a handful of earth from the grave, and a few other things that had something to do with the dead. The masseuse reckons up all the things she draws out of the invalid's body: the more she takes out, the less chance of recovery is there for him. If all are to be found, he will assuredly die. Before beginning the extraction of this materialized impurity, the woman spits on the body, in the place she is going to rub, some unguent she has been masticating."¹

This interesting note, for which we are indebted to a scientist of great experience, helps us to comprehend a phenomenon that very frequently occurs. In nearly all primitive communities the doctor or medicine man who is operating on a sick man begins, like the Posso masseuse, by rubbing or, more frequently still, by sucking, and at the end of a certain time, which may be short or long, and by dint of many efforts, he withdraws from his patient's body a small pebble, a fragment of bone, a shaving, an insect, or something else. The extraction of this cures the patient, and gives general satisfaction to the bystanders. The white man who witnessed such a scene, would only marvel at the credulity and ignorance of the natives, but if he could grasp their thought, which escapes him, he would regard the matter differently. To him, what is extracted from the body (according to the medicine man's statement) is a material object, and nothing else, but to the natives it is the disease itself, the evil spell of which this material object is only the outward sign; it is, as Kruyt so aptly expresses it, "materialized impurity," like the *bata* of the Celebes natives. The only difference is that these "materialized impurities" in the body of the sick man, which take the form of pebbles, frag-

¹ *Ibid.* II. T. L. V. LXXV, pp. 132-33 (1919).

ments of bone, etc. have been introduced into it, generally from afar, by a sorcerer who is his enemy, or an offended ancestor, and so on, whilst the *bata* comes from corpses.

If then we desire to comprehend these operations to some slight extent, we must transfer ourselves to the mystic plane on which these primitives' ideas have their being. The fragment of stone or of bone, the insect, etc., which have entered the body of the sick man (though mysteriously, leaving no visible scar), is in reality the presence and the working of a magic spell, and the witch doctor who extracts the object breaks the spell when he removes it. He thus heals the invalid, since his malady was this very spell, manifested by the presence of the object in his body. It is by virtue of symbolism, or rather, participations, of the same kind, that the "kidney fat," the vital essence, and the soul are but one to the Australian aborigines. Similar participations unite in the primitive's mind what we call evil influence, imminent misfortune, defilement, magic spell, illness, and even the mystery of death, materialized in the corpse. The more we endeavour here to obtain definite and clear-cut concepts, the less shall we be able to grasp these mental images which arise in the affective category of the supernatural.

VII

We shall not be surprised to find that Africa can furnish data quite similar to the preceding. "Death," writes Merensky, "appals the heathen who are obliged to witness it, but greater still is the horror they feel when in the presence of a corpse. It is indeed the custom of many tribes (in South Africa) to carry a dying man out on to the open veld and leave him to his fate, solely that the house and the family may not be defiled by death. A corpse is an object that will never be touched, if it can possibly be avoided."¹ With the Xosa Kafirs, "when the master of the house dies, all those dwelling in it are considered 'unclean' for several days, and as a rule they leave the house of death. After the death of his wife, a husband is unclean for a week; a wife who has lost her husband, for twelve or fourteen days, and the whole family with her. The adult members must go and camp in the bush for three days, despite the rain and the cold, and then they must bathe in the river, rub themselves with the fat of an ox that has been sacrificed, all shave

¹ A. Merensky. *op. cit.* pp. 303-04 (1888).

their heads, and wail their lamentations for the dead. When a child dies, it is only its parents who are unclean (that is, who are mourners); they must fulfil all the foregoing rites.”¹ Among the Amandebele, “the mourners, and indeed, all who may have had anything to do with the burial, go to the nearest stream for the purpose of washing therein, purifying themselves from the deed of burying the dead. . . . The nearest relatives are then obliged to go and remain upon a neighbouring mountain or hill, until an ox or a he-goat is brought them, which is to be offered to the gods, slaughtered, and eaten by themselves, before again entering the town; after which they are ‘sanctified.’ Should they disregard this ceremony, and return home unsanctified, they say that the cattle will fill the kraal with imperfect calves, the flocks will abound in feeble lambs and kids, and the children unborn will be deformed.”² If we compare this testimony with that of Mills recently cited, respecting the results of an *apotia* death among the Ao Nagas, the likeness between the sentiments and practices appears very striking. We might almost say that “bad death” gives us, as it were, a magnifying glass with which the better to distinguish the images, emotions, and reactions which any death inspires.

Junod, too, writes: “For the Thongas, death is not only a sad event, a great cause of pain on account of the bereavement, but a dreadful contaminating power which puts all objects and people in the neighbourhood of the deceased, all his relatives, even those dwelling far away, working in Johannesburg, for instance, into a state of uncleanness. This uncleanness is very dangerous indeed. It kills, if not properly treated. All are not affected in the same way. There are concentric circles round the deceased: the widows—the gravediggers—then the inhabitants of the bereaved villages, even the relatives of the wives of the deceased. . . . The village is ‘dark.’”³

Casalis had already noted the widespread effect of the uncleanness of death, and had compared it with other defilements. “Death, together with all that precedes or directly follows it, is the greatest of all impurities to these people; therefore sick people, those who have touched or buried a corpse, or have even dug the grave for it, the persons who may inadvertently

¹ A. C. Kropf. *Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern*. p. 157.

² T. M. Thomas. *Eleven years in Central South Africa*. pp. 282-83 (1872).

³ H. A. Junod. *The life of a South African tribe*. I, pp. 143-44.

have walked over or seated themselves on a grave, the near relatives of a dead man, murderers, warriors who have killed an enemy in the fight—are all reckoned unclean. They also regard as unclean cattle taken from the enemy, towns in which an epidemic is raging, tribes harried by war or other adversity, corn fields spoilt by blight or overrun by locusts, houses and persons struck by lightning.”¹ These last words show that “bad death” is merely one specially alarming case among the rest, death by itself being the worst of defilements. From this list, too, it is clear that “uncleanness” signifies both misfortune and the threat of misfortune. The evil influence thus manifested will go on being exerted unless it be neutralized, that is, unless an immediate and thorough purification be effected.

If it is necessary to show that the same ideas are found among the primitives of the two Americas, here are a few, from the hundreds of instances. “Such is the horror of the dead felt by the Anabali people, like many others recently converted, that as soon as they had buried the dead man in the very spot where his home had been, and covered his grave with many pieces of matting, they would quit the village, abandoning all their plantations, and would hasten to construct new homes, about twelve or fourteen miles away. If they were asked why they thus lost all the fruits of their labours, they would reply that ‘once death had entered their village, they could no longer live in peace there.’”²

The Lenguas of Gran Chaco, returning from a funeral, purify themselves just as we have found to be the case in the Dutch East Indies and among the Bantu tribes. “On their return to the village, several clay pots containing water are standing on the fires. After drinking some of the hot water, they wash themselves all over. *Palo santo* wood is then burnt, and carried round the village. A hole is dug to receive the ashes of the village fires, which are carefully collected and buried. The property of the deceased is then burnt, and if he possessed animals they are generally killed before the main party vacate the village. . . .

“The near relatives, as they enter the new village, are closely muffled up, and they live apart for the space of a month, taking their food alone, and never sharing in the common pot. They are looked upon as unclean until the expiration of the days of

¹ Casalis. *Les Bassoutos*. p. 270.

² P. Gumilla. *El Orinoco ilustrado*. I, p. 233.

mourning, when they undergo a purification with hot water, and it is not till then that the funeral feast begins. . . . After this, the purification is complete, the mourning is over, and the bereaved are allowed to enter once more into the common village life.”¹

Let us conclude this part of our subject by a very significant observation of Rasmussen's. Padloq the shaman had long been trying to discover why Qahitsoq, his adopted child whom he tenderly loved, was so sickly and tired of life, and now at last he had found out the reason. “Padloq came over to us and explained that Qahitsoq had been out in a boat the previous summer, the sail of which had belonged to a man now dead. A breeze from the land of the dead had touched the child, and now came the sickness. Yes, this was the cause of the sickness: Qahitsoq had touched something which had been in contact with death, and the child was yearning now away from its living kind to the land of the dead.”² It had therefore sufficed for the child to have come in contact with some object belonging to a dead man, for him to have become himself “unclean,” and the illness from which he is now suffering was this “uncleanness,” working on him like a magic spell. The evil influence emanating from the land of the dead, where his parents are, puts him on the road to death. Here again, everything that occurs is on the mystic plane.

VIII

Of the “concentric circles,” as Junod calls them, which indicate degrees of mourning around the dead, the innermost comprises the widowers and widows. They—especially the widows—are subjected to a regime that is more than severe, sometimes even horrible, in which the enforced expression of their grief is combined with a series of rules which the interests of the group demand. Indeed a complexity of motives and of sentiments, rather than one dominant idea, has inspired these customs, which are adhered to because tradition has ordained it, and it would be dangerous to act otherwise. Primitives are not always clearly conscious of their reasons. One of the strongest seems to have been the fear of death. (Cf. *Primitive Mentality* Ch. II, pp. 57-70, and *The “Soul” of the Primitive*, Ch.

¹ W. P. Grubb. *op. cit.* pp. 168-69.

² Kn. Rasmussen. *op. cit.* p. 34.

VIII, p. 239). The primitive finds it disagreeable to go alone to the land of the dead; he would prefer to have company, and therefore others are afraid that he may take one or more of his relatives with him. His new state is painful to him; he looks back on life with regret, and he feels a kind of jealousy and malice towards those who are happier than himself and can still enjoy the light of day. Now if in life the envy of the living is a source of danger for him who is its object, and it can work him ill, can bewitch him, is not the jealousy of a dead man much more to be dreaded? His relatives are those who are threatened most, and since they are in imminent danger of disaster, they are then "unclean";—all the more so because their solidarity with the dead man in whose defilement they must participate, had already laid them open to infection. This makes them, in their turn, harbingers of woe, "Jonahs." Until they have been ceremonially purified, it will be prudent to avoid all contact with them, and even break off all relations.

From this point of view, therefore, the widow of a man who has just died is especially unclean. There is also another reason for this. Through the intimacy of her relations with him, and through the fact of his having acquired her in exchange for gifts offered to her family, she has literally become his chattel, and is as much one of his belongings as the garments imbued with his perspiration, his weapons, his cattle and sheep, his house, etc. Now what becomes of a man's belongings when he dies? The custom is almost the same everywhere: except for a small number of objects which occasionally pass to his heirs, all that was closely associated with the man, or the work of his hands, all that served to feed or adorn or clothe him, etc., is left lying in its place, or thrown into the bush, or burnt. The survivors are not restrained in doing this by any regret for the value of the things thus destroyed, or the work that they may have entailed; they are only too anxious to be rid of them, and this is because these possessions of his are the dead man himself. To touch them is to be brought into contact with him—to contract the most deadly impurity. However great the material loss may be, these things will be unhesitatingly abandoned, shunned, destroyed.

The widow, or widows, being in the highest degree the dead man's possessions, will therefore be treated as such. The inhuman practices to which they are subjected do not manifest any special cruelty or indifference on the part of those who im-

pose them, but it has never occurred to these people that they need not demand their strict observance, just as they would never dare to inhabit the dead man's house, or don the garments he had worn. I cannot examine these customs in detail here; they vary somewhat in their form and duration, although in principle they are essentially the same.

As a rule, primitives do not go so far as to put to death the widows when they destroy the other possessions, though we cannot say that there are no instances of its being done. In the Fiji Isles, the widows of the chiefs and the nobles used to be strangled, sometimes even before the husband had expired. In Anaiteum in the New Hebrides, "this practice had a strange hold upon the people. They clung to it with most determined pertinacity; and the fact that the strangler was the woman's own son, if she had a son old enough, if not, her brother . . . or if she had neither son nor brother, her next of kin, was not the least revolting thing connected with the practice."¹ The author quotes several cases in which women, whose lives they had tried to save, resolutely refused to depart from the usual custom.—With the Kai in New Guinea, "the strangling was always done at once during the wife's outburst of grief for the loss of her husband, never after the burial. On the death of a certain Jabu, both his wives insisted on being strangled, and they shared his grave. Jabu was a very industrious worker, who always tilled his wives' plantations wonderfully well, and he had the reputation of being a successful hunter. . . . As it is believed that in the next world, the dead such as he remain good workers and skilful hunters, the wives were anxious to make sure of this excellent husband after death. In any case, they had no hope of being happier henceforth in this world than they would be with their husband yonder."²

We may imagine that the widows' sacrifices were not always spontaneous, and that in order to persuade them their circle may have been obliged to use force. "It is said [of the Papuans of Mōwenhafen] that the widows themselves desire to follow their husbands, and as soon as their husbands die, they invariably request their friends to strangle them, and even assist in the operation in every possible way. There are, however, numerous instances where widows have been known to evade this obligation by taking refuge with neighbouring Europeans

¹ A. W. Murray. *Missions in Western Polynesia*. pp. 42-43.

² R. Neuhauss. *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*. III. p. 84.

immediately after the death of their husbands.”¹ In another district, if they are not forced to accompany the deceased to the next world, they are obliged to remain quite close to the corpse until the burial has taken place. Riedel gives terrible and almost incredible details of this practice.² At Tagula, in the Louisiad Archipelago, “when a chief dies, his body is laid out on a sago mat under the house below which he is to be buried, where it lies for two days. . . . His wife or wives, if they have survived him, have to lie down alongside of the corpse covered with sago mats, and they must not move or look at anything during the two days until their husband is buried, when they are relieved from their horrible position, as a dead body becomes very offensive in that time in this climate.

“A brother or male relative of the deceased watches all the time to make sure that the wives do not try to look around, which if they do, they are at once killed, and before white men came, were cooked and eaten, as their doing so was a proof that they did not care for their husband, and had poisoned him to get rid of him.”³ Poisoned, which means, bewitched: they have brought disaster upon him, and caused his death.

Dr. Malinowski has given a very detailed description of the condition of the widow in the Trobriand Islands. “After the second exhumation . . . the people disperse, but the widow who, during all this time, has not stirred from her husband’s side, nor eaten nor drunk nor stopped in her wailing, is not yet released. Instead, she moves into a small cage, built within her house, where she will remain for months together, observing the strictest taboos. She must not leave the place; she may only speak in whispers; she must not touch food or drink with her own hands, but wait till they are put into her mouth; she remains shut up in the dark, without fresh air or light; her body is thickly smeared over with soot and grease, which will not be washed off for a long time. She satisfies all necessities of life indoors, and the excreta have to be carried out by her relatives. Thus she lives for months, shut up in a low-roofed, stuffy, pitch-dark space, so small that with outstretched hands she can almost touch the walls on either side; it is often filled with peo-

¹ E. W. P. Chinnery. *Notes on the natives of certain villages of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Anthropological Reports*, I. pp. 22-23.

² J. G. F. Riedel. *De sluik en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua*. p. 267 (1886).

³ J. H. P. Murray. *Papua*. p. 142.

ple who assist and comfort her, and pervaded by an indescribable atmosphere of human exhalations, accumulated bodily filth, stale food, and smoke. Also she is under the more or less active control and surveillance of her husband's maternal relatives, who regard her mourning and its inherent privations as their due. . . . This seclusion lasts from six months to a year, according to her husband's rank." ¹

We have noted also (Ch. VI, pp. 177-85) that in many African communities, the death of husband or wife is a difficult time for the surviving spouse. The family of the departed is inclined to hold her, or him, responsible for what has happened, and the dormant suspicion of witchcraft is easily aroused. When once conceived it is not soon dispelled. This accounts, at least partially, for the privations of all kinds imposed on widows, the galling supervision exercised over them by the dead man's relatives, and their cruelties, which may even be the cause of death, if there be the slightest breach of the regulations laid down for these women. Instances of this are by no means rare. The near relatives of the husband—his brothers, as a rule—fear that they themselves may have to suffer if the dead man is offended by his wife's lack of respect for him. "In this country it often used to happen," says a former observer, "that a dying husband would request one of his friends to run his wife through with his spear immediately after the husband's death, for the Bechuanas believe that people never die a natural death, but always because somebody has willed them to die. Even the wives who tended their husbands with the utmost devotion and tenderness were not safe from such suspicions, and after the death of chiefs and important men it was the custom to sacrifice some one of the members of their family, in deference to this prejudice, in case she should have desired his death." ²

Even where widows are not the victims of these suspicions, it used to happen that these Bantus treated them very harshly. "Here is an instance which I witnessed a few weeks ago. When the husband died, his wife with an infant was driven into the large bush near Mount Coke (in Caffraria), where she contin-

¹ B. Malinowski, *op. cit.* pp. 134-35.

² *Missions évangéliques (exposé de Moffat)* XVI, p. 206 (1841). So too in Australia, "a woman at the Clarence River neglected to trim and weed the tumulus of her late husband, and she was put to death in consequence of her neglect." Angas, *Savage life and scenes in Australia and New Zealand.* (1847). II, p. 280.

ued five days and nights without food, excepting a few roots which she pulled up, which just kept her alive. When she came out of the bush . . . she could scarcely walk. . . . The weather had been very cold during the time, in consequence of heavy rains. The child . . . only lived a day or two afterwards.”¹ No doubt this woman had been suspected of having brought disaster upon her husband, and the natives wanted to get rid of her, believing her to be a witch.

The horrible cruelties inflicted upon widows in the Dutch East Indies and in other places in the Pacific, have been matched by some in America. For instance, on the Columbia River in Oregon, a hundred years ago, “during the nine days the corpse is laid out, the widow is obliged to sleep alongside it from sunset to sunrise, and from this custom there is no relaxation even during the hottest days of summer. . . . The ashes of her husband are carefully collected and deposited in a grave, which it is her duty to keep free from weeds; and should any such appear, she is obliged to root them out with her fingers. During this operation, her husband’s relatives stand by and beat her in a cruel manner until the task is completed. . . . The wretched widows, to avoid this complicated cruelty, frequently commit suicide.”²

Among the Dénés, “the day after the funeral . . . the widow’s hair was shaved off by the relatives of the man whose remains she must henceforth carry every day (these are the bones, hung round her neck in a bag) and whom one must avoid mentioning in the future. Her face was smeared over with gum, she had to clothe herself in the most wretched rags, and her *guardians* (for thus her new masters are called) took pleasure in making her life as miserable as they could. She became the household factotum; well or ill, she had to work for them all without ever uttering a complaint, or asking for the smallest remuneration. During the public ceremonies, such as dances and feasts, her place was at the door of the hut, in the midst of the dogs she was charged to keep away from the festivities. . . . The widow led this wretched and penurious existence for two, three, or four years, according to the position held in the tribe by her deceased husband.”³

¹ W. Shaw. *The story of my mission in South Africa*. pp. 431-32.

² Ross Cox. *Adventures on the Columbia River*, II. p. 187 (1831), quoted by Yarrow, *Mortuary Customs of N. American Indians*. E. B. Rept. I, p. 145.

³ R. P. Morice. *Au pays de l’ours noir*. pp. 46-47. (1897).

Among the Caribs Fr. Gumilla noted yet worse customs. "The dead man's body is hung in the cotton hammock which was his ordinary bed; his wives must take it in turns to mount guard near him, one on each side of the corpse which, in this excessively hot country, soon becomes very offensive, and attracts all the flies in the place. For thirty days it is the lot of these wretched women to see that not a single fly rests on the body. And, unbearable as this state of things may be, it is not the worst torture these poor women have to bear, for they must be continually asking themselves: 'Shall I be the one chosen to be buried with him?'"¹

Such cruelties as these are undoubtedly exceptional, and only to be found in certain tribes, and on the death of persons held in high esteem. As a general rule, the natives confine themselves to imposing on widows a number of privations and taboos—the law of silence is frequently enforced, for instance—and above all, to isolating them, for fear that their uncleanness may be communicated to others. Thus, in Kiwai Island, "after a man's death, his widow is for a time secluded within an enclosure of mats in the communal house. She does not attend his funeral, and no one, man or woman, must speak to her. . . . Her children or some friend will look after her, and hand her silently, underneath her mats, the things they think she needs."² Such isolation of the widow is of frequent occurrence. With the Safwas, for example, "widows must remain in their huts for a month; the others avoid them, and they must not try to hold intercourse with the rest. They may not light a fire or do any cooking; their food is brought them by neighbours. They cannot sit down in company with others, or eat with them. . . . They may not talk to anyone, or touch or strike anyone, for if they do, 'the spirit of the disease' by which they, through the medium of the dead man, have become possessed, would be conveyed to the persons they had touched."³

In other words, the very fact of their husband's death has made his widow unclean. These women participate in the defilement of death; they are the prey of evil agencies, and in imminent danger of disaster. Those who have any dealings with them in any way whatsoever will be infected by them, and in their turn, these will bring misfortune upon others. Hence the necessity of isolating them, of not allowing them to touch

¹ P. Gumilla. *El Orinoco ilustrado*. I. p. 227.

² G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 256. ³ E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *op. cit.* I. p. 313.

anything or do anything, for themselves or for others. The restrictions to which they are subjected are intended to protect them, and to save others from the nefarious influence which emanates from their uncleanness. (Cf. Ch. X, pp. 380-88 upon this point; for there we shall find that the same fears respecting the uncleanness arising from the catamenial discharge have given rise to exactly the same preventive customs).

These motives, which are very clearly seen in cases of "bad death," are easily to be recognized in most of the customs pertaining to mourning, even when those who practise them have but a vague consciousness of their original significance. Thus, at the conclusion of the passage just quoted, Landtman writes: "A widower is not secluded, but for several days he stays in the village, only visiting his wife's grave, where he wails. After that, he begins to work again in his gardens, but for quite a long time he must refrain from going out hunting, fishing, or harpooning." It is quite allowable for him to go to his gardens and plantations, because there he is working alone, but in hunting or fishing, he would be in the company of others, and his uncleanness might bring disaster upon them, and ruin the expedition. We shall find later that a man whose wife is *enceinte* or in labour must also abstain from accompanying others, lest his impurity should spoil their chances. They would catch nothing, and perhaps some misfortune might befall them.

Funeral customs for the most part are mainly, then, purificatory measures for those who "belonged" more or less closely to the dead, and for the rest of the social group, protection from the mystic infection which any contact with them might bring upon it. Just as the primitives proceed to purify the persons who have touched the corpse, or taken part in the burial, so they have devised, too, various methods of protecting those who are mourning, from the misfortunes with which their uncleanness threatens them and their circle.

As long as the tie attaching them to the dead is not severed, their uncleanness and the resultant danger to others will subsist. It is essential therefore, that for a long period, which may last for months and sometimes for years, these persons—and widows in particular—shall submit to very stringent inhibitions and taboos.

When the time comes that a widow may marry again without attracting to herself or her new husband or the group the anger of the dead, the purification ceremony sometimes as-

sumes forms that appear very strange to us. (*Vide How Natives Think*, Ch. VIII, pp. 333-34). In places where a second funeral ceremony is customary, these forms signify both that the dead man is henceforward settled in his new state, and that the uncleanness of those who have belonged to him is definitely at an end, since no participation any longer unites them with him. The evil influence is no more to be dreaded, and contact with them is henceforth safe. By virtue of this final ceremony they have become "clean" once again, and they are thereby publicly acknowledged to be so. They may now resume the ordinary communal life of their tribe.

CHAPTER IX

BLOOD AND ITS MAGIC VIRTUES

I

AMONG the many kinds of uncleanness, one of the most redoubtable is that due to the shedding of blood, or to contact with blood that is flowing, as, for instance, blood spilt on the battlefield, or issuing from a wound, or the catamenial discharge, etc. But upon other occasions, on the contrary, it is from blood—either the blood of human beings or of sacrificial animals—that the primitives expect an increase of strength and vigour. In order that we may be able to distinguish the conceptions implied in these varying beliefs and the customs relating thereto, it may be as well first of all to define, as exactly as it is possible to do, the idea which primitives have formed of the blood itself.

When reading a description of ceremonies celebrated by the Arunta and the Luritcha, we are astonished to see what an important place is given to blood in the preparations. "When preparing for the initiation ceremony the bodies (of the performers) were first of all rubbed over with red ochre, then two young men opened veins, first in one arm and then in the other, and allowed the blood to flow out in a stream over the heads and bodies of those who were about to take part in the ceremony. . . . Each man carried on his head, and also between his teeth, a small mass of wooden shavings, saturated with blood."¹ "The blood in congealing formed an excellent adhesive material."²

A little further on, the authors describe in greater detail the method of proceeding. "One of these men, a Kūmāra, bled himself, opening for the purpose a vein in his arm. From this he allowed blood to flow until there was enough to fill, five times over, the haft of a shield. This was quite the equivalent

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *The native tribes of Central Australia*. pp. 234-35.

² *Ibid.* p. 284. Cf. p. 290.

of five half-pints, and as if that were not enough, he ended by walking slowly once up and down by the side of the pole, allowing the blood to spurt over it in the form of a thin stream. He did not seem to be any the worse for the loss of so much blood; and the natives appeared to think nothing whatever about it, no one objecting for a moment to open a vein in his arm or, just as frequently, to obtain it from the subincised urethra, these being the two parts from which the blood is obtained.”¹

There is no doubt as to the motive underlying these copious bleedings. The blood of the young men and of those in the prime of life will give greater vigour to the older men who play an important part in the ceremony. The authors expressly say so. “A remarkable feature in connection with this and other of these special ceremonies concerned with the offering of food was the sprinkling of the older men with blood drawn from the arms of the younger men, not necessarily from the younger man who was making the offering. Early in the morning of the day on which the ceremony was performed, one of the young men had opened a vein in his arm, and had allowed the blood to flow out in a thin stream over the bodies of four of the older men who were present. . . . Some of the blood had been allowed to flow into their open mouths, the idea being to strengthen the older men at the expense of the younger ones, and it had trickled down and over their bodies in thin streams, and had dried up.”² And a little later: “When starting on an avenging expedition, every man of the party drinks some blood, and also has some spurted over his body, so as to make him lithe and active.”³

In a legend of the Kakadu tribe, we hear of a medicine-man who is training his son to succeed him. “Joemin (the medicine-man) brought out the shell that he had previously left, full of blood, at the camp, and showed it to his son, saying, ‘Look at the blood, look at it hard.’ Then he took a leaf, put some blood on it, and rubbed it over his son’s head, arms and shoulders, saying ‘Strong back, strong arms, strong sinews, good eyes, keen-sighted eyes!’ Then, taking some more blood, he made him open his mouth wide, and gave him some to eat, saying: ‘Eat the blood right down; don’t let your tongue taste it.’”⁴

¹ *Ibid.* p. 370.

² *Ibid.* p. 382.

³ *Ibid.* p. 464.

⁴ B. Spencer. *The native tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia.* p. 297.

Blood, then, is a necessary ingredient in these ceremonies, but not as we should first of all understand it, for it is acting by means of its mystic virtue. Just as to these Australian natives the kidney-fat is not merely a soft and whitish substance but also, and above all, a vital principle, a "soul," so too, the blood is not merely the red and fast-congealing liquid which helps them to fasten their decorations of feathers and wool to their bodies, but it is at the same time, and chiefly, a vital principle too, and a source of power. It thus transfers to the older men the vigour of the younger ones who draw it from their veins to let it flow over them.

It has yet other magic virtues. "Blood-letting is a prominent feature of certain sacred ceremonies, such as the Intichiuma rite, as practised by the kangaroo men at Undiara, the great centre of their totem, where the young men open veins in their arms and allow the blood to stream out on to and over the edge of the sacred ceremonial stone which represents the spot where a celebrated kangaroo of the Alcheringa [a mythic epic] went down into the earth, its spirit part remaining in the stone which arose to mark the place. . . .

"The sacred pole called the *kanaua*, which is erected at the close of the Engwura ceremony, is painted all over with blood." ¹ Spencer and Gillen explain the mystic reasons underlying these episodes. The blood with which they besprinkle the sacred stone where the "spirit" of the mythic kangaroo is dwelling, will cause numerous kangaroos to appear in the district, and the *kanaua* pole, which is smeared all over with blood, "is the most sacred ceremonial object of the tribe. Its origin is evidently of very very early date indeed. . . . Possibly it represents a mighty mythic ancestor who was associated with the origin of the various totems." ²

To be of the same blood is to possess the same vital principle, and in this sense all who are of like blood make but one single living being. It is in this that the clan relationship really consists. It is the closest and most intelligible relationship, and it makes sexual relations between persons of the same clan, descending from the same ancestor self-pollution, incest. The Arunta profit by this mystic virtue of blood in various circumstances. "Partaking together of blood prevents the possibility of treachery. A member of a group whom the others wish to

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *The native tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 462-63.

² *Ibid.* pp. 629-30.

attack is forced to drink blood, for henceforward they will not have anything to fear from him. . . . Blood-drinking is also associated with special meetings of reconciliation which sometimes take place between two groups who have been on bad terms with one another without actually coming to a fight. . . . At the commencement each party drinks the blood of its own members and then a more or less sham fight takes place with boomerangs, no one being any the worse.

“Apart from these special occasions, blood is not infrequently used to assuage thirst and hunger; indeed, when under ordinary circumstances a blackfellow is badly in want of water, what he does is to open a vein in his arm and drink the blood.”¹

The red ochre with which these natives constantly smear their bodies for ceremonies, is not merely used by them for ornamental purposes. It is a special symbol of blood—and, since their symbolism is realistic, to them the ochre is the actual equivalent of blood, it *is* blood. This explains why they so often have recourse to it. “In all cases when a man or woman feels ill, the first thing that is done is to rub red ochre over the body, which may possibly be regarded in the light of a substitute for blood, just as sometimes a ceremonial object may be rubbed over with red ochre instead of blood.”²

This substitution seems all the more natural to the natives because they do not conceive of blood as we do, even from the merely material point of view. We regard it as a liquid that circulates in the arteries and veins in accordance with the impulse given to it by the heart. That it coagulates and forms clots when it leaves the body is well known to us but this property of it is not an important part of our current ideas about blood; as a rule, it scarcely occurs to us; while to the primitives, who know nothing about the functioning of the heart, or the circulation, the coagulation of the blood, its drying, and forming clots are an essential characteristic of blood. They vaguely imagine it as existing thus inside the body, and it is its liquid aspect that to them seems to be momentary and of sec-

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 461-62. It is on such conceptions that the widespread custom of blood-brotherhood is based.

² *Ibid.* pp. 464-65.

ondary importance.¹ We shall see later (p. 275) the Bantu conception of this. It is therefore not astonishing that they should take red ochre to be blood. "The deposits of red ochre which are found in various parts are associated with women's blood. Near to Stuart's Hole, on the Finke river, there is a red ochre pit which has evidently been used for a long time, and tradition says that in the Alcheringa two kangaroo women came from Ilpilla, and at this spot caused blood to flow from the vulva in large quantities, and so formed the deposit of red ochre." ² Spencer and Gillen collected many similar legends.

Accordingly, when natives who are going to take part in a ceremony smear their bodies with red ochre, it is not a costume they are donning in which to play their rôle. They actually believe that they are rubbing their bodies with blood, and just as sick people, by rubbing red ochre all over them, believe that they are renewing their vital powers, the actors in the ceremony feel that the ochre is enduing them with the same mystic virtue as blood would do. This use of red ochre is fairly frequent in other parts besides Australia, and it probably had the same significance in the beginning even if those who resort to it today are not aware of it.

In Australia, too, other observers have noted the same facts as Spencer and Gillen. Dr. W. E. Roth, for instance, writes thus. "Human blood is used for smearing all over the body, trunk, limbs, and face, in various obscure affections, and internal pains of one sort and another. The blood itself is removed from any other apparently healthy individual, but never a woman. . . . They take it from a vein in the arm. . . . In addition to the external application of the remedy, the patient may drink some or even all of it, in the latter case postponing the 'rubbing' portion of the treatment for a subsequent occasion. This blood-smearing cure is in vogue throughout North-West Central Queensland. The Kalkadoon, in addition, apply a method, without rubbing, wherein the whole body, head in-

¹ Dr. Malinowski seems to have found the same idea in the Trobriands. "When the first pains are felt, the woman is made to squat on the raised bedstead with a small fire burning under it. This is done 'to make her blood liquid,' 'to make the blood flow.'" *The sexual life of savages in North-western Melanesia*. pp. 194-95.

² Spencer and Gillen. *op. cit.* pp. 464-65.

cluded, is covered with red ochre." ¹ Blood also aids the natives of this part of Queensland to fasten to their bodies the feathers and down with which they decorate themselves for their ceremonies, and in many circumstances they make use of red ochre. It is by no means rash to think that their conceptions of blood and red ochre correspond with those of the Arunta and Luritcha.

On the river Darling, at the time of the initiation ceremony, "during the first two days an earlier observer tells us, the youth drinks only blood from the veins in the arms of his friends, who willingly supply the required food. They run the blood into a wooden vessel or a dish-shaped piece of bark. The youth, kneeling on his bed, made of the small branches of a fuchsia bush, leans forward, while holding his hands behind him, and licks up the blood from the vessel placed in front of him, with his tongue, like a dog." ² "A very sick or weak person is fed upon blood which the male friends provide." ³ Blood is even offered to the dead. "At some burials several men stand by the open grave and cut each other's heads with a boomerang, and hold their heads over the grave so that the blood from the wounds falls on the corpse at the bottom of it; some earth is then thrown in, and if the deceased was highly esteemed, a second bleeding takes place." ⁴ It does indeed seem as if these New South Wales aborigines held the same beliefs about blood as those of Central Australia, and those of Queensland of whom Dr. Roth writes.

In the tribes bordering on those described by Spencer and Gillen and Strehlow, a simultaneous use of blood and red ochre has recently been noted. "The decorations are painted on with red and yellow ochre, with sometimes a cross band of red ochre and blood, which is obtained by opening a vein in the arm, and allowing the blood to drip into a pirra (bowl) with a little red ochre in it. The ochre and blood are mixed into a thin paste and painted on to the shield with a bunch of feathers." ⁵—And again: "When they had got enough blood to make a thick paste, they dabbed this on to the shoulders and

¹ W. E. Roth. *Ethnological studies among the N. W. Queensland aborigines*. p. 162.

² F. Bonney. *On some customs of the aborigines of the river Darling*. J. A. I. XXII. p. 128 (1883).

³ *Ibid.* p. 132.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 134.

⁵ G. Horne and G. Alston. *Savage life in Central Australia*. p. 81. Cf. p. 111. (1929).

neck of the two principal performers. They then stuck white down on to the blood.”¹

The same authors also collected from the Wonkonguru some legends from which it is evident that to these natives red ochre is congealed blood. The mythic dog is fighting with a lizard which fastens its teeth in its neck, and the dog's blood stained the rocks bordering on the stream, and “to this day, people come from far away, to get the ochre here.” In another version of the legend it is an emu that is attacked by a dog, and when it kills the emu, its blood gushes forth, the ochre is formed, and it is an ochre of superfine quality.²

“The blood from the penis is held to be very potent for charms. If a blackfellow wants to poison a kirra (boomerang) so that it will kill his enemy, he opens a vein in his penis and collects the blood in a pirrha. This is mixed up with red ochre and painted on the kirra in bands. It is then held that if the enemy is only touched with the kirra he will die. This blood is also held to be a sure protection if painted on a shield in the form of two transverse bands. The one holding a shield so painted cannot be hurt.”³

II

Many very prevalent customs among the primitives, varying more or less in detail, are designed to utilize the magic virtues inherent in blood by causing certain persons and things to participate in it. Here is an incident reported from British New Guinea. “With respect to the Ubuia people, the trouble with them started last January, when nine of them went up the Siribi river to make a new canoe. When the canoe was completed, they looked round for a victim to ‘blood’ or christen it, which is their custom. They came across an unfortunate native of the Siribi river, whom they killed. After painting their canoe with the blood of their victim, they placed the body in the canoe, and returned in triumph to their village.”⁴ Incidents of this kind are innumerable, and there is no doubt as to the aim pursued. Since the blood is the life, to besmear a new object with blood is to endow it with life and power.

“*Manjaki*,” says Hardeland, “means to besmear with blood. It is a superstitious rite very often celebrated by the Dayaks.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 115. Cf. p. 173.

² *Ibid.* pp. 129-30.

³ p. 161.

⁴ *Annual Report. Papua.* 1913, p. 80.

Many parents practise it upon their children until they attain the age of ten or twelve, its object being to keep them free from all illness, etc. . . . When a child has been punished, it is necessary to *manjaki* him, 'so that his soul may not be sad, and throw itself away.' When two men have quarrelled, both will go through this performance as part of their reconciliation. After every feast to their gods, and every sacrifice, those who have taken part must *manjaki* to purify themselves. If any one has had a favourable dream, they *manjaki* him, that is, they besmear him with blood so that the dream may be the more surely realized. They do it to all sick persons; to those newly married; and they also *manjaki* possessions; a new house, for instance, on first entering it, or houses where a death has taken place. When they begin to plant rice, they *manjaki* the field; they sprinkle it with a little blood, saying: 'I besprinkle thee with blood, O earth, that thou mayest be fertile!' They also *manjaki* sacred vessels, gold, etc., that they may not be lost, and that a blessing may rest upon them. This sprinkling may only be done with blood from an ox, a pig, or a hen; they use yolks of eggs too."¹

Mallinckrodt describes the same custom, and almost in the same terms, as noted in the Dayaks of Koelakapoeas.² Shadee observed it among those of Landak and Tajan, and he adds: "We hope later to be in a position to demonstrate that the besmearing the body with blood has as its aim the increasing of the vital principle, and the strengthening of the too feeble soul."³ Quite recently, Mjöberg was present at a ceremony of this kind in Borneo, among the Kalabitans. "Long knives were unsheathed, plunged into the flowing blood, and all those present, including the women, had their arms painted with blood. . . . The blood of the animal sacrificed (a pig), holds off the evil spirits which are perpetually prowling about the neighbourhood."⁴

In cases of this kind, whether observers are expressing themselves in animistic terms or not, the sprinkling with blood, the *manjaki* aims at purifying—that is, as we have already shown in the preceding chapter, *fortifying*. It is a protection against evil influence, which it neutralizes or nullifies. When Dayak

¹ A. Hardeland. *Dajacksch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, p. 491.

² J. Mallinckrodt. *op. cit.* T. L. V. LXXX, pp. 541-42 (1924).

³ M. C. Shadee. *op. cit.* T. L. V. LV, p. 341 (1903).

⁴ E. Mjöberg. *op. cit.* p. 80. (1929).

parents, month by month, sprinkle their children with blood they are undertaking a "purification" which is usually a preventive designed to make them stronger. It is a sort of magic hygienic measure, and we recall the parents among our own people who used to make their children take a spoonful of cod liver oil every morning; or think of our inoculations against diphtheria and other infectious diseases. Both with them and with us, such measures are prophylactic, and they are founded upon the conception of illness that prevails.

To primitives, as we have already noted, illness and disease are usually regarded as bewitchment, and in attributing to blood healing virtues, they are acknowledging its power to break an evil spell. This is indeed the idea in the Australian aborigines' minds when they give a sick man blood to drink, or besmear their patient's body with blood and red ochre. They are both purifying and strengthening him, and this amounts to dis-enchanting him. Father Gumilla noted a similar belief among the Guama Indians. "As soon as they perceive that one of their children is ill, whether it be the babe at the breast or an older child, they make use of the only remedy which they in their ignorance believe efficacious. They take a very sharp piece of bone, and with great suffering to themselves, they thrust it through the tongue. The blood gushes forth in big bubbles, and they discharge it upon their cherished infants, spreading it with their hands all over the tiny bodies from head to foot. And this butchering process goes on every morning until the child either recovers or dies."¹

III

In these proceedings, so shocking to the worthy Father Gumilla, the real action, despite all appearances, takes place upon the mystic plane. The blood, while it is a liquid, or a collection of reddish clots, is at the same time a vital principle, an unseen force. It is fighting another force, alike unseen, a malignant principle, an evil influence, which is the disease. It has the magic virtue of a charm, a medicine, that can triumph over the workings of witchcraft.

But when it leaves the body without the owner's desire, and a man bleeds without having himself designed the bleeding, as we have seen the Australian natives and the Guama Indians

¹ P. Gumilla. *op. cit.* I, p. 185.

and others do, it is a very different matter. The primitive is then much moved and troubled; he feels himself in danger, for it is his life that is slipping away. Whatever may be the amount of blood lost, whether it is a steady flow or merely a few drops, matters little; the loss is the sign that a very evil influence is being exerted upon him. He is in imminent danger, and under a fatal spell; if he does not resort to energetic measures he is a lost man, he will die.

In all this there is something that puzzles us. A man cuts himself in the arm or in the tongue, and in this way provides a considerable amount of blood wherewith to besmear the body of a sick person or an aged man, and he sees his blood flow with perfect indifference. But the same native, by reason of a scratch, loses a few drops of blood, and at once he is uneasy, dejected, and in despair. The sight of the blood strikes his imagination; he believes himself to be dying. How are we to account for this change in his attitude? To him, the greater or lesser amount of blood lost is not the thing that matters. Such a consideration, which to us would be a highly important question, affects him very little, for he has no conception of the physiological functions of the blood. But he has a very vivid and, at times, very agonizing conception of its magic power. When he willingly shares with one of his relatives this force within him, he does not think that he is enfeebling himself in the slightest degree. He certainly will not bleed himself white; he will not open an artery, but will draw from some superficial vein the blood he needs. Still, he pays no attention to the amount of the vital fluid that is flowing from him. Spencer and Gillen explicitly affirm that the Arunta does not seem to be any the worse for an excessive blood-letting, nor to be at all concerned about it. But when blood is being lost from the primitive's body without his having willed it thus, it is his very life that is ebbing away. He would never think of comparing this with the foregoing case. The comparison we make between the two, which to us seems so simple, does not present itself to his mind, while on the other hand he ascribes to a scratch which bleeds slightly a fatal significance which we never suspect.¹

¹ In one of the Ao Nagas' popular tales, a hero, a magician who is invincible, triumphs over all the tests set him. Lastly the Rajah made him dance on axes. "Somehow in doing so, Champichanglangba got a little scratch, which bled much, and all the Assamese rushed up and smeared themselves with his blood. This caused their magic power to increase, and his magic power to decrease." J. P. Mills. *op. cit.* p. 327. A small scratch that bled was enough to endanger him.

As it so often happens, we find that similar ideas are prevalent among the Bantus. In Bryant's dictionary we read: "*i-ngazi*, A blood, i.e. blood regarded as a separate quantity, or a single collection, as blood discharged from the body, or coagulated or clotted in the body (the natives having no clear conception of the circulation of the blood); plural, *izi-ngazi*, dropsy of the legs and arms, supposed to be from congealed blood, and caused by an *untakati* (sorcerer)." ¹ "*Uku-xela* means to kill, to slaughter; descriptive of the peculiar manner of killing cattle, viz: to cut a slit immediately behind the joint-bone of the breast, and putting the hand into the animal to tear off the large blood-vessel which is attached to the spine. This is done for the purpose of preventing the blood from being spilt on the ground for the following reasons: (1) to save the blood for eating, of which savages are very fond; (2) for many superstitious causes, which the present generation cannot explain, except so far as to manifest a degree of fear for the blood of an animal spilt on the ground. 'That the life is in the blood' is evidently the cause of their fear." ²

The slightest shedding of human blood is a serious thing. Among the Xosa kafirs anybody who, intentionally or otherwise, causes another to lose blood, incurs a weighty responsibility. "Any attack upon the person must be paid for by a fine of from one to five heads of cattle. . . . But if blood has flowed as a consequence, the chief has to arrange the matter; the price of blood is paid to him, and the wounded man receives nothing.

"In party brawls, or those which arise at the beer-drinkings, if the blood flows, *each* of those taking part must pay a head of cattle to the chief." ³ Colonel Maclean also mentions these somewhat singular regulations and explains the reasons for them. "A man's *goods* are his own property, but his *person* is the property of his chief. Thus, if his possessions are invaded, he claims redress for himself; but if his person be assaulted and bodily injury be the result, it becomes *his owner's* concern. In the latter case, however heavily the offender may be fined, the actual sufferer derives no benefit. 'No man can eat his own blood' is the maxim that regulates this procedure; and as the fines levied for personal injuries are considered the 'price of blood,' whoever should receive any part of such fine in a case where he had himself been the sufferer, would be regarded as violating this maxim." ⁴ If, for instance, you have stolen or

¹ A. T. Bryant. *op. cit.* p. 173.

² J. L. Döhne. *op. cit.* p. 375.

³ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* pp. 180-81.

⁴ Col. Maclean. *op. cit.* p. 35.

maimed some man's cattle, he will receive an indemnity; but if, in fighting with him, you caused an abrasion of his skin, and blood appeared, he can claim nothing. It is the chief who will fine you heavily, and he will retain the fine. For you have committed a crime; you have endangered something that is his property—the person of one of his men. From the mere fact that the blood has been perceptible, it is no longer a private matter, to be settled by the interested parties. The chief, who has run the risk of losing one of his subjects, alone intervenes. He demands the “price of blood” as he would after a murder.

Kropf says further that “to a Kafir every drop of blood that comes from the nose or from any wound is always horrible, and if he should let one fall on the ground, he always covers it with soil, for fear of treading on it and contracting some defilement.”¹

Apart from the danger from any involuntary loss of blood to the human being who suffers it, it is therefore disastrous, too, to any one who touches it, for the mere contact with it attracts a fatal influence. Hobley says the same thing. “The neophyte to be circumcised is placed upon a bed of leaves for the operation, as it is very bad for the blood to fall on the earth. If anyone touches the blood, it is considered unlucky, and he must cohabit with his wife, and the mother of the child with her husband, and then no harm will ensue.”²

In a study he made of the Didinga of the Anglo-Egyptian Soudan, Driberg explained the nature and the gravity of these fears. “Human blood shed in anger invariably attracts the malicious and dangerous spirits, and the presence of blood is accordingly a very great danger, laying individuals open to influences which may immediately, or at a later date, cause their death. Consequently any carelessness where human blood is concerned is a crime which, if death results, even years later, must be expiated in the same way as homicide. It is necessary to recollect that, though the actual cause of death may be small-pox or pneumonia, or some other natural disease, it is assumed that the individual would not have contracted this disease, had he not been exposed to the malevolence of a spirit who had willed it on him.”

Driberg illustrates this by some instructive instances. “If, with the blood of violence upon him, a man wishes to enter a

¹ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 191.

² C. W. Hobley. *op. cit.* p. 82.

village, either his own or another's, he must first sacrifice a goat at the entrance of the village, and scatter its intestinal dung over the village. Merely to wash the blood from himself would not be sufficient. If he carelessly enters the village, without sacrificing, he must sacrifice at once to try to avert all possible misfortune, but if a death occurs there in the next few years, he is nevertheless responsible and must pay the compensation for homicide." The blood that is on him has made him unclean, and by entering the village without having been purified, he contaminates it. His uncleanness is communicated to its inhabitants, who accordingly are in imminent danger of misfortune, and should a death occur, it will be his fault.

"If he goes to the men's club outside the village enclosure with unpurified blood, and eats with them, he is severely flogged, and must sacrifice, but even so, if any of those present dies in the next few years, he is liable for the full compensation.

"If a man enters cultivation with unpurified blood on him, or if he sheds blood in or near cultivation, he must sacrifice a sheep or goat in the cultivation, and scatter the intestinal dung over the crops, which would otherwise die.

"Should a man impure from blood milk a cow, it would either dry up or die, unless he sacrificed a goat. Even so, if it dies he has to replace the animal.

"It is probably for the same reason, viz : blood, that a woman is secluded after parturition—for three days for a male child, and four for a female. Anyone breaking this prohibition and entering the woman's courtyard must at once sacrifice a goat, and if there is a death subsequently, he is responsible for the payment of full compensation as for homicide."¹ Thus it is quite enough for him to enter the courtyard of the woman in childbed, even without going near her, or seeing her, for the blood that is flowing from her to make him unclean. When he has become unclean he will contaminate others, and he is responsible for any disasters that may occur. We shall discover later the extraordinarily injurious effect of certain female discharges.

The natives of the Lower Congo are just as afraid of contact with human blood shed through violent means as these Didinga, as Bentley has noticed. "The people are so wicked that only the

¹ J. H. Driberg. *Didinga customary law. Sudan Notes and Records*, VIII. pp. 166-67.

mildest games are possible in the native towns. Every one is on the look-out for an excuse to extort money from someone else. Hockey is the favourite game on our mission stations; but in the towns, if the boys played, and one of them got a scratch in the game, a great lawsuit would be made of it, and heavy fines demanded by the injured boy's friends. If a drop of blood is drawn, however accidentally, it is treasured on a leaf for evidence. A broken bone would matter little, but one drop of blood makes them lose their heads most unaccountably."¹ Father Van Wing writes also: "Blows which draw blood are fined much more heavily than simple blows, for it is in the blood that the soul, the immortal life-principle and the innermost personality dwells, and this is deeply injured by any flow of blood."² Finally, we have Dr. Schweitzer's testimony. "As a rule, a native will never touch anything stained with blood or pus, because it would make him unclean, speaking in a religious sense."³

It would be an easy task to bring forward other testimony of a similar kind, taken from other districts, far away from those mentioned. I shall quote three only. Among the Lenguas, says Grubb, "I have seen an Indian very much upset by a trivial wound, simply because there was much bleeding from it, and the whole look of it was alarming."⁴ In the Marquesas, "during the tattooing . . . every drop of blood was quickly wiped up with a piece of tapa, so that none might fall on the ground."⁵ In *Primitive Mentality* (p. 382) a similar incident, noted in the Caroline Islands, is related. "The wound was a trifling matter; nevertheless, the whole party betrayed extreme terror. The injured man fell into a state of stupor, and sat there motionless, with his eyes closed, just like a man expecting an immediate death." We are now better able to comprehend his fear and that of his friends. The facts that we have already studied throw light on this one. The smallest loss of blood is a great danger, both to him who thus sees his mystic vital essence ebbing away, and to those who, by contact with this blood, acquire a dread defilement and run the risk of spreading it.

¹ W. H. Bentley. *op. cit.* I, p. 163.

² R. P. Van Wing. S. J. *Études Bakongo*. pp. 168-69. (1921).

³ A. Schweitzer. *op. cit.* p. 89 (1929).

⁴ W. B. Grubb. *op. cit.* p. 201.

⁵ Dr. L. Rollin. *Les Iles Marqueses*. p. 122 (1930).

IV

If a mere drop of blood shed may have such results, how great is the fear inspired by the bleeding which brings death in its train! The defilement that accrues to a murderer must be enormous, and the peril to which he subjects his circle no less formidable. The precautions to be observed by a man who has killed another, the purifications to which he is subjected before he can resume his ordinary relations with others, imply an ensemble of thoughts and feelings that it is not easy to analyse. It would serve little purpose to interrogate the primitive about it. He respects the taboos, observes the ceremonies and celebrates the rites because tradition demands it. If the white man should ask him for any explanation beyond this, he will give the one that he thinks will be most pleasing to his interlocutor. As for observers, as a rule they lay stress upon the fear that the homicide feels, lest the dead man should avenge himself on him, and they pursue their enquires no further. When we look into the matter more closely, however, other ideas and other emotions help to determine the demeanour of the primitive and his circle in these circumstances.

In the first place, it is quite true that the homicide and his friends are anxious to get rid of the spirit of the dead (i.e. the dead man himself) since he is more to be dreaded now than when he was alive. Thus, among the Aruntas, when a man has been killed in a punitive expedition, "the body and anything in contact with it is strictly tabu to the killer. . . . On their return, they halted some distance away from the main camp, and decorated their bodies, painting them all over with powdered charcoal. . . . As soon as they came in sight of the main camp they began to perform an excited war-dance, approaching in the form of a square, and holding and moving their shields as if to ward off something which was being thrown at them. This action is intended to beat off the *Ulthana* or spirit of the dead man.

"Once arrived at the camp, they execute another dance, which is supposed to be effective as a means of frightening the *Ulthana*. . . . For several days they paint their bodies, etc. Their troubles are not yet over. The *Ulthana* is supposed to follow the party in the form of a little bird, and is constantly on the

look-out to injure them. They must be always on their guard so that they may not be taken unawares.”¹

In British New Guinea, among the Massim of the South, “no one would eat a man of his own killing, or a prisoner he had taken, though it appeared that he might eat a man of his own clan or even of his father’s clan, killed or captured by another individual. The killer or captor of the man who was to be eaten would go straight to his own house and stay there for about a month, living on roast taro and hot coconut milk; his wife continues in the house, but sleeps apart. He stays in the house because he is afraid of the ‘blood’ of the dead man, and it is for this reason that he does not join in eating him; if he did, his belly would become ‘full of blood,’ and he would die. But there is something more subtle than the actual blood, though connected with it, of which he goes in terror. Ipanesa explained this as the smell or vapour of the blood, but both of these terms I believe to be too precise. It seemed rather as if certain imperceptible qualities emanating from the blood lingered about the scene of the cannibal feast and adhered to a certain extent to those who had taken part in it long after all physical traces had been removed, and that these influences were specially injurious to the provider of the feast. It was to avoid these that the house seclusion lasted a whole month, and the provider of the feast—probably for the same reason—would not for some considerable time take lime from the lime-gourd of anyone who had taken part in the feast. The older men agreed that whatever these qualities were, they were not expressed by the word *arugo*, used for the ghost, shade or spirit of a dead man.”²

If the killer is thus exposed to dangers arising out of the (mystic) qualities imperceptible to the senses, the “influences,” as Seligman calls them, of the blood he has shed, we may just as well say that this blood has made him “unclean,” and then

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *The native tribes of Central Australia*. pp. 492-93.

² G. S. Seligman. *The Melanesians of British New Guinea*. pp. 557-59. Among the ba-Ila E. W. Smith noted the same belief in the “qualities” of the blood shed, imperceptible to the senses, and dangerous to the slayer. “There is something about blood, whether it be the smell or the sight, or the associations of it that gives rise to abhorrence and fear. . . . It gives the mysterious powers a hold on you. Warriors have always to be doctored to take away the consequences of their having slain, however legitimately, in battle (and it is the same for homicide). This is apart from haunting by the ghost; it is as if the effect of your deed fastened itself upon you.” Smith and Dale. *The ila-speaking peoples of N. Rhodesia*, I. p. 415.

the precautions taken are explained. They prove a defence for himself against the effects of the evil influence, and they protect others from contamination through his uncleanness. This is one of the reasons, and perhaps the main one, of his seclusion for a whole month, and possibly this, too, is why he does not take lime from the lime-gourd of another, for it would be contaminated.—In Kiwai, Landtman had noted something very much like this observation of Seligman's. "The natives say that a warrior after a fight is never afraid of the ghost of an enemy killed by him. Certain rites, however, seem to indicate a desire to free oneself from the pernicious influences which may infest a man who has been stained with blood in a fight."¹ There is nothing, apparently, to be feared from the dead; but the blood shed has made the man unclean. The defilement resting on him is dangerous to himself and his family, and the rites are designed to purify him.

Elsewhere, however, in New Guinea, the Bakaua warriors, returning home, endeavour like the Arunta, to defend themselves against the "ghosts" of those they have killed. They perform a dance, set fire to a big block of wood, and throw burning pieces of wood towards the field of battle "to prevent the souls of the dead" from doing them any injury. "They believe indeed that these come during the night close to the victor, and affect his sight so that he can no longer see clearly, and sooner or later will become the victim of those he has this day conquered."² Among their neighbours the Kai, the natives are specially concerned about the uncleanness attaching to the warriors who have killed others. "On their return to the village they must avoid all contact with their relatives, and for some days, the latter studiously avoid them, for they are afraid of them and keep them at a distance. Should any one in the village be seized at this time with abdominal pains, it is thought that he must have sat down in some place that one of these warriors had occupied. If another complains of toothache, it is because he has eaten a fruit that one of them had touched. They have to be very careful to set aside the remains of their food out of the reach of the pigs, for if they were to eat it they would die; therefore they burn these remains, or else bury them."³

At the mouth of the Wanigela river, "a man who has taken

¹ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* pp. 160-61.

² R. Neuhauss. *op. cit.* III. p. 144.

³ *Ibid.* III. p. 132.

life is considered to be impure until he has undergone certain ceremonies: as soon as possible after the deed he cleanses himself and his weapon. This satisfactorily accomplished, he repairs to his village and seats himself on the logs of sacrificial staging. No one approaches him or takes any notice whatever of him. A house is prepared for him, which is put in charge of three small boys as servants. [We may remember that children are 'impure'; thus these boys have nothing to fear from the uncleanness of the homicide.] He may eat only toasted bananas, and only the centre portion of them—the ends being thrown away. On the third day of his seclusion a small feast is prepared by his friends. . . . The next day, the man dons all his best ornaments and badges for taking life, and sallies forth fully armed and parades the village. . . . Some days later, his purification is finished. He can then enter his wife's house."¹

Lastly, still in New Guinea, we find that the people of Orakaiva have similar beliefs and customs. The man who had taken life would abstain from eating the flesh of his victim, and this taboo included his father, mother, and near relatives. "Should they be rash enough to take part in the feast, their genitalia would swell, their joints grow crooked, and their heads turn bald (though in the case of an old man, it was said that these results need not be feared).

"The slayer immediately removed his *bo* or perineal band, and wore a leaf, or nothing, until he reached home and could effect a change of clothing; if he had dispatched the victim with a club, he would straightway change this for another man's: on no account would he *shoulder* the club that struck the fatal blow, for he would run the risk of a swollen or distorted shoulder-joint.

"He must not drink pure water out of the river, but only that which has been stirred up and made muddy by the feet of a non-slayer. He must not eat taro cooked in the pot, but only that which has been roasted in the open fire. He must abstain from sexual intercourse. These restrictions lasted for a few days, and then the slayer ate the same purificatory stew (*suna*), which is given to initiates at the end of their seclusion. . . .

"It seems likely that all these observances and tabus are in a sense not only purificatory but defensive. . . . I have been informed directly that they are meant to drive away the *asisi* or spirit of the slain man. In support of this view, I may quote

¹ R. E. Guise. *op. cit.* J. A. I. XXVIII. pp. 213-14 (1899).

what W. N. Beaver has written (Annual Report, Papua 1918-19, p. 97): 'I am not disposed to the sole view that the killer is unclean. It seems to me, rather, that rites are necessary to throw off the power of the ghost or ghosts of the slain.'"¹

In South Africa, "when a Xosa kafir has killed a man, he is regarded as unclean. He must roast his meat over a fire made up of specially chosen woods which give the meat a bitter taste, and after he has eaten it he must blacken his face with the charcoal. Some time afterwards he is allowed to wash himself, rinse out his mouth with fresh milk, and paint himself brown again. From this time he is clean once more."² With these same kafirs, writes Kropf, "after a fight, a sacrifice is offered, and the warriors defiled by the blood shed must take emetics in order that they may be purified."³ Here are the details of a ceremony of this kind as the Zulus perform it. "Every Zulu man who might, whether in war or otherwise, have killed another man, was, before being able to return and mix with his family, required to go through a certain elaborate ceremony of purification or fortification called *uku-gunga*. (For the equivalence of these terms, the reader should see Ch. VIII, pp. 240-242.) This, in the case of an army, was regularly arranged for by the king. After having killed his adversary, the victor . . . would immediately doff his garment and put on that of the man he had killed. He would then go to the river, and wash the whole body, afterwards doctoring himself with certain prescribed herbs. . . . He could now direct his course home, but must keep on the lookout for any strange female he may come across, as, before he can take up his residence in the kraal, he must first have had sexual intercourse with some female or other of a tribe not his own, otherwise, even at home he must continue to live out on the veld. Upon entering his kraal, he must suck from the tip of the fingers a large variety of medicines or fighting-charms—this before partaking of any kind of food. He then sucks in the same way milk mixed with other medicines or cleansing charms. . . . This done, he is clean, and may again freely enter society."⁴ Should he neglect these ceremonies, he is "liable to become insane," as a consequence.⁵

Junod lays stress, sometimes upon the fear inspired by the

¹ F. E. Williams, *Orokaiva society*, pp. 173-75 (1930).

² H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.* I, p. 418.

³ A. Kropf, *Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern*, p. 191.

⁴ Bryant, *op. cit.* p. 549.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 550.

dead man who is seeking his revenge, and sometimes on the uncleanness which a man has contracted by killing with bloodshed, and on the necessity for purification. The Thonga "give the name *nuru* to the spirit of the slain which tries to take its revenge on the slayer. It haunts him, or may drive him into insanity: his eyes swell, protrude, and become inflamed. He will lose his head, be attacked by giddiness, and the thirst for blood may lead him to fall upon members of his own family and to stab them with his assegai. To prevent such misfortunes, a special medication is required. . . . The *nuru* is to be feared, not only in slain enemies, but in connection with any human corpse, and even with dead animals."¹

Junod describes this treatment, and justly remarks that it does not differ fundamentally from those to be followed in other cases of uncleanness. "The slayers are 'hot' (an expression which also applies to the tabooed woman during her menses); they are 'black,' an epithet which also designates the grave-diggers, the bereaved mother, etc. Hence seclusion much more complete, a true period of margin, with many alimentary and sexual taboos. These last are so severe that, after the Moondi battle, one of the slayers took great offence at a man who dared to touch his food, as the man was living in his home, and had relations with his wife. (The slayer was afraid that this contact might cause his own death, or bring misfortune to his family.) Possibly the incisions on the brow are an old kind of tattooing in connection with that marginal period, similar to the inguinal incisions of the widows. . . . Is it not striking to notice the correspondence between these rites in their regular sequence, and those of the circumcision school, of mourning, of moving a village?"² We can certainly agree with this. The correspondence between them is, as Junod says, so striking that some observers have wondered whether the slayer may not be mourning for the man whom he has killed, for the taboos and the purificatory rites to which he is subjected differ very slightly from those demanded in the case of a widow or widower.

With the Safwa "when one man has killed another, he is very much afraid of his ghost. If he should have on him a little of the medicine made from the ruxari tree, he puts it in his mouth and chews it; that makes the dead man's ghost disappear; it makes it stiffen so that it can henceforth do nothing to the man who has slain it. If he does not do this, the dead man seizes

¹ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I, p. 453.

² *Ibid.* I. p. 458.

him and makes him insane. . . . The other inhabitants of his village are also in great dread of the dead man. . . . If the slayer is married, he does not sleep in his wife's hut, but in the village tavern (the men's house). . . . Five days afterwards he is purified by the witch-doctor."¹ The same rites must be observed for the hunter who has killed an elephant.² A little further on, a native is relating the fact that when he returned home at the end of a campaign, he was ill for two months (a mental aberration caused by the spirit of the man he had killed). "The doctors took me to the waterfall, dug up some medicinal roots for me, and gave me some medicine to drink. Then I was all right again."³

Conquerors of the Lango tribe are received triumphantly. "Early next morning the drum is beaten, and each slayer of a man . . . brings a goat or a sheep, for the killing of an enemy entails grave spiritual danger from his ghost (*tipo*, shadow, the immaterial part of a man). This *tipo* has a deadly influence, afflicting the slayer with attacks of giddiness and frenzy, during which he may do himself or the bystanders mortal mischief. It makes the head go round, and dances in his head, until he is not responsible for his actions. . . ." They protect themselves from this ghost by a series of rites, ceremonies and sacrifices and (a fact which supports Junod's theory) they give each slayer "rows of cicatrices on his shoulder and upper arm."⁴

With the Bangala of the Upper Congo, "a homicide is not afraid of the *mongoli* of a man he has killed belonging to any of the neighbouring towns, as disembodied spirits travel in a very limited area only, but if he kills a man belonging to his own town he will be filled with fear lest the *mongoli* should work him harm. There are no special rites to free him from those fears, but he will mourn for this slain man as though he were a member of his own family."⁵

In many other parts, in North and South America, for instance, the shedding of human blood, homicide, also entails uncleanness and, as a consequence, very serious dangers to the slayer and his circle, until he has been duly purified. Among the Ecuador Jibaros, "if the slayer infringes these rules (i.e., does

¹ E. Kootz-Kretschmer, *op. cit.* I. pp. 207-08.

² *Ibid.* I, p. 143.

³ *Ibid.* II. p. 249.

⁴ J. H. Driberg. *The Lango*, pp. 110-11. Cf. p. 229.

⁵ Rev. J. H. Weeks. *Anthropological notes on the Bangala of the Upper Congo river*. J. A. I. XL. p. 373 (1910).

not submit to the taboos and the purificatory rites) the consequences for him will be fatal. He will soon die; he will not be able to kill any more enemies, or to celebrate other *tsantsa* feasts. Even his nearest relatives will die through sickness or accidents, one after another (every death that takes place within the family of the slayer during the time following the killing of the enemy is set down to the secret operation of the revengeful spirit). His domestic animals, instead of increasing and flourishing, will pine away and die. The manioc, plantain, and other domestic plants, will dry away and produce no fruits. In all his undertakings he will be unlucky." ¹ In short, for lack of purification, the homicide remains under an evil influence which extends to his possessions, and he himself brings misfortune to all who surround him, both man and beast.

Among the Papago Indians "the warriors who killed Apaches were required to undergo an ordeal of purification called lustration, during which they endured even greater hardships than on the warpath, thus expiating the crime of murder. The time of this ordeal was sixteen days, divided into four periods of four days each. . . . The warriors were taken to some secluded place, and deprived of every comfort. They were allowed no warmth, and no more bedding than when they were on the warpath. They could not even see a fire, and a man who attended them was required to shield his cigarette so that they would not see its light. They wore their hair loose as though in mourning; were not allowed to scratch their bodies with their hands, and were subject to many other rules." ² To put it briefly, they were unclean, like persons who had been in contact with a dead man, like a widower or widow. "On the evening of the sixteenth day, the warriors bathed, braided their hair, painted their bodies, and went to the victory dance." ³ The rest had no further reason to dread their presence, for their uncleanness was at an end.

Observers who speak of homicide very rarely specify whether the killing is accompanied by the shedding of blood or not. They imply that when it is a case of fighting, the blood of the slain enemies has flowed. Nevertheless there is no doubt that most primitives make a distinction between homicide and a fatal loss of blood. In a certain number of cases in which the group has

¹ R. Karsten. *Blood revenge, war, and victory feasts among the Jibaro Indians of Eastern Ecuador*. E. B. Bulletin 79, p. 41. (1923).

² Fr. Densmore. *Papago music*. E. B. Bulletin 90, pp. 187-88. (1929).

³ *Ibid.* p. 193.

decided to put one of their number to death—as for witchcraft or incest, for instance—they take care that the blood shall not appear. The sorcerer is burnt; the incestuous person strangled, drowned, or clubbed to death. The natives are afraid that their blood, if shed, may defile the ground and thus draw misfortune upon the whole group. While as for the dead man himself, they fear his vengeance; he will harry the murderer, he will make him lose his head, interfere with his sense of sight, and send him out of his mind. Therefore they very often try to get themselves forgiven, and persuade the dead man to be reconciled with his slayer, and even become his defender. This is sometimes the purpose for which the skulls are preserved. In his study of blood revenge among the Jibaros, Karsten has clearly shown that, by virtue of these ceremonies, the skull of the enemy slain, that is, the enemy himself, becomes a kind of protecting spirit.

V

In the eyes of most primitives there is little real difference between hunting and warfare. The man who does not belong to the tribe is merely game like other large animals that one may, or may not, be accustomed to eat. To get the mastery over him they have recourse to the same magic processes, and when they have killed him, they must take the same precautions with respect to purification. "To the Herero," says Brincker, "as to other races, a man and a lion are equal, as far as blood is concerned."¹ Whichever of them has been killed, the same rites must be carried out. The Nagas express the same sentiment about a man and a tiger.

In like case, "animalicide," if we may venture to use the word, must be treated exactly like homicide. He who kills a lion, elephant, tiger, crocodile, etc., contracts the same uncleanness as he who takes a man's life. He runs the same risks and, in order that he may not contaminate others through his defilement, he must submit to the same prohibitions, and undergo the same purificatory rites. He must "mourn" for the animal that he has slain. There is one difference, however. The hunter, anxious about his future expeditions, tries to pacify the animal species of which he has slain one. He endeavours to treat his

¹ P. H. Brincker. *Charakter und Sitten der Bantu S. W. Afrikas. Mitteilungen des Seminars für orientalische Sprachen*. III. 3. p. 83 (1900).

victims in such a way that their congeners may be desirous of sharing their fate, and come and offer themselves for attack, so that they may enjoy the benefits he procures for them. The warrior, as a rule, seeks only to influence the person of his dead enemy.

In Kiwai, "the man who caught the dugong is not permitted to cut it up. The work falls to the lot of his wife's relatives, either the father-in-law or the brother-in-law."¹ "A man who has just killed a large boar seems to be haunted by some fear of the animal's spirit. On emerging from the thicket, when he arrives at the nearest pathway, he sets up a stick in the ground, and addresses the spirit as follows: 'You go road belong Sido' (a mythical hero, the first man who died and opened the way to Adiri, the land of the dead). This indicates the way that the spirit of the pig should take, so as not to follow the man to the village, causing him trouble there."² Landtman adds: "When a young man has killed his first dugong, appropriate charms assure him of luck in his future expeditions . . . the object of others is partly to bring the boy safely back after his adventures, keeping away all evil influence and sickness, and partly to put him in the right way of future distinction."³ Thus they pacify the animal that has been killed, they endeavour to conciliate its congeners, and they purify the lucky hunter, just as if it were a case of homicide.

On the Wanigela estuary "no man may carry, or partake of, any kangaroo that he has killed. He generally exchanges it with another man similarly situated."⁴ As we have already seen, no Papuan will eat a man whom he has himself killed, or taken prisoner.

With the Angami Nagas, "the genna performed for success in hunting is most noticeably similar to that performed for the killing of an enemy. The hunter must eat outside the village, etc."⁵ The purificatory rites for animalicide are the same as those for homicide. "A Sema hunter must not eat the animal he has killed. . . . The hunter who takes the head of the game killed must remain chaste that night, in addition to which he may eat no rice on the following day. Whoever kills a tiger

¹ E. B. Riley. *op cit* p 107.

² G Landtman, *op. cit.* p. 112.

³ *Ibid.* p. 140.

⁴ R. E. Guise. *op. cit.* J. A. I. XXVIII. p. 217 (1899).

⁵ J. H. Hutton. *The Angami Nagas.* pp. 240-41.

must remain chaste for six days. . . . He must sleep away from home, or at least away from his women-folk, on a bed of split bamboo to prevent sound sleep, during which the soul of the slain beast might attack or devour him.”¹ Thus he is exposed to the same dangers, and he must submit to the same purifications as if he had killed a man.

The Bantus of South Africa thought the same. “Whoever gave the lion its first wound (among the Xosa kafirs) is honoured as a hero, although this exploit makes him unclean for a certain time. Indeed, as soon as the hunting party gets near their home, the hero is hidden by his companions who, arranging themselves in a circle, cover him with their shields and conceal him from the gaze of the crowd. One of them, making extraordinary leaps and gestures, goes in front, extolling the hunter’s courage. Meanwhile the others remain at a little distance; they intone a kind of chant, which they accompany by striking their shields with their kirris. Others again are busy preparing a wretched little hut at some distance from the dwellings, and here the lion-killer must remain completely secluded for four days. He paints his body white, and young boys only (themselves unclean, and therefore running no risk of danger) may come near him. When the four days have elapsed he paints his body brown, as it was before; the chief’s bodyguard comes to fetch him and he is solemnly brought back to the kraal.”² His killing of the animal has therefore made him unclean, and as long as he remains so, the rest must avoid all contact with him. He is treated like a homicide, and a mourner, and as a woman who is menstruating or in childbed would be. The Bergdama at the same time regard him as being in danger. “They fear that the lion may avenge his death upon his ‘murderer.’ This is why the village ‘steward’ makes four incisions on the upper part of his arm (cf. *supra*, p. 284), until the blood flows, and into the wound he pours some drops of the lion’s blood, taken from the heart. In this way, the dread of misfortune is averted, and the cicatrices are at the same time marks of honour to the hunter.”³

The Safwa explicitly liken animicide to homicide, and expect the same results from it. “Here with us the people believe that the soul, the vital breath of an animal, of big game, can

¹ J. H. Hutton. *The Sema Nagas*. p. 77.

² H. Lichtenstein. *op. cit.* I. p. 419

³ H. Vedder. *op. cit.* I. p. 121.

enter a man, and they are much afraid of it in consequence. They say: 'The breath of life of these animals makes us men ill; we go mad.' " Then there follows a detailed account of the purificatory rites to be observed by the hunter who has killed an elephant.¹

Driberg gives a minute account of the precautions taken by the Lango when an animal has been killed in the hunt, and he specifies their meaning, which he regards as magico-propitiatory. "The word *lucho* gives the main clue to the result. This word has a variety of meanings according to the context, but its basic idea is that of inversion or alternation. Then in the case of an animal which has been killed, its guardian spirit is inverted by the above procedure, i.e., the direction of its influence is altered. Let us assume that a bushbuck has been slain, and that the necessary ceremonies have been performed: the winyo (guardian spirit) of the bushbuck has been released and its effect has been diverted. In future it will attend the slayer of the dead bushbuck, dazing and confusing the winyo of other bushbucks and attracting them to him by their recognition of the winyo as one of themselves, so that they fall an easy prey to the hunter's spear."²

We already know (cf. Ch. III, pp. 99-100) that on this matter the Eskimo hold similar beliefs and have similar customs to the preceding. Here are a few more proofs of it. "In general the Mackenzie people did not eat any of the flesh of a murdered man, but the murderer should lick his knife off at once." [By thus drinking his victim's blood, he rendered him unable to do him any harm.] "A man killer, whatever the circumstances, must do no work for five days, and must refrain from certain food for a year. . . . In general, the taboos connected with man killing were the same as with whale killing."³ Near the Bering Strait, "the dead bodies of various animals must be treated very carefully by the hunter who obtains them, so that their shades may not be offended, and bring bad luck or even death upon him or his people. . . . For example, when a white whale was killed by an Unalit hunter, all those who took part in the hunt, or who merely helped to take the whale from the net, could do

¹ E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *op. cit.* I, p. 143.

² J. H. Driberg. *The Lango*. p. 227.

³ W. Stefánsson. *The Stefánsson-Anderson Expedition. American Museum of Natural History. Anthropological Papers. XIV.* p. 378.

no work on the four days following, this being the time the shade stays with the body.”¹

Rasmussen noted many taboos, like those relating to mourning, which the Iglulik Eskimo must observe after killing an animal, and these among others. “When a whale, a bearded seal or a bear is killed, no man’s or woman’s work must be done for three days. It is also strictly forbidden to cut turf or gather fuel from the earth. . . . If a man comes home with an animal which he has killed out at the edge of the ice, he must not enter the house on his return until he has removed his outer clothing.”²

In conclusion, it is clear that both the hunter and the warrior have offended the unseen powers. The man or the animal slain continues life in the world of the dead, more to be dreaded in the new state, as an imperceptible, intangible spirit, than when alive and visible. And since the individual, whether human being or animal, is never actually distinct from the other members of the group or the species, other unseen powers are concerned with the victim’s fate. The man killer has to fear, in addition to the anger of the dead man’s relatives, that of the members of his group no longer living, and the hunter will have no luck in future if he does not appease the genius of the species of which he has slain a representative. Moreover, the blood that has been shed has made them both unclean. Evil influences, which we should term supernatural, are at work, and these threaten them and their group with misfortune. To escape disaster and neutralize these influences, they must resort to other powers, alike supernatural, capable of counterbalancing the first. And this is the reason for the sacrifices, taboos, rites and ceremonies, and we can scarcely be surprised to find them very similar to those of mourners.

¹ E. W. Nelson. *The Eskimo about Bering Strait*. E. B. XVIII. p. 438 (1899).

² Kn. Rasmussen. *op. cit.* pp. 183-84.

CHAPTER X

BLOOD AND ITS SINISTER QUALITIES

I

THE word "taboo," the meaning of which, being widely extended, has become somewhat vague, is used impartially to denote a number of prohibitions of different kinds. One of the commonest of them is designed to afford protection against certain evil influences, and to arrest their spreading, and thus prevent them from affecting persons and things as yet immune. This, for instance, is the reason, or at any rate one of the reasons why mourners, homicides, and dying people are isolated. They are unclean, and it is necessary to prevent their impurity from being communicated to others. They are also forbidden to make use of utensils that others would have to touch after them, to eat from the common pot, and so on. If these taboos are not observed, misfortunes will very certainly ensue, both for themselves and others. And this is not because the violated taboo demands the punishment of the guilty person, but because the very fact of this violation leaves the field open to the evil influence. The taboo acts as a kind of barrier, a sort of mystic sanitary cordon which arrests an infection that is of equally mystic nature. As long as the cordon fulfils its purpose and the barrier holds, the infection will not spread, but if the cordon be broken and the barrier gives way, nothing can oppose its passage. The uncleanness arising from death is extremely infectious, and people are therefore very often forbidden to enter a village where a death has just taken place. If the prohibition be not observed, the uncleanness will be extended, and there will be other deaths. The Nagas' method of "closing" the village is designed to arrest infection. Those who enter it, without paying attention to the decree, throw down the barrier, and the evil influence set free is immediately exerted upon them. They have become unclean, and are in imminent danger of disaster.

On the eve of an expedition, or of some important, dangerous, or difficult undertaking, it often happens that a taboo of this kind is placed upon sexual intercourse, since it might be a cause of failure. There are undoubtedly cases in which, far from being forbidden, such intercourse is, on the contrary, enjoined. In the agrarian rites, for instance, the main object of which is to secure and increase the fertility of the soil, the fruitfulness of the plants, and an abundance of crops, we know that sexual intercourse plays an important part. But as a rule primitives find no difficulty in believing that an influence, which in certain circumstances is beneficial, should in others prove harmful. Lindblom says explicitly: "In certain cases sexual connection brings good luck, is purificatory and is necessary to ritual, and on the other hand, in other cases it is inauspicious, and must therefore be carefully avoided." ¹

In Kiwai Island, sexual practices frequently intervene to render the work in the gardens and plantations productive. A great number of the Papuan rites prove that, to make his palm-trees fruitful and his fields fertile, the cultivator reckons on an influence proceeding from the female, and particularly from the relations he may have with his wife at specified times. In some mystic fashion the fertility of the soil and the growth of plants participate in the reproductive powers of the woman, of which certain secretions of her genital organs are the vehicle. Nevertheless, with these same Papuans, "a man must not have connection with his wife the night previous to working in his garden, as that would cause the pigs to come to the garden." ² Again, "at different stages in the growth of the banana garden, the children's assistance is required. The boys and girls selected for the various rites should be quite young, those who 'savy nothing'; if they had reached puberty, they might commit some sexual transgression at the gardens, which would spell disaster to the crops." ³

The fashioning of a harpoon for dugong fishing is an operation which is as delicate as it is important, for the existence of the Papuan fisherman depends upon it. The work is accompanied by a series of observances designed to ensure its success and bring luck to the weapon when in use. "During the whole time of its fabrication a man must refrain from sexual con-

¹ G. Lindblom. *op. cit.* p. 487.

² G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 68.

³ *Ibid.* p. 92.

nection with his wife, and she is not even allowed to come near the place in the bush." ¹

In New Britain, "natives were very particular in preserving chastity during or before a fight, and they believed that if a man slept with his wife he would be killed or wounded." ² In Samoa, however, it was not so. "So far as I know," says the same author, "the Samoans did not observe the custom of personal chastity before commencing or during war." ³ If this last fact be correct, it must be regarded as exceptional. G. Brown says again: "In the Shortlands group (Solomon Islands) when a new canoe is launched and is being taken round for inspection, no man can 'visit his wife,' until it is put in the canoe-house again. . . . A woman could not go into a new canoe, or no shark would ever be caught by it. If no shark be taken, a Duke of York native also believes that some one has committed adultery with his wife." ⁴ In this last case the evil influence which causes the failure seems to proceed from the woman, not only because she is unfaithful, but also because the sexual act in question brings misfortune to her husband and his companions.

In the Truk Islands in Micronesia, "any one who had sexual intercourse, whether marital or not (for the natives make no difference in this respect), is unclean, and such connections are forbidden (1) when taro is being planted, for otherwise the tubers would not increase in size; (2) at the time of the big fishing expeditions; (3) during the manufacture of nets for turtle-catching; (4) during the rehearsals and the performances of the 'spirit' dances; (5) during the most important religious ceremonies; (6) during the preparations for sea-voyages, for the captain and the crew; for if not observed, they would be the prey of Olak (an evil spirit) and of sharks; (7) to warriors during a campaign; (8) to women while they are weaving the most costly mats."

Father Bollig adds: "These natives do not distinguish between sexual relations that are allowable and the others" (a statement which is rather difficult to accept in such a general form. Possibly he means to say that in all cases they imply danger and defilement?), "and in spite of the numerous prohibitions here listed, they have no idea of chastity, and still less, of virginity." ⁵ These last words prove that the taboos in

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 120-22.

² G. Brown. *Melanesians and Polynesians*. p. 154.

³ *Ibid.* p. 174.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 241.

⁵ P. L. Bollig. O. M. Cap. *Die Bewohner der Truk-Inseln* pp. 34-38.

question have nothing in common with an appreciation of sexual purity in the moral sense of the word, as we should understand it. To these natives it is merely a question of averting the fatal influence which inopportune sexual relations might have upon their enterprises.

In nearly all the Pacific Islands, and in Asia, among the Nagas, for instance, the same belief holds good. Thus, "dyeing is exclusively performed by women who, when they are so occupied, must refrain from sexual intercourse."¹ It is the same when they are making pots.² "The task of building a weir is not one that can be entered on without due precautions. For three days beforehand the builder must not speak to strangers, and must refrain from sexual intercourse."³

In South Africa Junod, among others, has observed the same prohibitions, and he has endeavoured to account for them. "When indulged in before marriage, by boys and girls in the custom called *gangisa*, the sexual act has quite another bearing than when accomplished by married people. In the first case, it is deemed of no consequence, and has not the ritual value which it sometimes acquires in the state of marriage. The sexual act certainly places married people in a peculiar position; if it is not a state of actual defilement, it is at least attended with some danger to society. Patients, more particularly convalescents, must not tread on the same paths as married folk, or they must tie to their ankles a root of *sungi* as a protection against the emanation or perspiration which married people have left on the grass. For the same reason, a woman who has relations with her husband must not visit a sick person; she must wait two days before entering the hut of a confined woman."⁴ In this "emanation" we see something analogous to the *nuru* of those who have suffered violent deaths, which we considered in the preceding chapter, on page 280, and which also makes people unclean and brings disaster.

During the fairly long time in which the school of circumcision lasts, "sexual intercourse is strongly prohibited to all inmates, men as well as shepherds: breaking this law would kill the circumcised. Therefore the men must not go home, at least as seldom as possible, during these three months. . . . Strange to say, in the meantime obscene language is permitted and even recommended. . . . Some of the formulæ contain expressions

¹ J. P. Mills. *The Lhota Nagas*. p. 38.

² *Ibid.* p. 41.

³ *Ibid.* p. 73.

⁴ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* II, pp. 335-36.

which are taboo at other times; when the women bring the food to the novices, the shepherds who receive it from their hands are allowed to address them with as many unchaste words as they like. The mothers themselves have the right of singing obscene songs when they pound the mealies for the novices.”¹ It is noteworthy that the same license is permitted during burial feasts.²

When these same Thongas are taking part in a magic ceremony before beginning a campaign, “one of the queens, an old woman who has no longer any sexual relations, enters the arch, absolutely naked. She dips a leafy branch into the magical infusion, and marches all round, sprinkling all the warriors and muttering. . . . It is extremely important that the officiating woman should be old, and have had no sexual relations for a long time, or the assegais would lose their strength, the masculine weapons would become blind, and the feminine weapons alone would see.”³ Again, in reference to a special fish-trap, Junod says: “The construction of this trap is governed by strict laws: no sexual relation is allowed during the five or six weeks of the fishing.”⁴

Among the ba-Ila, there are very many sexual taboos. “Men going to fish, or to set traps, or to dig game-pits, must not visit their wives or other women the night before. Some men will not do it before going to hunt lest, as they say, they should be hurt on the way, or mauled by a wild beast. Others, on the contrary, regard intercourse as giving them good luck during the hunt. . . . Men engaged in smelting iron must abstain from all commerce with women.—Above all, men going to war must absolutely have nothing to do with women from the time that preparations are begun and the doctors have started to doctor the army. Breach of this would mean certain death in the fight, and likely enough bring disaster to the army.”⁵

Again, in the case of a special fishing “the men leave the villages and encamp on the river bank, and until the fishing is over, they are forbidden to have commerce with their wives or other women. If in the midst of the fishing a man should return home to take a bundle of fresh fish, and should break this rule,

¹ *Ibid.* I. pp. 79-80.

² *Ibid.* I, p. 160. Cf. Smith and Dale, *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. II. pp. 84. 272.

³ *Ibid.* I. p. 441.

⁴ *Ibid.* II. p. 69.

⁵ *Ibid.* II. p. 44.

the effect would at once be seen, for the next time the Iwando was pushed along, there would be no fish taken. When this happens, they say: 'Some one has brought a (sexual) transgression to the Iwando.' The diviner is called in to detect the wrongdoer, and he is driven away. 'Medicine' is brought to cleanse the Iwando, and if all is well, the next pushing gives a good catch."¹ His sexual intercourse has defiled the man and, on his return to his companions, he has communicated his uncleanness to the net, which henceforth becomes incapable of catching fish. Only the necessary medicine, by purifying it, can restore its efficacy. How did it lose it? Probably the ba-Ila do not ask themselves this; it is enough for them to know that the implement under the fatal influence of the man who is unclean, no longer does its work. From the consideration of similar beliefs observed in other places (cf. Ch. X, p. 325) it is quite likely that they account for the circumstance by the disposition of the fish, which, horrified by the defilement of the net, refuse to allow themselves to be captured, and plunge into the depths.²

The pernicious influence which emanates from persons who have recently had sexual intercourse is peculiarly fatal to sick people. In Kiwai, "a woman who is used to frequent sexual intercourse with her husband cannot be asked to treat a sick person, for her mere presence might endanger his life. A man who wants to go and see some sick person, (for instance, his brother) regularly, must cease to cohabit with his wife for the time."³ "In New Britain, also, if a man was wounded and was under treatment, no man or woman who had recently had sexual intercourse could visit him. He would certainly die, if this were done. One day at least must elapse before they can come into the presence of a wounded man. This restriction, however, does not apply in cases of ordinary sickness, but it applies in full force in the case of a woman in childbirth, and the child will surely die if it is violated."⁴

We find the same fears persisting almost everywhere. With the Azende of the Belgian Congo, "the husband, who is always suspicious and fearful of danger, will forbid the house where

¹ *Ibid.* p. 169.

² We might conclude with this remark of Hutton's: "Continence is regarded as a precautionary measure, and on this account is often observed by those who will be hunting dangerous animals the next day." *The Sema Nagas.* p. 77.

³ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 224.

⁴ G. Brown. *op. cit.* p. 274.

the young mother is lying, to all persons who have recently had sexual relations. They may not see either mother or child, for the child would be sure to die.”¹ And among the Creek Indians, in North America, “the physician is so religiously cautious of not admitting polluted persons to visit any of his patients, lest the defilement should retard the case, or spoil the warriors, that before he introduces any man, even any of their priests, who are married according to the law, he obliges him to assert, either by a double affirmation, or by two negatives, that he has not known even his own wife, in the space of the last natural day.”²

II

Fear of such defilement and the disasters it might cause goes further still. The primitives do not confine themselves to prohibiting sexual relations in certain circumstances and for a given period, and to avoiding contact with persons who have recently had such. They fear the evil influence emanating from a woman from the mere fact of her presence, and this has given rise to an immense number of precautions, rules and taboos, to which she must conform. I shall quote a few of them only.

Among the Arunta peoples, “into the mysteries of the Ert-natulunga (the depôt of the churinga) and its contents no woman must pry at risk of death. The position of the Ert-natulunga—not their exact position, but their locality—is known to women, who are obliged to go long distances round in order to avoid going anywhere near to them.”³ “When the men return, bringing back the churinga that they had lent to another tribe, the return journey is made by the least frequented path, so as to avoid as far as possible any chance of meeting women.”⁴

“Black men,” says Mrs. Parker, “do not approve of women cooks. At least the old men, under the iron rule of ancient custom, will not eat bread made by gins, nor would they eat iguana, fish, piggiebillah (porcupine) or anything like that if the inside were removed by a woman, though after having prepared such things themselves, they allow the gins to cook them

¹ C R. Lagae. *op. cit.* p. 170.

² J. R. Swanton. *Religious beliefs and medical practices of the Creek Indians*. E. B. XLII. pp. 626-27.

³ Spencer and Gillen. *The native tribes of Central Australia*, p. 134.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 161.

—that is, if they have not young children or are enceinte: under those conditions they are unclean.”¹

On Rossel Island, New Guinea, “the most important fishing ground on the island is probably the Eastern Lagoon in the neighbourhood of the island of Noa. Fishing in this neighbourhood is subject to special restrictions. Women, for instance, are not allowed on expeditions in this region”² and again: “A certain sacredness seems to attach to these canoes, and women are forbidden even to look at them.”^{2a}

In the Marquesas, “the warriors . . . were *tapu* as long as the war lasted. They then lived apart from others, being fed by the other members of the tribe, and they were not allowed any intercourse with women. It was the same for the fishermen while the fishing went on, for planters at harvest time, for the tattooer and his helpers and the patient, as long as the operation, which lasted for several weeks kept them all together.”³ “In war time all contact with women was absolutely forbidden to the combatants. It was the non-combatant *kikino* who prepared the food, and brought it to the warriors while hostilities lasted.”⁴ And the Kayans too, in Borneo, when the men meet for a cock-fight they will not give their wives permission to accompany them, “lest the cocks’ courage should be affected by their presence.”⁵ They finally do allow one woman to go with them, but she is obliged to remain at some considerable distance from the game birds. There are innumerable instances of this kind.

As for the Bantus of South Africa, we will confine ourselves to the fear shown that the cattle may be rendered unclean. With the Xosa Kafirs, “it is the boys and young men who do the milking, and they, too, look after the cattle and take them to the pasture.”⁶ Among the Amandebele, “when the plough was first used, the natives were greatly amused, and came from all directions to see it. . . . The chief objection they had to its introduction into their country was the fact that the heaviest garden work would then fall to the lot of the men and oxen,

¹ L. Parker. *The Euahlayi Tribe*, p. 11.

² W. E. Armstrong. *Rossel Island*, p. 20.

^{2a} *Ibid.* p. 30.

³ Dr. Louis Rollin. *Les îles Marquises*, p. 82. (1929).

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 201-02.

⁵ A. W. Nieuwenhuis. *op. cit.* II. pp. 258-59. (1900).

⁶ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 109.

instead of the women.”¹ They were more anxious to avoid giving laborious work to their cattle, which they cherished, than concerned about the women, who from time immemorial had done the digging. And then too, if the oxen are to work, since contact with women is dangerous for these animals, men will have to take the women’s places in the fields! Among Zulus, “grown-up girls and women must not enter the cattle kraal, for it would become unclean. The cows, too, are so accustomed to boys and young men, that they do not let anybody else milk them.”² Holub noticed the same thing with the Bechuanas. “It is only since the introduction of the plough, the use of which is now (1876) becoming more general, that women’s lot has been ameliorated; men use the plough with the help of oxen, and women must *never* touch these.”³ “No woman is allowed to touch the milch cows, or, as a rule, cattle at all. They are looked after by men, young men and those in the prime of life, as well as the older ones.”⁴

Mackenzie says too: “The Hottentot and Koranna women are the milkers of the cows. But among the Kafirs and Bechuanas and other tribes of the Bantu family, women are not allowed even to enter a cattle-pen when the cattle are in it. It is customary for the Bechuana women to mix cow-dung in the plaster which they use for the walls of their houses; but I have often seen them have to wait patiently until the cattle went to graze, when it was lawful for them to enter the pen to collect the cow-dung.”⁵ With the Thonga, “girls are not allowed to walk amongst the pumpkins, to pluck their fruit or to pick their leaves without certain precautions.”⁶ “Women, especially those of the child-bearing age, and having sexual relations, are not allowed to take care of the oxen. It is taboo. When they require dung to smear the hut, they send little children or girls free as yet from menses, or at any rate unmarried, to fetch it from the oxen kraal.”⁷

The principal motive for these prohibitions is clear, since they only apply to women who are of age to bear children. Little girls who have not yet attained to puberty, and women

¹ T. M. Thomas. *op. cit.* p. 310 (1872).

² F. Speckmann. *op. cit.* p. 147.

³ E. Holub. *Sieben Jahre in Süd-Afrika*. I. p. 423.

⁴ *Ibid.* I. p. 479.

⁵ Rev. J. Mackenzie. *Ten years north of the Orange River*. p. 499.

⁶ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* II. p. 28. Cf. I. p. 184.

⁷ *Ibid.* II. pp. 49-50.

who have passed the climacteric, are exempt.¹ "Bechuana women are not allowed to enter the cattle kraal, or even the yard close to it, called the *khotla*, where the men assemble to do their sewing, eat, and confer. Little girls may go there, but when they become nubile, they are forbidden to enter."² Callaway writes, quite frankly: "Under these circumstances, no black woman draws near, but they go to a distance; those who approach are old women who have passed the time of child-bearing and have become men." And in a note he adds: "Old women are called men, and no longer act as women, nor observe the custom of *hlonipa* (avoidance) to the men."³

If there is no further cause to fear the presence of women or their influence on plants, animals, objects, undertakings, ceremonies, etc., it is because they are henceforth regarded as asexual. They no longer possess the characteristic quality which was theirs from puberty to the climacteric, and which was the reason for the many taboos to which they were then subjected.

III

The earliest period of a woman's life has the same advantage as the latest, for the little girl can go freely everywhere. Like the little boy, too, she is exempted from certain food taboos imposed on adults. Many trifling services are asked of her which, for the reasons already indicated, women are not allowed to render. But from the moment when the signs of puberty appear, everything is changed. Young girls who are becoming adult and nubile, have to go through an initiation which is

¹ This rule is found in other places. In Mangala, in the Southern Pacific "the work of planting and keeping the taro-beds in order is assigned to girls under sixteen years of age, and to women who have passed the prime of life. Ladies are seldom seen in these plantations until their beauty begins to fade, when they are required to return to their 'occupation' and wade for hours in mud from two to three feet deep." J. Williams. *A narrative of missionary enterprises in the South Sea Islands*. p. 211.—With the Lhota Nagas, "old women may eat the same things as old men, but there are a few kinds of meat which men may eat, but young and middle-aged women may not." J. P. Mills. *op. cit.* p. 77.—Lastly, with the Iglulik Eskimos, "young women must never eat tongue, head or marrow of caribou, and little girls must not eat those of seals. Women who have ceased to bear children are exempt." Kn. Rasmussen. *op. cit.* p. 196. Without quoting further, we may say that this privilege of the older women is of frequent occurrence. Cf. Trumann Michelson. *Contributions to Fox Ethnology*. II. *Bureau of American Ethnology*. Bulletin 95, p. 2.

² *Missions évangéliques*. XIX, p. 407. (1844).

³ H. Callaway. *The religious system of the Amazulu*, p. 440, and note 23.

often long and complicated, which it is not our purpose to study here. We have only to remember here the critical state of uncleanness in which the loss of blood has placed them, the evil influence which thereby emanates from them, and the methods employed to protect them and their circle from the misfortunes that might ensue. These are isolation, seclusion, many and very vigorous taboos—for the young girl who attains puberty is treated exactly like a mourner of the first degree, or a homicide, and her condition resembles theirs. People avoid all contact with her, and they do not allow her to resume the ordinary communal life until she has been purified from her defilement. This fact is almost universal, and it has been more than once noted and studied, particularly by Sir James Frazer. I shall quote only a few significant instances of the custom.

With the Arunta, "a girl at the first time of menstruation is taken by her mother to a spot close to, but apart from, the women's camp, near to which no man ever goes. A fire is made, and a camp formed by the mother, the girl being told to dig a hole about a foot or eighteen inches deep, over which she sits attended by her own and some other tribal Mia, who provide her with food, one or other of them being always with her, and sleeping by her side at night time. No children of either sex are allowed to go near her or speak to her. During the first two days she is supposed to sit over the hole without stirring away; after that she may be taken out by one or other of the old women hunting for food. When the flow ceases she is told to fill in the hole . . . and shortly after, she is handed over to the man to whom she has been allotted."¹

With the Kai in New Guinea, "the natives think that the first menstruation has made the young girl a woman; that is, she is now marriageable. During this period young girls are obliged to rest, and to leave the hut assigned to them as seldom as possible. If they do go out, they must cover themselves with mats, and wear on their feet half-husks of the coconut, or, if these are not procurable, little pieces of wood tied on with strings. The purpose of this is to protect them from evil influences (and no doubt too, we might add, to prevent their uncleanness from contaminating the ground they tread on) . . . "Further, they must remain all the time sitting or lying on leaves of a certain species of banana, and make use of a pillow made from a special tree, for by this means all kinds of noxious in-

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *The native tribes of Central Australia*. pp. 460-61.

fluences are averted from them. For the same reason many kinds of food are forbidden them; the only vegetable foods they can eat must be roasted, never boiled, and they can only drink of stagnant water. If they were to eat of stewed dishes, or drink running water, they would run the risk of the menses continuing indefinitely.”¹

The Bakaua, neighbours of the Kai, “put the young girl into an enclosed space inside the house. She may not sit down on the ground, but only on a piece of wood which has been placed there expressly for her, and this is so that her uncleanness may not adhere to anything in the house. Since she must not move, and is subjected to yet other rules, a relative stays with her to assist her. . . . During the whole period of her seclusion she is not allowed to do anything. . . . Many foods are forbidden to her. . . . If she is obliged to leave the house, she must cover herself with a mat or piece of bark which entirely conceals her, and her feet do not touch the ground. They are (as with the Kai) covered by half-husks of the coconut.”²

The seclusion of young girls at such a time is also very frequent among the South African natives. In the Mayomb language, there is a special word *kumbi* to denote “a young marriageable girl in the brides’ hut,” or “the bride painted red.” (In Kropf’s *Kafir-English Dictionary*, on p. 396, we are told that when a girl has once menstruated, she is painted with red clay.) “As a rule, the village possesses one or more of these huts, and as soon as a girl is marriageable she must enter it; she is usually taken there by her mother, but the bride makes several attempts to escape, and in the end they tie her up and seclude her.”³

Sometimes this time of seclusion lasts for an indefinite period. “Being greatly astonished at not seeing any young girl or even little girl in any of the villages, I asked the catechist what had become of them all. ‘They are shut up in the huts prepared for those who are marriageable, according to the custom of the country’ (the Cameroons), he replied, ‘but if you like, you can see some of them.’ He then took me into several huts in which one, two, or four or five girls were, literally, shut up in the dark, each girl having her own little cell formed by walls of plaited palm-leaf. I tried in vain to discover anything in these

¹ R. Neuhauss. *op. cit.* III. pp. 40-41.

² *Ibid.* III. pp. 418-19.

³ L. Bittremieux. *Mayombsch Idiotikon.* pp. 290-92.

retreats, but the darkness made it impossible. As the result of my request the women who are told off to look after these recluses allowed them to come out, and in this way I saw four or five of them; they were awkward, frightened girls, either completely naked, or else having a belt of shells round their loins, and besmeared with red ochre from head to foot. It appears that they are thus shut up for about eight or nine months, the only space allowed them being that occupied by the bed on which they can sit or lie. They may go out for a few minutes only, and that always before dawn. Upon entering and upon leaving this 'convent' . . . special ceremonies take place."¹

Customs which are remarkably like these have been described in other parts—among the Tlinkit Indians of British Columbia, for instance. "When they have reached puberty young girls, regarded as unclean, are secluded for a fairly long time, being transferred to a little hut made of leaves and branches, such as women in childbed must occupy. Erman has described these huts as being about six to eight feet high, provided with a latticed outlook to the seaside, but everywhere else thickly covered in with firtree branches. . . . It seems that the seclusion used to last for a whole year at one time, but that has been gradually reduced to six months, three months, or even less. During all this time the young girl cannot quit her narrow prison (where she is always kept in darkness), except at night, and even then she must be closely muffled. On her head she has to wear a broad-brimmed hat, so that she may not be able to look up, and thus make the sky unclean. Only her mother, or slave-girl, or her very nearest relatives, may come and see her, or bring her her food. Langsdorff adds that these girls must eat very sparingly, and can take liquids only by means of a tube made out of the wing-bone of a white-headed eagle."²

The Tlinkit peoples fear that the eyes of a young girl at this time in her life may communicate her uncleanness to the sky, just as the Papuans fear that her footsteps may contaminate the earth. Her beverage must not touch her lips, or they would defile it. In some places these recluses are fed, so that they may not touch the food with their own hands, and they are not even allowed to scratch themselves, except with an instrument made for the purpose, etc. These rules and regulations, so religiously

¹ *Missions évangéliques*. XCIX, 2, p. 155 (1924). H. Nicod.

² A. Krause. *Die Tlinkit-Indianer*. pp. 217-19.

observed despite their frequently painful nature, which the climate and the rigour of their diet render yet harsher to these young girls, are founded upon a very varied ensemble of motives. Among the chief of them are the desire to prepare the young girl for her condition of wife and mother, to protect her from the dangers of all kinds to which her uncleanness exposes her, and also to defend the members of her circle against the evil influence which emanates from her.

IV

In primitive communities almost without exception, there is no form of uncleanness, (according to the meaning which they give to the word) more to be feared than that of a woman during her "periods." At such a time she is always subject to an evil influence, but her defilement is especially fatal to her circle. Contact with the catamenial flux acts like poison, and the woman who loses blood in this way brings misfortune to what she touches, and to anyone who may touch her. (By "poison" we must understand here, as the primitives do, something possessing a magic or supernatural power to kill.)

The fear inspired by a woman in this state has given rise to the precautions taken almost everywhere to avoid contact with her, and also to the restrictions and taboos placed upon her. With the Arunta, for instance, "a curious restriction applying to women during the time of pregnancy, and also during the menstrual period, is that they may not, during the continuance of either of these, gather *irriakura*, the bulb which forms, together with *munyeru* a staple vegetable food; the breaking of this rule would result in the failure of the supply of *irriakura*."¹ The influence of an unclean woman would infallibly react upon the disposition of this plant and henceforth it would conceal itself from the natives. Common interest therefore demands that she shall not go near it, and above all, shall refrain from touching it.

Junod has acquainted us with the explanation given by the natives themselves of their attitude concerning this. "One of my Thonga informants, discussing the Bapedi ideas about women, said to me one day: 'To them, *two bloods* are specially dangerous—that of the periods, which is highly dangerous, be-

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *op. cit.* p. 473.

cause it kills; and that which follows a birth, the lochia, which is even more so.'"¹

"Here is the testimony of old Mankelu, one of the most typical Bantus I have ever met, a noted doctor, and one who speaks in brief phrases, in which technical expressions abound. I asked him: 'What brings misfortune (*yila*) more than anything else to you Thonga of Nkouna?' and I give his answer literally. 'The great thing that *yila* is the woman in her monthly periods. She is taboo for six days. . . .'

"Every woman who leaves for a married home takes with her two mats, two wooden pillows and two changes of clothing. The old mat and the old clothes will be used exclusively by her during the period. While it lasts, the woman must remain in her own part of the hut, she must not even touch her husband with her feet. The hut is in fact divided into two parts, that on the right, which is the husband's domain, his *chilao*, and on the left of the door, the woman's *chilao*. The woman who is menstruating is absolutely forbidden to cross the middle line. The husband would not do it either, lest he should step on a drop of this fatal blood."²

To this temporary separation we must add that the wife is forbidden to use the same utensils as the rest, or to touch anything belonging to them, for an individual's belongings are the individual, and should she touch them it is the same as if she touched him or her, and the same dread consequences would ensue. "It is *buditahzi*," says E. W. Smith, (that is, a very serious fault, which places her in a grave position) "for a woman during the menses to touch her husband's gun."³ And again: "For five days she is *tonda* (unclean); then she washes, and may rejoin her fellows. . . . There is something about the woman that is dangerous. Moreover, her condition lays her open to receive malign effluence from others. . . . (Here we very clearly see the double effect of the impurity: the unclean woman is both a danger to others, and herself a more easy prey to evil influences.) But the mysterious radiation from her, that ordinarily is so baneful, may be made use of. It is believed

¹ It is noteworthy that the same thing is asserted and in the same terms, by the Araucans in Chili. "There were two kinds of blood especially dangerous to men; the menstrual flux, and the uterine discharges following a confinement." T. Guevara. *Mentalidad araucana*, p. 181.

² H. A. Junod. *Conceptions physiologiques des Bantous Sud-Africains*. Revue d'Ethnographie et de Sociologie. 1910. pp. 137-38.

³ Smith and Dale *op. cit.* I. p. 374.

that if tsetse fly invade a district, they can be driven away by the menstruating women going and sitting where they are, and allowing themselves to be bitten. One of our friends was told by natives that a certain fly-infested road was now free because so many women had passed along it." ¹

As a general rule the woman who is unwell must keep away from the rest. Smith indeed adds: "She may not enter a hut in which people are sitting who have 'eaten medicine'; if she must enter, they have first to come out. (Her presence would prevent the medicine from being effectual.) It is taboo for her to eat in company. Were she to eat in company with a man, he would lose his virility. . . . Should she venture to sleep on her husband's bed, she would incur his righteous indignation and be made to pay damages. . . . She may not sit near people, lest there should be mutual injury. . . . She must have nothing to do with the common fire, but must light one for her own use. She must not handle other people's pots, nor eat out of their basins, nor drink out of their cups, nor smoke their pipes. She may not cook food for anybody, nor draw water for another. If she sleeps in her hut, it must be on the floor. (The contact of her body would make the sleeping-mat unclean.) She may not enter a village other than her own. She may not wear nice clothes." ² In short, she is exactly what we found the mourners to be, that is, unclean, and therefore she is subject to the same treatment as theirs.

In East Africa, with the Safwa, "at such a time the man sleeps in the village tavern, not in his hut. He takes his gun and his spear with him, for should these weapons remain in the hut with the woman who is unwell, he could not use them again when hunting; the woman's indisposition would have spoilt them (that is, she would have bewitched them, and made them inoperative).³ When the Safwa prepare *mzwamfi* (ordeal poison) they do not make it in the hut, but outside, for they are afraid of uncleanness, for, they say, 'If we were making it in the hut, and widowers or widows or other mourners, or women who were unwell were to come in, their uncleanness would adhere to the *mzwamfi*, and it would be no good.'" ⁴ It is the same with the Naman of S. W. Africa. "If a girl should become unwell while out in the veld, when she and her companions are

¹ *Ibid.* p. 27.

² *Ibid.* p. 27.

³ E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *op. cit.* I, p. 66.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 223-24.

gathering roots and berries, her companions contrive turn by turn to carry her back to the kraal, for if she walks among the bushes she will scorch them, the succulent roots will shrivel up, and the leaves wither from the bushes. If she milks a cow, the milk will turn to blood. . . . If she cooks a meal, those who eat it, especially men, will be very ill, etc.”¹

There are numerous testimonies of this kind. I shall quote but one more taken from Father Petitot, who has described “the rigorous methods used by the Déné and the Déné Etcha Ottiné towards women who are confined, or who are menstruating. These unfortunate creatures may not follow in the tracks made by the rest of the tribe, or used by their family when on the move. They must make their painful way apart through the crumbling snow. They cannot enter the village, or share their husband’s tent. Impure and humbled in the sight of all, although they have become sacred and taboo, they are allotted a hovel constructed for them, and in it these unfortunate females must live throughout their period of sickness.

“If this should occur in summer, and the family be travelling by water, matters are no better, for the poor creatures have no right to a place in the family canoe. Therefore two canoes are brought near together, a plank is tied between them, and the sick women take their places on this stool of repentance. Should the two canoes make a wrong move and become disconnected, so much the worse; the women will have an unexpected bath. . . .

“One night we were awakened by piercing female cries, and repeated appeals for help, and we heard, too, the angry tones of a man, whose voice we recognized as that of our half-breed helper Franquet. Next morning we learnt that Franquet, having surprised his sick wife on his bed, had immediately seized her by the hair, dragged her outside into thirty degrees of frost, and left her to spend the night in the snow, not without having beaten her severely first. . . .

“I rebuked this Indian severely for his lack of common humanity. ‘It is our rule,’ he said; ‘all the Déné do the same. If we let women who are unwell stay near us, we should die ourselves.’”²

If one of the main characteristics of the sorcerer is to spread

¹ A. W. Hoernlé. *The expression of the social value of water among the Naman of S. W. Africa. The S. A. Journal of Science.* XX. p. 525 (1923).

² P. Petitot. *Autour du grand lac des Esclaves.* pp. 41-45.

misfortune around him, because there is a baneful principle within him, we may say that a woman during the time that her period lasts, runs the risk of bewitching her circle. Through her touch, or merely through her presence she communicates her uncleanness. Now according to an expression of Irle's which we have already quoted, to defile is to bewitch. Once the period is over and the necessary precautions have been taken, the woman is no longer unclean; she has ceased to be the bringer of ill-fortune.

Nevertheless, according to a widespread belief, as we have just seen, the presence of women is undesirable in many circumstances. The Maoris used to think that "the very fact of a woman passing over a *tapu* spot would pollute or destroy its sanctity, for such is the effect of that sex. As a native friend put it to me: 'Should a woman trespass on a place where a new *tapu* canoe was being made, then the gods would retire, and when the vessel was taken to sea they would not watch over and protect her, hence anything might happen.'" ¹

Women are frequently forbidden, on pain of death, to be present at a performance or a ceremony. The Bantus dread the touch and the mere approach of women for their cherished cattle, even when they are not unclean. Among the Eskimo of King William's Land, "it is believed that reindeer are peculiarly susceptible with regard to anything to do with women, because the uncleanness attaching to menstruation and confinements rests permanently on women. A woman is taboo from the time of her first menstruation. . . . From the time they land (early in July) until they build the first snow huts (in November) women are not allowed to work on sealskins, or sew a single seam in them." ² To some extent, similar prohibitions have been universal. They are to be accounted for by the fact that, even in the time when a woman does not appear to be bringing misfortune on those around her, it is none the less true that a few days before she was not "clean," and that in a few days more she will not be so either. Since primitives have no conception of physiological functions and of ovulation in particular, this regularly recurring uncleanness is believed by them to have some mystic cause inherent in the nature of women, and this cause is a permanent one. Stated differently, the adult female until the time comes when she is "clean," bears within herself a mysteri-

¹ Elsdon Best. *The Maori*. I. p. 261.

² Kn. Rasmussen. *Thulefahrt*. pp. 248-49.

ous and dreadful power of not being so, and this is the reason for so many of the restrictions placed upon women in nearly all communities. They have in them something that is disquieting to a man, and in its presence he feels himself powerless.

This is all the more so because this mystery is associated with that of fertility, and it is the woman who gives birth to the child. It is she, too, almost everywhere, who does the cultivation, and perhaps without her the plantations would remain barren. (Cf. *Primitive Mentality*, Ch. X, pp. 361-365.)

For these same reasons a woman is readily suspected of witchcraft, for it seems as if her nature predisposed her to it. Father Schulien, who has described the initiation ceremonies in a tribe of Portuguese East Africa, has noted this. "Witchcraft," he says, "gives an Atxuabo woman an exceptional position with regard to man. The possibility of this power of casting a spell is seen in the remark made to me one day by my cook. Antonio, my washerman, had just died. In the evening after we had buried him I was speaking of him to my cook. He was very grieved at his death, and said to me, 'He must certainly have been bewitched by some woman, because women can do men every possible injury. . . .'"

"The manifestation of this mystic force in women and that which allows them to exercise it is the catamenial flow. . . . Menstrual blood is a charm which women very often employ, either to defend themselves, or to injure men in many different ways."¹

May not this be one of the more or less formulated and conscious reasons which make primitives so often suspect women of having caused their husbands' deaths, and treat widows with a severity and cruelty that we find it very hard to explain? Their very sex lays them open to suspicion. When the disaster occurs, and the husband or child dies, then at once and almost instinctively, by reason of this dread, mysterious power women bear within them, men are tempted to consider them responsible for it.

V

Shall we endeavour to probe further yet, and try to find out why it is that the menstrual discharge constitutes such "uncleanness," such a "poison" for the woman herself and her

¹ P. M. Schulien. *Die Initiationszeremonien bei den Atxuabo, Anthropos*. XVIII-XIX. p. 78 (1923-24).

surroundings that it is capable of arresting the growth of plants, causing illness and death, etc.—in short, of acting like a real bewitchment?

In the preceding chapter we noted that any unpremeditated flow of blood makes primitives uneasy. It matters little whether the amount lost be considerable or trifling. They believe that life is thus escaping from the animate being, and that it will shortly leave him. Any loss of this kind is a prognostic, a sign of death. It has a mystic significance, wholly out of proportion to its real importance.

The fact that the catamenial flow occurs at regular intervals does not make this loss of blood any less terrifying to primitives. On the contrary, since they do not know its cause (except for what we shall shortly indicate) they are all the more impressed by this periodicity. In any case they do not confound this flow with any other loss of blood; for the latter they would regard as a serious menace to the person interested, but as a rule to that one alone; whereas the menstrual discharge, while placing the woman herself in a critical condition, is at the same time a grave danger to her circle, upon which it threatens to have the effect of a very malignant principle, a bringer of ill, a transgression.

What is it that makes this flow so dangerous? It would be useless to try to guess. Moreover, although the dread and horror it arouses is almost universal, it would be vain to ask the reason of it from those who feel it. Without reflecting about the matter, they unhesitatingly obey imperative traditions, which have been handed down from generation to generation. It is quite possible, however, that in some communities there still remain recognizable traces of the conceptions upon which these traditions are based. On the other hand, a comparison of the beliefs and customs relative to the menstrual discharge with those that pertain to other losses of blood in women may help us to understand their origin.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the repulsion and horror felt by Maoris for the catamenial flow, as we see from their elaborate precautions to avoid any contact with it, even indirectly. Thus "it is a curious fact, which often struck me as remarkable, before I learnt to account for it, that a New-Zealander will never lean his back against the wall of a house. The company assembled within a house, however numerous, always leaves a little space between themselves and the wall. The

cause of this strong objection to sit close to the wall is their dread of the mysterious influence of certain *tapu* objects, which have been thrust into the rush walls of dwelling-houses for concealment.”¹

In another passage² the author tells us in Latin what these dreaded objects are: they are linen stained with the menstrual discharge; and Elsdon Best finally gives us the clue to the enigma. “The discharge is viewed as a sort of human embryo, an immature or undeveloped human being, hence the *tapu*. ‘The *paheke* (catamenial flow) of a woman is a sort of human being, it is a person in embryo.’ Another aged authority states: ‘The menses is a kind of human being, because if the discharge ceases, then it grows into a person, that is, when the *paheke* ceases to come away, then it assumes human form and grows into a man.’” Elsdon Best adds: “In native legends there are several instances of the development of the menstrual discharge into a human being . . . or sometimes a maleficent spirit.”³

This is a decisive statement, and it throws strong light upon the fear caused in the older Maoris by women’s periodic indisposition. That which frightened them so much was not only the loss of blood itself, but the appearance of an embryo that does not come to maturity, and is a “spirit”—that is, a kind of dead man—particularly to be dreaded. For the catamenial flow, although it is the red liquid we perceive, also has a *wairua* (cf. *The “Soul” of the Primitive*, Ch. IV, pp. 146-47), which may do a good deal of harm. “In New Zealand,” writes Shortland, still in Latin, “people believe that the catamenial flow contains the germs of a man; and according to an old superstition, linen imbued with this blood was *tapu*, just as if it had received a human form. Such linen was denoted by the words *kahu*, *kakahu*, *kahukahu*, which really mean clothing, but also ‘the spirits of human embryos’ ”⁴ evidently what Elsdon Best calls the *wairua* of the menstrual discharge. “These are the spirits which inflict

¹ E. Shortland. *Traditions and superstitions of the New-Zealanders*. p. 112 (1854).

² *Ibid.* p. 292.

³ Elsdon Best. *The lore of the Whare Kohanga. Jl. of the Polynesian Soc.* XIV. pp. 211-12. Cf. this observation recently made in Morocco. “At Marrakesh the first appearance of menstruation serves as a pretext for great family feasts. Relatives who live at a distance are notified, and an invitation is sent round, on which the time-honoured formula is: ‘Our daughter has been delivered of a dead daughter.’” Dr. Em. Mauchamp. *La sorcellerie au Maroc*. p. 112.

⁴ E. Shortland. *op. cit.* p. 292.

the most fatal diseases.”¹ It is therefore these that are most to be dreaded, and natives would avoid contact with them at all costs.

In other words, the menstrual discharge, before it leaves the woman's body, is an embryo human being, which is alive and which, were it not expelled, would assume a human form. Once it has left the body, this possibility no longer exists, but what terrifies the Maoris is that it nevertheless continues to live, but as the dead live, as a spirit. Such spirits are peculiarly maleficent and redoubtable—like those of the foetus discharged in abortions and miscarriages, and those of stillborn children or of dead babies. Elsdon Best expressly states: “An immature birth is always a danger to a community, for its *wairua* may develop into an *atua kahu* (*kahu* means the enveloping membrane) a cacodoemon, a malignant demon delighting in harassing man. . . . Such a spirit may take up its abode in an animal—dog, lizard, or bird, and work incalculable harm.”²

Thus the terror inspired by the menstrual flow in the older Maoris, and in many peoples who are no doubt more primitive than they, the fatal influence attributed to it, the seclusion of women who are unwell, etc.—all this is bound up with the beliefs that relate to a certain kind of particularly nefarious and dangerous spirits. These are beings that have not lived, or hardly lived at all—children dead almost as soon as born, or stillborn, or having had but a brief uterine existence. These appear with the menses, as they do in abortions and miscarriages.

Respecting their power for evil there is abundant evidence. Elsdon Best says: “Happening to be delivered of a stillborn child, a woman resolved to utilize the spirit of that child as a war god, or, as anthropologists would say, as a ‘familiar.’ Now in Maori belief the spirits of stillborn children, termed *atua kahu* (here we recognize the term used for the ‘germs’ of human beings which, arrested in their development, appear in the form of the menstrual discharge) are exceedingly malignant beings who ever delight in afflicting the living. Thus it will be seen that they are useful creatures to employ for the purpose of harassing and destroying one's enemies.”³ Shorthand had already said in more general terms: “The only cause from which sickness is ever imagined to originate is spirits who have en-

¹ *Ibid.* p. 115.

² Elsdon Best. *The Maori*. II, pp. 5-6. Cf. *Ibid.* II, pp. 34, 49.

³ *Ibid.* p. 241.

tered into the body of the sufferer. The natives believe that all neglect or infringement of the law of tapu, either wilful or undesigned, or even brought about by the act of another person, moves the *Atua* of the family to anger, who punishes the offender by sending some infant spirit to feed on a part of his body, more or less vital, according to the magnitude of the crime.”¹

Such beliefs are not peculiar to New Zealand; for we find similar ones in various forms in many other districts. In the Dutch East Indies, for example, in Sumatra, “the Loeboes of Mandailing are convinced of the malignity of the spirits of still-born children, and as demons that cause illness they have a dread of them. As a rule, these Loeboes are of opinion that the spirits of the dead who have not enjoyed the pleasures of life, or but for a short time only, are ill-disposed toward human beings . . . they are jealous, and inclined to anger and revenge. To this category belong also the spirits of stillborn children. When a Loeboe wants to injure another, he tries to make use of one of these spirits, which are more formidable than all the others, and to do so he has recourse to a priest. These ideas of theirs have led to a very cruel form of witchcraft.”² This is precisely what was done by the woman who had given birth to a stillborn child, of whom Elsdon Best wrote, and this form of witchcraft is often practised by means of the menstrual discharge, for thus a person may have at his or her service the most redoubtable of all the spirits or demons. Kreemer says too of these same Loeboes, “should the child refuse the breast, they believe that the wandering soul of some embryo still imperfect is preventing it. This soul, which has always been deprived of the mother’s milk, is jealous of the newborn baby, and for that reason tries to prevent its sucking. In order to appease the jealous soul, they resort to the following device. The priest takes a ricebowl and puts all kinds of dainties in it, such as salt, ginger, fish, a fresh banana-leaf, a few riceballs, etc. Then he holds it to the mother’s breasts, saying: ‘Here is some other food in exchange!’ (for the mother’s milk). They hope that the child may then suckle contentedly.”³

¹ E. Shortland. *op. cit.* pp. 114-15.

² Kreemer. *De Loeboes in Mandailing*. T. L. V. 1912, quoted by Kleiweg de Zwaan in *Tijdschrift van het koninglijk Nederlandsch aardrijkskundig genootschap*. 1928. p. 71.

³ J. Kreemer. *op. cit.* T. L. V. LXVI, p. 315.

In Sumatra again, "the people who live on the heights of Padang, are convinced that when a woman has brought about an abortion, and has buried the child in the bush or elsewhere, the spirit of the foetus haunts the place in the form of a frog. This spirit shows itself to be a mortal enemy to all men, especially the father, whom it seizes by the genital organs, so that it may pluck them forth." ¹ And in Java there is the same belief. "The spirit of a premature birth wanders about in the shape of a cricket, and when this insect is heard at night the natives make a fire on a piece of potsherd and burn a lombok on it. . . . Thus it is evident that these islanders too are afraid of the spirits of children that were undeveloped, and that they try to protect themselves from these demons." ²

In Central Celebes, "the Lolai Toradjas say that the spirits of stillborn children do not go to the land of the dead, but become spirits they call *silakkoe*, which give forth certain sounds. . . . Beside the spirits of stillborn children, others are excluded from the land of the dead, and these are: spirits of men who have died of leprosy, or been decapitated in battle, or who have committed suicide, and also men who did not brand themselves on the arms. Since all these are considered to be bad people, whose spirits are especially dreaded, we are entitled to conclude that the spirits of stillborn children are regarded as evilly disposed also." ³ Among the Moriers of Tinompo, "the spirits of stillborn children and those who die immediately after birth may not go to the land of the dead . . . they wander about where they are. . . . The mice which come in hordes to spoil the rice are believed to be the incarnate forms of these spirits, therefore in this island the people evidently consider the spirits of such children to be evil-minded and always ready to work ill to man." ⁴ And finally at Endeh in Flores, an *ana reëh*, a premature birth, demands perpetual offerings. They are placed near the tree (usually a banyan fig) where the foetus is preserved, and if anyone suspects that the 'spirit' of the *ana reëh* is in their neighbourhood, they make a great deal of noise in order to chase it away." ⁵

¹ Van den Toorn. *Het animisme bij de Manangkabauers der Padangsche Bodenlanden*. T. L. V. 1890, quoted by Kleiweg de Zwaan.

² Kleiweg de Zwaan. *op. cit.* 1928. p. 65.

³ *Ibid.* p. 67.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 70.

⁵ Van Sachtelen. *Endeh (Flores)* p. 139. *Mededeeling van het bureau voor de bestuurszaken der buitengewesten, bewerkt door het encyclopaedisch Bureau. Aflevering XIV (1921).*

VI

From the evidence just given it is clear that many primitives liken the catamenial flow to the prematurely born foetus, the stillborn child, and the child that dies immediately after birth. In all these cases alike, they believe that the worst is to be feared from these dead who have not lived, or only barely so. We shall therefore not be surprised to find that with respect to women who have miscarried they take measures which are not less severe than those observed for women when they are unwell.

Among the Bantus we have numerous testimonies to the fear caused by a miscarriage. Here are a few of them, all of which betray significant details. With the Barotse, "a woman who has miscarried is left on the veld, under some miserable hovel in which she lives in complete isolation, her food being the scanty pittance brought to her every day. She is kept secluded thus until the new moon. For the same reason the husband is confined to the courtyard of his house; all intercourse with his neighbours is forbidden and he may not even visit his cattle and his fields, for it is feared that he may exercise some evil influence over men and beasts and things. The community will therefore see to it that this isolation is strictly maintained. At the new moon, both the man and his wife have to undergo certain ablutions, and after having been cleansed in the river, and then only may they resume their ordinary life."¹ Junod says too: "Miscarriages are very much feared amongst South African natives because they are accompanied by the uncontrolled effusion of a blood that is a terrible taboo. The discharged foetus must be buried in wet soil, otherwise the rain will not fall. The country, having been polluted, will be dried up by hot winds. A strange rite called *mbelele* is performed in times of drought, when all the graves of children born prematurely and buried on the hill are searched, and their contents thrown into the mud, near the river. . . . A woman who has had a miscarriage is impure for three months at least."² And again: "When a miscarriage has been concealed, the rain can no longer fall, because the country is no longer right. Rain fears that spot. It must stop at that very place, and can go no further.

¹ *Missions évangéliques*, LXV, p. 429 (Coillard). 1890.

² H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I, p. 189.

This woman has been very guilty. She has spoilt the country of the chief, because she has hidden blood which had not yet properly united to make a human being. That blood is taboo. What she has done is taboo. It causes starvation." ¹

Here "taboo" is the equivalent of the Bantu word *yila*: that which brings disaster, which exerts evil influence, casts a spell. And Junod adds almost immediately: "If any birth is taboo, owing to the lochia, those of children prematurely born are doubly dangerous. Abnormal children such as twins, children who have died before the *boha puri* rite, in some clans also children who cut their upper teeth first, partake of this noxious character. They are a calamity for the whole land." ²

It could not be more explicitly stated that miscarriages and abortions, and the foetus thus discharged (or rather, the spirits of these foetus) arouse in Bantus the same fear as do monstrosities, prodigies, and in a general way, transgressions. The same fatal influence is attributed to them all; they defile, they bewitch. No doubt the woman herself was in the power of some evil influence, which caused the accident, and therefore she becomes an object of dread and repulsion. The others are afraid of her; hence her isolation, the taboos to which she is subjected, and the final purification she must undergo. Smith and Dale say the same: "Should a woman who has aborted, and before she is cleansed from her impurity, enter a person's house or eat out of a person's dish who is not a relation, she *ipso facto* becomes that person's slave; or if more than one person has been offended they sell her, and divide the proceeds. She has rendered them liable to contract that horrible disease *kafungo*." ³ . . . "A woman who has aborted is supposed to have it, and is therefore regarded as a very dangerous person. The foetus is buried, but is supposed to be able still to exert its baneful influence (that is, its spirit continues to act like a maleficent demon). The disease may be contracted by walking near the spot where the foetus is buried, by having connection with the woman, or by smoking her pipe. Before the husband will resume cohabitation with her, she must have connection with another man, to whom she thereby transfers the disease." ⁴ This last condition is exacted so that the woman, now "pure" again, may cease to be dangerous.

The details which follow, taken from a native's account,

¹ *Ibid.* p. 294.

² *Ibid.* II, pp. 296-97.

³ Smith and Dale. *op. cit.* I, p. 402.

⁴ *Ibid.* I. pp. 234-35.

show very clearly that a woman after an abortion is treated exactly like a person whom the vicinity of, or the relationship with, a dead man have rendered unclean. "Abortion is regarded with horror; the woman is in a state of uncleanness, and is a distinct danger to the community. . . . They build her a shelter out west, and there she has to remain all the time of her uncleanness. After a time they prepare medicine for her, putting it into a basin, that she may wash with it every day. Her food she has to cook in potsherds. When it is over, her mother seeks medicine for the return to the village, and all the people wash in that medicine. When she enters the village, she gives the medicine to all that are in the village, and they drink it, which means that the abortion (that is, the defilement) shall not stick to them. And as for the woman, when she enters her house, she and her husband may not come together as man and wife before she has been with other men." ¹

Need we show that the same beliefs have given rise to similar customs in other places? Two instances will perhaps suffice. "Among all of the Creek tribes of the Lower Mississippi a miscarriage, a stillborn child, or a very young child was laid away in a hollow tree, where it was nicely ceiled in. Otherwise it was thought that there would be a drought, that a pestilence would break out, or that death from other causes would occur." ² Among the Iglulik Eskimos, Rasmussen tells us, a miscarriage or an abortion is a very serious defilement, and if the necessary purification ceremonies have not taken place, the most terrible disasters will overwhelm the group. There is, then, no worse crime for a woman than to conceal a miscarriage, and none exposes her to more severe penalties. Sometimes it may happen that things seem to show that such a crime has been committed; terrible consequences ensue, and yet apparently no woman is guilty. How can such a thing be possible? "In the case of quite young girls who had not yet given birth to any child, a miscarriage might accompany their menstruation without their knowing, and only when the shaman, in such a case as this, pointed out the girl as the origin of the trouble, and the cause of the anger of Takánakapsáluk (the mother of animals), would she call to mind that there had once been, in her menstruation skin (the piece of thick-haired caribou skin which women place in

¹ *Ibid.* II, p. 6.

² J. R. Swanton. *Social organization and social usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy*. E. B. XLII, p. 398 (1924-25).

their under-breeches during menstruation) something that looked like 'thick blood.' She had not thought at the time that it was anything particular, and had therefore said nothing about it, but now she is pointed out by the shaman, it recurs to her mind. Thus at last the cause of Takánakapsáluk's anger is explained, and all are filled with joy at having escaped disaster." ¹

VII

This last account is specially instructive, for it permits us to probe a little deeper into the beliefs of these primitives concerning the menstrual discharge, the foetus, then the infant in the mother's womb, and even during the early days after the confinement, for we know that the infant is not yet wholly born. To Rasmussen's Eskimos, the foetus in the first stage of its development, is "thick blood." We shall find that similar, if not exactly the same conceptions are to be found in many other communities.

"The Sinangololo Papuans of the Rigo district of British New Guinea think that an abortion is not possible until the third or fourth month of pregnancy. Until then they believe that the child is only blood (*rara*) and its bones are not formed." ² "Among the Papuans of what was formerly German New Guinea, a pregnant woman entreats certain spirits to rid her of her burden. 'Strike my body with a cudgel, so that the blood that is forming a mass there may be broken up and driven out!' is what the poor woman begs." ³

Here indeed the idea seems to be the same as that of the Eskimos, viz: that in the first months of pregnancy the foetus is merely "thicker blood" blood in a solid state, such moreover as primitives are usually inclined to consider "inside the body." (Cf. Ch. IX, pp. 268-69.)

Hardeland recounts the legend of a certain Sangiang Tempon Telon, who was born prematurely. He had come into the world in the shape of a mere clot of blood. "His mother threw it in the river, and the current carried it away. . . . A Sangiang woman, who had just come down to bathe, found it, drew it out of the water, and from that clot of blood she made a living

¹ Kn. Rasmussen. *op. cit.* p. 129.

² J. P. Kleiweg de Zwaan. *Abortus provocatus in den indischen Archipel. Mensch en Maatschappij.* IV. p. 140. 1928.

³ *Ibid.* p. 137.

being. . . .”¹ Among the Palembang Koeboes of Sumatra, “they say that during the first three months of pregnancy, the foetus is ‘nothing but water.’ At the end of the third month, it ‘becomes blood’ and this goes on until the fifth month. At that time they imagine the foetus to be a clot of blood, or a sanguinary mass as large as the head of the thigh-bone. . . . The limbs now begin to be formed, and this goes on until the seventh month, and it is only after this that the foetus begins a life of its own, however tiny its body may be.”²

A remark made by Landtman helps us to realize that primitives imagine blood therefore as something rather firm in consistency. “The blood fills the flesh in the same way as does ‘water’ a melon, and ‘milk’ a banana. If one squeezes a watermelon, it will be compressed into almost nothing, and the same is said to be the case with a piece of flesh; it consists almost exclusively of blood. For this reason old people whose flesh contains very little blood have become parched and thin. The blood is not contained in any particular vessels, and does not circulate.”³ Hence it follows that the bodies of men and animals are chiefly composed of blood. When eating their flesh, those who eat are really drawing in their blood, but, as we have already seen (Ch. IX, pp. 266-68) the primitive is above all conscious of the mystic properties of the blood. It is the (magic) essence of life, and it is in this sense that we must understand the saying: “this clot of blood is a living being.” A piece of flesh is blood, hence it is life. Here we see one of the reasons which may have made man a flesh-eater, and often, too, a cannibal. Possibly he was ministering to a special kind of hunger, a pressing need for nitrogenous food. But at the same time, in feeding on flesh, he felt his own life-force, possibly exhausted by fatigue and privations, regain strength and vigour; it was the blood, the life, that entered his body with the flesh eaten, and he experienced a renewal of energy.

From this point of view, too, we may understand the countless legends and stories in which we find children being born from a clot, or even a few drops, of blood. This kind of miracle is not so strange to primitives as it would be to us. The body of the infant is its flesh, save for the skeleton, which hardly seems

¹ A. Hardeland. *op. cit.* p. 506.

² G. J. Van Dongen. *De Koeboes in de onderafdeeling Koeboestrecken der Residentie Palembang*. T. L. V. LXIII. p. 228 (1910).

³ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 218.

to count, for the bones are still so small and frail—and this flesh is blood.

In a Tami story of New Guinea, “when the sister was alone, she went to dig some taro in her plantation. Then she visited her bananas and sugar-canes, weeded them, bound up their stems, picked off the dead leaves and, while doing this, happened to cut her finger with the leaf of a sugar-cane. As it bled a good deal, she dug a little hole in the earth, and let the blood flow into it. The hole filled up, and she had to dig a second one, which soon became three quarters full. She covered these two holes with earth, and then rose, and she perceived that her belly was no longer swollen. . . . Some time afterwards she noticed that her bananas were being stolen, and she set a watch in her plantation, and surprised two youngsters there. They were fighting, and then the woman said to them: ‘I cut my little finger, and the blood flowed, and it has produced you two.’ In the course of the story these two wonder-children showed superhuman strength and courage. Like Hercules, they could overcome any monsters whatsoever.”¹

The woman who had cut her finger was already enceinte, and the twins in her womb (this twin pregnancy was already something unusual) were as yet nothing but blood. When she gives herself a wound the blood leaves her, and she is no longer pregnant. In a short time these infant prodigies develop in the holes into which she had dropped her blood. Such an occurrence, to the Papuans who listen to this story, is marvellous, but not absurd. With the Bakaua, their neighbours, “when a woman desires to bring her pregnancy to an end, she takes a very sharp-edged piece of grass and makes incisions in her abdomen, her elbows, ankles, finger-tips and heels, and as a consequence of this loss of blood, a miscarriage will occur.”² The idea here is evidently similar to that in the Tami story. The blood which leaves the body through these incisions is that out of which the foetus is formed, and the pregnancy is thus brought to an end.

Wirz recounts a similar story current among the Marindanim of Dutch New Guinea, but in this case the blood is that of a man. “Dorek wanted to plant yams, and began by making a

¹ R. Neuhauss. *op. cit.* III, pp. 540-42. The same legend, slightly different in detail, is found among the Kai neighbours of the Tami and the Bakaua. *Ibid.* III. p. 189, and also in British New Guinea. F. E. Williams. *Ora-kaiwa society*, p. 155.

² *Ibid.* III. p. 425.

bamboo enclosure, and while he was arranging it, he cut his foot with a piece of bamboo, and had to stop working. He put the blood that flowed from his wound into a folded taro leaf. The blood congealed and, to his great surprise, a human face appeared. Little by little the substance developed more distinctly, and at last there was a whole boy there.”¹ This story is a myth, but it nevertheless implies that human blood suffices to form the body of a child. A very similar story had already been published in the appendix to Codrington’s work *The Melanesians*. “They say that Tari went into his garden to work, and as he was working, something cut him, and he put the blood into a bamboo vessel, and went into the village, and set it by his fire-place, and there it stayed. And after many days when he was going to work he told his wife to cook some food for him and she went to get it. She found however that it was already done, and this circumstance was often repeated, so that, greatly puzzled, she tried to find out how it happened. From her hiding-place she saw Deitari (Tari’s blood) creep out of the bamboo vessel which Tari had put aside; and she saw that he was exceedingly fair, and she hid him. . . . She brought him forth, and Tari rejoiced very much to see him.”²

Ideas of this kind are not unknown in Africa. There is a Zulu story in which the wife, despairing because she had no children, told the pigeons of her trouble. They advised her to draw blood by scarifying herself. She obeyed them, and from the clotted blood a child was formed. “The husband wondered, and said: ‘This child, where did you get him?’ The woman said: ‘It is my child, the child of a clot of my blood, the child of the pigeons, who taught me wisdom; they told me to scarify and cup myself, and take a clot and put it in a pot, and it would become a child. So it became a child.’ And the husband rejoiced, and gave her thanks, and said: ‘I am happy, and rejoice this day. You have now a child. It is very good.’”³

This story is based upon the same ideas (curiously like those we have just noted) as those the Bantus have about the blood and the foetus. In Bryant’s dictionary we read: “*i(li)Hlule* means clot of blood, gore, as found in the arteries and heart

¹ P. Wirz. *Die Marind-anim*, II, p. 148.

² R. Codrington. *op. cit.* pp. 406-07.

³ H. Callaway. *Zulu nursery tales*. pp. 72-73. Cf. p. 116.

after death; an imperfectly formed foetus, as in abortion." ¹—So too, in Endemann's: "*fálatza*, the factitive form of *falala*, to spread (in such a way that the blood spread is diffused while flowing). *Xo fálatza mali*: to have a haemorrhage (is said of a miscarriage in the early months of pregnancy)," ²—and "*le-soele*, especially in the plural, means coagulated blood; in the singular, foetus also." ³

Lastly, the folk-lore of the North American Indians gives some example of similar ideas. In a story of the S. E. Indians, for instance, "an old woman was living in a certain place. One time when it was raining, she found a little blood in the water, laid it aside carefully and covered it up. Some time afterwards she removed the cover and found a male baby over it. She started to raise him, and when he was old enough to talk, he called her his godmother." ⁴ In another story we find that a single drop of blood becomes a child. "An old woman lived alone. She walked along a certain path until . . . at one place a log lay across the trail. One day as she stepped over this log, she saw a drop of blood in her track. Stooping down, she carefully scraped up the dirt around the blood and carried it home. She put the blood and dirt in a jar. She looked in the jar occasionally and discovered that the blood clot was growing. After several months she saw that it was beginning to look like a human being. In ten months it was developed into a boy. She took him out of the jar and dressed him. The boy grew. . . ." ⁵ This is a miraculous extra-uterine pregnancy which, without any previous impregnation, pursues its course apart from the woman's body; but in the jar in which she placed the drop of blood from her body matters proceed just as they would have done within her womb. During the earlier months the foetus is a clot of blood which is increasing in size. To these Indians no doubt, as to the Papuans of New Guinea, the blood is the very essence of the flesh. This at least is the idea implied in the thought of some Indians of French Guiana. "They believe in a spirit called Chinay (thus far not identified by me) who is a real cannibal and sucks their blood, which accounts for their being so thin when

¹ A. T. Bryant. *op. cit.* p. 259.

² K. Endemann. *op. cit.* p. 68.

³ *Ibid.* p. 516.

⁴ J. R. Swanton. *Myths and Tales of the S. E. Indians*. E. B. Bulletin 88, p. 10 (1929).

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 15-16.

sick.”¹ When deprived of their blood, they have no flesh left, and they become emaciated. This is what the Kiwai Papuans say of the wizened old men.

The primitives' folklore thus confirms their idea that the foetus during the early months of gestation is merely blood, and that this blood is alive. They were accordingly inclined to imagine the catamenial discharge as a miscarriage. Now we have already found how great is the horror and dread occasioned by a foetus which is prematurely born, which continues to live, although it is dead, and becomes one of the most maleficent of demons. This accounts for the fatal influence they attribute to this blood, their shrinking from it, and the isolation to which a woman is subjected as long as the flow lasts.

VIII

A confinement very frequently gives rise to fears of the same kind, and these are no less intense. During her pregnancy the woman (and, to a lesser degree, her husband) has already been subjected to various regulations, and especially taboos, most of which are designed to ward off the dangers with which her child is threatened. Thus in Kiwai, “the husband” (of a pregnant woman) “must not go out hunting, fishing or fighting. The woman must not go near anyone engaged in making a canoe, drum or harpoon-shaft, as she would ruin the work. Neither must she approach a sick person, lest his malady should get worse.”² Here we find once more the inhibitions imposed on women who have recently had sexual intercourse, or who are unwell, in short, are unclean. In another passage the author says: “A man whose wife is with child may not go with his comrades to war. The natives say: . . . ‘the blood belong woman run along man, make him no good’ . . . and also ‘woman he make him eye belong man no good.’ If the man should take part in a fight he would be killed and his companions with him. The blood flowing from his death-wound is associated with that of his wife in childbed.”³ The pregnant woman is unclean on several counts undoubtedly, but to the natives it is mainly through participating in what will befall her when she is delivered of

¹ W. E. Roth, *An inquiry into the animism and folklore of the Guiana Indians*. E. B. XXX, p. 181.

² G. Landtman, *op. cit.* pp. 230-31.

³ *Ibid.* p. 149.

her child. The uncleanness that will then manifest itself is already covering her, and her husband is also affected by it.

In New Guinea also, with the Jabim natives, "the husband of a pregnant woman must not go out to sea to fish; he may catch the smaller fish at the river-mouth, but in the open sea they usually catch bonitos. . . . He must not accompany the others to catch them, however, for the bonitos would not fail to disappear as soon as the boat drew near. This disappearance of the fish has some connection with the blood of the woman."¹ With the Jabims' neighbours the Tami, "the husband of a woman with child can never go out fishing . . . for the foetal blood accompanies him, and as soon as the fish see him coming they plunge into the depths. For this reason, too, fishermen going to sea must not meet a woman who is pregnant. . . . More than one woman brings her pregnancy to an end by causing a miscarriage, so that her husband may be able to catch fish."² Finally, the Bakaua in this district "do not allow a woman who is pregnant to take up a position on the beach or near the estuary, because her blood kills the fishes. Nor must her husband go with the other villagers on a fishing expedition; he can fish only if he remains at a long distance behind them, for they hold indeed that the blood of the foetus is (magically) visible on him, and it frightens and disperses the fishes."³

The same beliefs and customs prevail in the near vicinity among the Marind-anim of Dutch New Guinea. "Above all, even before the birth of the child, the married pair must avoid intercourse with the other inhabitants of the village, and he must leave the men's house and she, the women's. She goes to a little hut specially constructed for the purpose—an *urambuha*, or small hut for a pregnant woman. There she spends several months both before and after her confinement. . . . The man lives near in a small hovel or under some shelter. From this time forward neither of them may visit the neighbours, nor even leave the village, except in a case of absolute necessity. They are forbidden to work in the plantations, to fish, hunt, climb coconut trees, have any sexual intercourse, etc."⁴ These taboos relating to pregnancy, as well as others that I have not mentioned, bear a strange resemblance to the taboos imposed on mourners, with the Jabim, Tami, and Bakaua natives, and they undoubtedly are due to the fear inspired by the blood of a woman

¹ R. Neuhauss. *op. cit.* III. pp. 293-94.

² *Ibid.* III. p. 538.

³ *Ibid.* III. pp. 425-26.

⁴ P. Wirz. *op. cit.* I, p. 34.

with child, and the uncleanness with which she infects her husband. In another part of Dutch New Guinea, "to the question 'Has a pregnant woman the "evil eye"?' the answer given by the native is: 'Yes; by merely looking at someone she can make him ill. . . . She casts a spell on him.'" ¹

The South African Bantus think very much the same. To the ba-Ila, "such a woman is taboo; her condition makes her a source of danger to the community. Especially is she liable to injure the new life developing within her womb. The husband, from his close connection with her, is also taboo. Strict rules are therefore laid down to avoid any evil consequences that may come from these dangerous persons: above all, nothing must be done to prejudice the well-being of the unborn child." ² And further on in the same passage: "A pregnant woman must on no account come to the hut (of a new-born child) lest the child 'should die of luvhumwe or wars'. Luvhumwe is the condition of something split or parted asunder. If a pregnant woman passes through a calabash garden, the calabashes will all drop off their stalks or split; if she passes a tree laden with fruit, the fruit will fall to the ground; if she passes near a litter of pups, their heads will split and they will die; if she passes a hen sitting on a nest of eggs, they will all crack. . . . In the same way, were she to enter a hut where there is a baby, its skull would part asunder."

I do not wish to stress facts of this kind, for the pregnancy taboos are practically universal; but it will be helpful to distinguish between those which protect the unborn child and those relating to the dangers which the uncleanness of the woman in such a state entails on her and her surroundings, for the latter vary to some extent. In Nias, for instance, "to my question whether the woman with child was avoided, I was everywhere answered in the negative. She maintains her customary intercourse with the people of her house and her village: nobody avoids her, and she works nearly always up to the last minute before her confinement." ³ Such a fact is neither unique, nor even very exceptional.

¹ J. A. Wasterwal. *Zwangerschap, geboorte, kindermord en huwelijk bij de Papoea's in en om de Tanah-Merah Baai*. Tijdschrift. T. L. V. LVIII, p. 214.

² Smith and Dale. *op. cit.* II, pp. 10-11.

³ Kleiweg de Zwaan. *Die Heilkunde der Niasser*. p. 200 (1913).

IX

As soon as the confinement actually begins, things are quite different. In many primitive communities the most intense fear is shown at such a time. The parturient woman's uncleanness is now revealed by unmistakable signs, and to protect themselves against her, the natives have recourse to the most energetic and, in our eyes, often, the most inhumane measures.

Though their customs may differ slightly in detail, it is always the same fear that actuates the primitives in what they do when the travail begins, during the confinement, and for some time after: it is the fear that the woman's blood may defile—both in the physical and in the mystic sense of the word—the house, those who are in it, and the whole community. Most observers liken this fear to that shown by primitives of the menstrual discharge.

We must not, however, consider this the sole motive for the precautions, rules, and prohibitions which at this time are imposed upon the patient, and also, to some extent, upon her husband. Many of them are designed to protect the young mother and her baby from dangers of all kinds, especially from the evil spirits that would profit by their critical state to work them ill. Into the series of rules and rites that accompany and follow a birth there enters a complex ensemble, compounded alike of fears and of desires for protection. Here I shall consider only those having reference to the uncleanness arising from the blood in parturition, and the various methods of neutralizing it—that is, of dispelling the evil influence and its fatal consequences until the young mother shall have been made clean again. When she is no longer impure, all danger for herself, her child and her husband, and for the community is over.

Among the Euahlayi people "every night for about a month the mother has to lie on a steam bed made of damped eucalyptus leaves. She is not allowed to return to the general camp for about three months after the birth of her child.

"Though perfectly well, she is considered unclean, and not allowed to touch anything belonging to anyone. Her food is brought to her by some old woman. Were she to touch the food or food utensils of another, they would be considered unclean and unfit for use. Her camp is *gailie*, i.e. only for her; and she is *goorerwon* as soon as her child is born—a woman unclean and

apart.”¹ The author does not state that the uncleanness proceeds from the blood lost during and after the confinement, but we are inclined to think that that is the idea of these aborigines, from the similarity of this evidence to the following facts:

On Rossel Island “for menstruation and the delivery of a child there are houses in the bush a little way from the village, which the men do not go near. A woman stays in the bush house, when bearing a child, for some twenty or thirty days. . . .”² “At Mawata (in Kiwai) delivery must not take place inside the ordinary house, for ‘blood belong woman’ is a very bad thing, with which the people should not come in contact, particularly the men. . . .” And again: “During a couple of weeks after the birth of her child, the mother stays within the enclosure of mats in the house, where a fire is kept burning. She is looked after by some other women, but during that time her husband does not enter into any direct communication with her, after his first inspection of the infant.”³ He nevertheless participates in her uncleanness, since he cannot accompany the others either fishing or hunting, for he would bring misfortune upon them. Papuans not only believe that the fish or the game see or feel the woman’s blood on the fisherman or the hunter; according to them the animals see the wife in person, beside her husband. She is both in the hut whence she is forbidden to depart, and with her husband in the forest. Here we have a very clear case of bi-presence. “A hunter who wants to go to the bush, although his wife is in childbed, sometimes manages to prevent her soul from haunting him. He takes his tobacco pipe, and after smoking, puts it down close to her, and says to it, after mentioning her name: ‘You stop, no come along me. I go along bush, by and by I come up back, you (can) go.’ This lays the spirit of the woman till he comes back and takes up the pipe. The hunter may also walk round a certain tree once and then thrust an arrow or stick into the ground close to the tree, after which he calls his wife’s name, saying: ‘*Urio* belong you, no come along me. All time you look out that thing. You there, I stick you.’”⁴

Among the Kai, other New Guinea Papuans, “as soon as travail begins, the women must leave the village immediately and

¹ L. Parker. *op. cit.* p. 39.

² W. E. Armstrong. *op. cit.* p. 101.

³ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* pp. 230-32.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 272.

go into the forest, near running water. During their monthly courses also they are not allowed to go to their plantations, but must leave the village for the bush, where a little hut is prepared for them.”¹ With the neighbouring Jabims, “during the confinement the husband must keep away from the house. The day after the birth is kept as a holiday; nobody goes to the fields, for fear that the taro crop would fail. Here again, there seems to be a causal connection between the failure of the crop and the woman’s blood.”² The husband of the young mother, and all the other men in the village too, share in her uncleanness. If they were to work in the fields, this uncleanness would affect the taro, just as the sight or odour of blood, seen on the husband, makes the game escape the hunter, or causes the fish to dive when the fisherman shows himself. Perhaps even, the men might be accompanied by the wife’s “spirit,” and such a presence would be fatal to animal and plant life.

In Doreh Bay in Dutch New Guinea “the woman is delivered in a hovel that is made ready under the house; she remains there until after her purification rites, for her husband is afraid of the woman’s blood.”³ Later the author added the following details. “When the delivery is near, a hut is very quickly prepared, for on no account must the birth take place in the house. If this hut, or rather, this kennel is not ready in time, the woman must in any case leave the house, and they provide her with some sort of shelter as soon as possible. In this critical hour she may expect no help; no man, nor even any woman, may come near her. She has to do everything for herself, and remain isolated for at least ten days after her delivery. So that she may not leave her shelter, even in a case of pressing necessity, only the very frailest of ladders, often but a single bamboo pole, is placed against it. Nobody must pass near a hut in which a woman in childbed is lying. Should anyone infringe this rule he or she will be held responsible for any damage done by pigs to the plantations.”⁴ By going near this hut such an individual has contracted uncleanness from the lying-in woman’s blood; he or she, being unclean, will bring misfortune upon the community, and be regarded accountable for any ravages the pigs may commit.

¹ R. Neuhaus. *op. cit.* III. p. 91.

² *Ibid.* III, p. 294.

³ J. L. Van Hasselt. *Anteekening aangaande de gewoonten der Papoea's in de Dorehbaai ten opzichte van zwangerschap en geboorte. Tijdschrift. T. L. V. XLIII, p. 567 (1901).*

⁴ *Ibid.* XLVI, pp. 287-88 (1903).

In New Georgia, "when a native woman expects a little one, the women of her village build her a small leaf-house away in the bush, no man being allowed to touch it, and there in the dirt and damp, with the rain often pouring through the roof her child is brought into the world. No man is allowed near the place, and the father does not see his child for at least fifteen days."¹ In the Marquesas, "since the end of the pregnancy and the delivery were *tapu*, the woman used to remain throughout this period and till after the birth in a specially constructed hut, to which only the husband and the midwife had access."² And here is one final testimony, from the Truk Islands of the South Pacific, "a little removed from the dwelling-houses one may see here and there tiny little huts, placed there for a special purpose. . . . They provide shelter for women about to be confined, and also during the menstrual periods."³

In South Africa these same fears of contamination have led the Bantus to take similar precautions. Among the Xosa kafirs, "if the birth takes place in a house, the mother crouches over a heap of loose earth; she must be stark naked, so that neither her garments nor the floor of the house shall be defiled by a single drop of blood."⁴ Colonel Maclean writes: "A woman is not allowed to be seen out of her hut, or to be visited by her husband or other male friends, during her state of 'ukufukama,' which continues for a full month after her confinement, and during which time she abstains from the use of milk."⁵ (If she were to drink milk, the cows that had given it would fall sick and would yield no more.) Among the Herero, "the hut in which a confinement has taken place remains unoccupied until it falls to pieces. Nobody is allowed even to take a piece of its wood for a fire."⁶ This prohibition, as we may remember, is applied also to a house which has been struck by lightning, and in both cases it is accounted for by the uncleanness which attaches to the house.

The details given by Junod on this subject are very informative. "The *place chosen* for the delivery is generally the back of the hut, where the pregnant woman lives. Some mats are

¹ G. Brown. *Melanesians and Polynesians*. pp. 34-35.

² Dr. L. Rollin. *op. cit.* p. 96.

³ P. L. Bollig. *op. cit.* pp. 193-94.

⁴ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 121.

⁵ Colonel Maclean. *op. cit.* p. 94.

⁶ Irle. *Die Religion der Herero. Archiv für Anthropologie*. N. F. XV, p. 357. (1915).

brought and erected in such a way as to form a small enclosure; this is done to protect the woman from indiscreet onlookers.”¹ (Undoubtedly, but also to protect others from the evil influence which will emanate from her, especially from her blood.) “After the birth, the *husband* is not allowed to enter the hut under any pretext; this is not on account of his being unclean; quite the contrary. A birth does not contaminate the father amongst the Thonga as it does in some other tribes. He is not obliged to undergo any medication. His exclusion from the conjugal hut is due entirely to the fact that his wife is polluted by the blood of the lochia, and he would run the greatest danger if he came near. Excluded are also all *married people*, i.e. all those who have regular sexual intercourse. Should they touch the child, he would die. If however a woman wishes very much to go and see the new-born child, she must abstain from relations with her husband for two days. . . . Young girls are welcome in the hut, but they must not kiss the baby during these first days. ‘It is not yet firm, it is only water,’ as they say.”²

The main cause of fear is the sanguineous flow that follows the birth. “This ‘blood,’ to the South African natives, seems to be imbued with impurity even more fatal than that of the menses. . . . But the lochial discharge is particularly dangerous when it follows a miscarriage, especially a *miscarriage that has been concealed*. In this case it is not only the man who is menaced or killed by it; the whole country, the very heavens must suffer for it.”³ Junod reports a very strange and curious form of the fear inspired by the woman recently confined. “The chief of the Bukaha in the Shuluvane country married only virgins. He had intercourse with his new wife till she had her first child. Then she was impure; he feared to have any more relations with her, and allowed her to live with her lovers. Each of his wives had a regular lover, a kind of second husband.”⁴

Without laying further stress on the African instances of this kind (which are indeed innumerable), I shall quote a few similar ones which come from North America. With the Alaska Eskimos, for instance, “when a child died, the mother secluded

¹ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I, pp. 35-36.

² *Ibid.* I. p. 41. Cf. I, p. 166.

³ H. A. Junod. *Conceptions physiologiques des Bantou Sud-Africains. Revue d'Ethnographie et de Sociologie.* 1910. p. 139.

⁴ *Idem.* *The life of a South African tribe.* I. p. 99.

herself for ten or twelve days in a small hut built for the purpose. The same custom prevailed when a child was born, and for twenty days the mother was considered so unclean that no one would touch her, and her food was given to her on the end of a stick. When the twenty days were over, the mother and child took a warm and then a cold bath, and were then considered clean.”¹ The similarity between the seclusion imposed for mourning and that which must follow a birth has struck several observers of primitive customs. In both cases the uncleanness must be regarded as almost the same since the methods of defence against it are the same.

In his valuable work on the Iglulik Eskimos Rasmussen relates, in the very words used by Orulo, the wife of Aua, (one of his friends and a highly esteemed shaman), the account she gave him of her own life. “The first thing I can remember,” she says, “is that my mother lived quite alone in a little snow hut. I could not understand why my father should live in another house, but then I was told that it was because my mother had just had a child, and was therefore unclean, and must not be near the animals killed for some time to come.”² Later, Rasmussen himself gives more precise details. “When a woman feels the birthpangs coming on, then if it is winter, a snow hut must be built; if summer, a tent erected for her. This house or tent, which is quite small, resembles a dog kennel. . . . At this time too, all her belongings must at once be moved outside the house where she has been living, and may not be taken in again before she herself returns from the lying-in house.”³

“Women must effect their own delivery without help, and must be alone in their hut or tent; even when the birth is difficult no one is allowed to assist. ‘She is considered too impure for anyone to be near her.’ Anyone rendering aid would become impure in turn, and subject to the same troublesome, year-long taboo as the woman herself. The obligations involved interfere so seriously with domestic duties, that the community will not allow any married woman, not even the patient’s mother, to incur them. But more important than domestic considerations are those of religion; not even a solitary woman, without relatives to consider, may assist, for the ‘powers’ or the spirits would be angered at the inability of the woman to

¹ W. H. Dall. *Alaska and its resources*. p. 403.

² Kn. Rasmussen. *op. cit.* p. 48.

³ *Ibid.* p. 170.

manage by herself; or the animals would be offended if a woman aiding another in childbirth should touch a newborn infant not of her own bearing. The only thing that can be done for a woman in cases of difficulty is to apply to a shaman, but that costs a great deal. . . .

"After the birth, the woman cleans herself all over, in winter with snow, in summer with water, and cuts away afterwards such portions of her clothing as may have become stained with blood. She is now ready to proceed to another hut prepared for her (the first is used for the confinement only); and she remains there for one or two months, or according to circumstances, sometimes three; if she has been unfortunate with her previous children, for instance, her taboo will be more severe according to the number and nature of such earlier misfortunes.

"She is regarded as so unclean, so dangerous to her surroundings that her impurity is supposed to issue forth in an actual, albeit invisible, smoke or vapour, which drives away all the game. Shamans who have been up to the moon have seen from there how these emanations arise from women in child-bed and during menstruation. . . . A woman recently delivered must therefore have her hood thrown over her head when she goes out, and must never look round after game. In her hut or tent she must have her own wooden drinking vessel and wooden tray . . . and also her own cooking pot . . . and her particular wooden ladle, etc." ¹

X

In many communities, especially in the Dutch East Indies, the successive stages of the confinement have been the subject of particular attention, and these have given rise to some very remarkable beliefs and customs. Without undertaking a very detailed study of them here, I shall try to give an abstract of them which may help to throw light on what has gone before.

The Palembang Koeboes of Sumatra "imagine the course of a delivery to be as follows: the waters, the infant, the umbilical cord, the placenta, and the blood. They regard the waters as the remains of the foetus before the fourth month, and the blood as being left over from it at four months. The waters, cord, placenta and blood are looked upon as companions of some kind

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 171-73.

to the child that has come into the world, and to the umbilical cord and the placenta an intense vital force is attributed. In them are to be seen the brothers (or sisters) of the newborn child. Their body is not like his, perfectly developed, but their soul and spirit are as normal as the infant's, and have even attained a higher degree of development than his." ¹ . . . "The cord and the placenta are often regarded as one and the same being, and the name of the one is never uttered without that of the other. Until the death of the individual born with themselves they come to visit him three times a day and three times each night. They are tutelary genii, a sort of guardian angels to men born with them and living on earth, whom they must protect from all evils, and this is why the Koeboe, before he goes to bed or goes to his work, or starts on any voyage always thinks of his *veri-tamboeni*, or placenta-cord. . . . The mere fact of thinking about it is enough; there is no need to invoke it or ask anything of it, or pray to it. If a man does not think of it, he is depriving himself of its good offices on his behalf.

"The waters and the blood are considered chiefly as a proof that the human body is made of these liquids: it is a compound of blood and water." ²

There is no doubt that from one point of view this placenta-cord is somewhat akin to the *kra* of West Africa (Cf. *The "Soul" of the Primitive*, Ch. VI, pp. 193-200) and to the "tutelary genii" and the "personal totems" observed in so many different communities. But as a rule these are neither visible nor tangible, whilst the after-birth and the umbilical cord are seen in physical form, like the infant born at the same time. We should not insist too strongly upon this difference, however, for it is far less important to the primitive mind than to our own. That which may be grasped by the senses can be regarded by them as at the same time spiritual, since to primitives there is nothing that is actually "material" or "immaterial," in our sense of the terms. What the Koeboes say of the placenta-cord would seem much less strange to us if we could reconstitute their conception of it, that is, could directly perceive in the object present to sense its mystic properties and powers, and imagine, like the Australian aborigine, the soul as the kidney fat, or think, like the Fijian, of snakes as "spiritual," ³ etc.

¹ G. J. Van Dongen. *op. cit.* T. L. V. LXIII. p. 229 (1910).

² *Ibid.* pp. 220-22.

³ *The "Soul" of the Primitive*, Ch. V. p. 178.

Still in Sumatra, with the Karo-Bataks, everything that is alive has its own *tendi*, and man has his, but he also has his placenta (*agi*) and the birth-waters, which can have an existence of their own. "They accompany a man, go in front and behind him; at night they mount guard at his head and feet; and he invokes their protection before composing himself to sleep."¹ In this case the waters take the place of the umbilical cord, and the details given are less precise than those observed by Van Dongen, but there is evidently a belief akin to that held by the Koeboes.

There is yet another to be found at Endeh in the island of Flores. "The after-birth, which is considered to be alive, is hung on a tree, usually a banyan fig outside the village." And again: "At the time of birth the placenta is placed in a box or hollowed-out bamboo near the young mother's bed . . . and it has food brought to it! Next day, it is all wrapped up in a male or female garment, according to its sex (for the placenta is a little brother or sister), carried away from the village and hung on a tree, usually a banyan fig.

"The shaman must not forget beforehand to urge it seriously to go in peace to the land of the dead, and not to disturb its relatives in future. . . . The story is told of a man who had his origin in a placenta which was already hung up in the usual place. Since the people imagine the placenta to have a soul as well as the infant, and attribute the same sex to it, it is not surprising that a story of this kind should have been associated with an individual whose birthplace nobody knew."²

In the western district of Flores, "the placenta, wrapped up in leaves, is carried out of doors. Near the house a shallow pit is dug; it is placed in it, and the pit is covered over with a stone. Later people put a wooden enclosure round it. . . . On the five following days, night and morning, this stone is raised, and boiling water is poured on the placenta, to protect it from wild beasts."³

In Soemba, "the placenta, called 'the elder brother' (once only, the 'younger brother,' as far as Kruyt could ascertain), is sometimes placed in a basket and hung up in a tree."⁴—Schadee

¹ R. Römer. *op. cit.* *Tijdschrift* T. L. V. L, p. 208 (1908).

² Van Sachtelen. *op. cit.* XIV, p. 118.

³ H. B. Stapel. *Het Manggeraische volk (West Flores)*, T. L. V. LVI, 166 (1914).

⁴ A. C. Kruyt. *De Soembaneezen*. T. L. V. pp. 516-17 (1922).

gives a long list of passages in which it is stated that the waters, and the blood flowing after the delivery, and the placenta are all considered as "young brothers and sisters" of the newborn infant.¹—Wilken had already found that "in all the tribes inhabiting the Archipelago the after-birth is the subject of superstitious reverence, because it is regarded as the *sudara*, or blood-relation of the newborn child. If that should be a boy, the placenta will also be a male, but if it be a girl, the placenta is of the same sex. It is usually buried, but sometimes the natives burn it."² "In Eastern Nias they believe that the placenta is the *sudara*, i.e., the brother or sister of the infant. It has to cover the foetus and protect it from malign influences."³ At Atjeh in Sumatra, "as among all the tribes of the Malay Peninsula and many other peoples too, it is held that the placenta is as it were the not fully developed brother or sister of the baby, and that it precedes it into a better world; it is wholly identified, so to speak, with the child. This identification goes so far as to assume that when the baby for instance has an attack of 'gripes,' the *adoi* or placenta is feeling sick too. The natives bring remedies to the place where it is buried, and if this is ineffectual, and the baby goes on crying, and still suffers from colic, they unearth the placenta, and bury it elsewhere, thinking that the first place was too damp, or too dry,—in fact, ill-chosen. They believe too that the *adoi* (its 'spirit') constantly comes and plays with the child, as for instance, when it smiles during sleep."⁴

This interesting text helps us to understand the prevalent beliefs about the placenta in the Dutch East Indies. It arrives in this world with the new-born infant, to which it is a sort of twin; but it does not stay there. It goes immediately to the world where the dead are living; that is, it at once becomes a "spirit," and in this form it accompanies and protects the child that is living on earth until the end of his days. Yet more, it identifies itself with him, though they are not confounded. Here again we are confronted with one of the cases of participation so familiar to the primitive mind, and so puzzling to our own. In *The "Soul" of the Primitive* we encountered them

¹ M. C. Schadee. *Het familieleven en familierecht der Dayaks*. T. L. V. 1910, pp. 398-99.

² Wilken. *Handleiding voor de vergelijkende volkenkunde Neder landsch-Indien*. p. 205.

³ Kleiweg de Zwaan. *Die Heilkunde der Niasser*, p. 204 (1913).

⁴ J. Jacobs. *Familie en Kamponglevens op Groot-Atjeh*. I. pp. 151-52. (1894).

apropos of the *kra* and the tutelary genii, the werewolves, the leopard-men, panther-men, etc., apropos too of their conceptions of reincarnation, and on various other occasions. When we look at things from this point of view, these East Indian beliefs relating to the placenta no longer seem ridiculous, nor the care taken of it incomprehensible.

Such being the *leit-motiv*, the variations upon it are endless. Here are a few of them. In his great work on Atjeh, Snouck-Hurgronge writes: "They wrap up the 'younger brother' (the placenta) in a piece of stuff, together with a little salt and a few ashes from the kitchen; then they put it behind the kitchen hearth, probably to dry it quickly. Of all they say in Java about the placenta—that you can read on it the number of confinements a woman has undergone; that the placenta is the same at every one of them; that after the birth it returns whence it came, and that during birth it is a source of danger to the elder brother, the new-born infant—of all this you hear nothing in Atjeh."¹ In Nias they do what they can to prevent its doing any harm (to the mother, it is true, and not to the newborn child, its brother); they hasten its death.²—At Bali, "the placenta is preserved in a box, and then buried in front of the young mother's house. For six months they continue to bring it offerings every day, for there is a spiritual bond subsisting between the placenta and the new-born infant during this time, and they desire to maintain a favourable disposition in the placenta."³

With the Sakai of Ulu Kampar in Perak, "if a child should suffer from any itching complaint, the navel-cord, which appears to be usually buried under the house, is dug up and inspected. Should this have been attacked by ants, they are killed with hot water, and it is re-buried in another spot. The after-birth is frequently buried under the house. . . . The Behrang Senoi, on the other hand, frequently hang it on a branch of a tree, and have a curious belief that within three days it becomes a scaly ant-eater, the navel cord forming the animal's tail."⁴ Possibly in this last circumstance we may have another form

¹ Snouck-Hurgronge. *De Aljèhers*, I, p. 421.

² Kleiweg de Zwaan. *op. cit.* pp. 207-09.

³ G. K. B. Agerbeek. *Gebruiken en gewoonten in de afdeeling Zuid-Bali*. T. L. V. LVII, p. 2 (1915).

⁴ I. H. N. Evans. *Studies in religion, folklore and custom in British North Borneo and the Malay Peninsula*, pp. 220-22. (1923).

of the Koeboes' conception of the placenta and the umbilical cord as one and the same being.

Finally, to the Koelakapoeas Dayaks, "when the child is delivered, they wait for the after-birth—the younger brother or sister of the new arrival—to appear, and then both infant and after-birth are placed upon a banana-leaf and the midwife cuts the cord. . . . The placenta is buried or else hung up on a tree near by. . . . The soul of the placenta is believed to be a part of the woman's soul, and if after a confinement it does not return to the mother's body, she can never bear another child." (Here we may compare the Javanese belief already reported, that it is the same placenta reappearing every time a woman has a baby.)

"They usually wait . . . until the cord has fallen off before they bury the placenta. . . . During the interval, the basket in which it has been placed is put near the woman's bed, next a lighted lamp. If the baby smiles, they say it is making faces at its little brother (or sister, as the case may be). If it cries, they are angry with each other. The natives frequently reproach the placenta for not being kind to its brother or sister.

"When the placenta has been buried they put round the 'grave' a small paling, made of planks from the ironwood tree. When the placenta is hung on a tree . . . the life of the child and that of the placenta react on each other. If it is attacked by worms, the child falls ill."¹ The Loeboes of Sumatra believe the same thing. "After having washed the placenta with water, they put it into a new rice-pot . . . and then bury it under the house, a stone indicating where the little grave is. Should the baby cry a good deal later on, they attribute it to the fact that ants have penetrated the buried rice-pot and are stinging the placenta. It is for this reason that in a similar case they pour hot water on the little grave to drive away the ants."²

In other districts still the same beliefs have been noted. With the Tinguians in the Philippines, for instance: "the whole life of a child can be determined, or at least largely influenced, by the treatment given the after-birth."³ In East Africa, among the Baganda, to take that tribe alone, "the after-birth was called the second child, and was believed to have a spirit which

¹ J. Mallinckrodt. *op. cit.* T. L. V. LXXXII, pp. 590-92. (1924).

² J. Kreemer. *op. cit.* T. L. V. LXVI, p. 314 (1911).

³ F. Cooper Cole. *The Tinguian. Field Museum of Natural History. Anthropological Series.* XIV, p. 304.

became at once a ghost, (that is, it died at once, and henceforward lived like the dead, just as they picture it in the Dutch East Indies). It was on account of this ghost that they guarded the plantain by which the after-birth was placed, because the person who partook of the beer made from this plantain, or of food cooked from it, took the ghost from its clan, and the living child would then die in order to follow its twin ghost. The grandparents, by eating the food or drinking the beer, saved the clan from this catastrophe and ensured the health of the child. . . . Thus they retained the ghost of the after-birth in the clan; whereas if a person belonging to another clan ate the food or drank the beer, he thereby carried away with him the ghost of the after-birth.”¹ Here we are faced by a two-fold participation. On the one hand, the after-birth is identified with the plantain near which it is buried; it is present in the fruit from the tree and the beer made from it; and on the other hand, the living child and the after-birth are in a certain sense one and the same being, since if the “ghost” of the after-birth leaves the clan, the child will die. Writing, not of the after-birth, but of the umbilical cord, Father Gorju says: “The kings of Buganda ascribed honours to one object (the umbilical cord) which to them was more than a mere symbol. They called it *mulongo*, or twin brother. . . . To the people, the popular word *kalira* was nothing more or less than a *mwana*, a child, a second being, the duplicate of the first, the preservation of which was not without effect upon the health and very life of the newborn infant, at least until his official entry into civil life.”²

Such beliefs, of which numerous other instances might be given, and those relating to the menstrual discharge, seem to throw light upon each other. There is no doubt that they belong to the same class. The waters and the lochia, the placenta and the umbilical cord are the imperfectly developed “brothers and sisters” of the new-born infant and he, like themselves, is as yet but blood and water. They are born with him, but only to die immediately; yet, like all the dead, they continue to live as “ghosts,” and hence are much to be dreaded. It is therefore necessary to take their moods into account, to look after their welfare, and sometimes bring them offerings. The catamenial flow gives rise to similar ideas. It too is a living, though incomplete, being, which appears but to die, and its ghost is especially

¹ Rev. J. Roscoc. *op. cit.* pp. 54-55.

² P. J. Gorju. *Entre le Victoria, l'Albert et l'Edouard*, p. 333.

malevolent, hurtful and dangerous. Like the blood in miscarriages it arouses the greatest fear, indeed, real horror. It places the woman from whom it flows in a condition of excessive uncleanness, like that of the woman in childbed, and yet more the woman who has brought about an abortion. To the primitives these cases differ only in degree, for all of them show the woman to be "defiled" in the most terrible way, and that, the most dangerous to her circle. The blood issuing from her affirms the unseen presence of "spirits," that is, of the dead, from whom so much is to be feared. It *is* indeed these "spirits" themselves. It acts like poison, as primitives understand the word; it casts a spell; it kills.

These beliefs, especially those collected in the East Indian Archipelago, are usually reported in animistic terms, either because the natives themselves put it thus, or because the Dutch observers are accustomed to express what they see and what is told them in such a form. It is indeed difficult to know what the natives really do imagine, and what is in their minds when they are talking of what the observers call the "soul" of the foetus, the "spirit" of the navel-string, and so forth.

But whatever be the terms applied to these ideas of theirs in our own language, that which we must endeavour to grasp, as far as it is possible for us to do so, is the "spiritual" aspect of things like blood, flesh, umbilical cord, placenta. To us they are portions of the living body, or parts of the maternal organs at a given time—nothing more, and nothing other, than this; but to the primitives, in whom the affective category of the supernatural at once comes into play, they are beings both material and spiritual, whose magic influence is of extraordinarily dread power.

We must therefore try to fall in with their view of the world—a world oriented, encircled, and composed differently from our own. To them the supernatural, although distinct from nature, is yet not separate and apart. It is the element of it that they feel the most intensely, and that which most often engages their attention. For it is upon the supernatural, upon these unseen forces and influences that their destiny, their happiness or their unhappiness, their life or death, at all times depends. The influences we have been studying are among those which they dread the most, and they are therefore particularly anxious to avoid all contact with this fatal blood, which would

make them terribly unclean, and bring the worst disasters upon them. This anxiety of theirs is at once corporeal and religious, if it be permissible to use the latter term when the predominating element in the emotion aroused by the supernatural is one of fear.

CHAPTER XI

SOME METHODS OF PURIFICATION

I

A MAN may festoon his person with amulets, he may have the most efficacious formulas at his command, and scrupulously observe the necessary regulations and taboos on all occasions—yet he is never sure of remaining clean, that is, he is not certain that he may not be under some evil influence. An error or imprudence on the part of a member of his family, the touching of some unclean object, may have had this effect upon him without his being aware of it. Or it may be that there has been a death in his house or it may have been struck by lightning, or something else of the kind, and he himself is unclean. How is he to recover from such a state; how shall he escape the threat of disaster?

In order to comprehend the significance and the efficacy of the means of purification instituted by primitives and transmitted from generation to generation, we ought to be able to imagine as they do what it is they are trying to rid themselves of. It is something spiritual, an evil influence, an unseen force bringing misfortune, but at the same time it is something material, since the defilement clings to the unclean man, it “sticks” to his person, and this must be “cleaned off” in the literal meaning of the word. We have no terms which exactly correspond with those native expressions “denoting both material representations of immaterial qualities and immaterial representations of material objects.”

Thus in Hardeland's Dictionary we read: “*Papas pali*: broom used to sweep away all impurity and all misfortune (these are indeed two aspects of the same reality, at once spiritual and material). It is made of the leaves of certain plants, fastened together and steeped in blood and in rice-water. It is then moved backwards and forwards above the man who is *pali* (unclean); or it is taken everywhere throughout the house

that is in such a state; and this is called 'sweeping away impurity'.¹ What to us is a symbol of purity is in their eyes purity itself. Their thought, which is intensely mystical and yet at the same time realistic, here follows its usual trend, and the symbol literally *is* what it symbolizes.

In Borneo, when a tiger-cat has been killed in hunting, there must be a ceremony performed. This "animalicide" has placed the hunters and their companions under an evil influence, and it is essential that they shall be purified, i.e. freed from its fatal power. "The hunters cross over the body of the animal eight times each way, uttering certain formulas meanwhile, and for a week they are obliged to besmear their bodies with fowl's blood, and bathe night and day in order to be clean once more."² In Central Celebes, "they give the name *mopaocra* (to send back), to a ceremony which takes place whenever circumstances oblige them to destroy magic influences, (or in other words, to cleanse themselves from defilement). They begin by sacrificing a white fowl, and with its blood they besmear the foreheads of all the important people present. . . . After three days have been given up to a series of rites, they sacrifice a white fowl and a white buffalo. . . . The priestess is said to drink a little of the blood of these animals, and then the foreheads of other persons present are smeared over with this blood 'to give them life'.³ (The blood strengthens them and at the same time purifies them. Upon blood regarded as the vital essence, cf. *supra*, Ch. IX, pp. 266-67.) It has the same beneficial influence on things as on men. "In Upper Mori in Central Celebes when a man, in casting his javelin or his spear, has missed his aim several times in succession, he goes home and cuts off a cock's comb with a knife, smearing the points of his weapons with the blood that spurts from the wound. The magic power which had made his weapon fail is neutralized by this blood, and henceforth the weapon will be more powerful."⁴

The Bergdama of South Africa have the same belief in the purifying virtues of the blood as these East Indians. "The man who, whether unintentionally or not, has violated the traditional regulations and accordingly believes himself a prey to misfor-

¹ A. Hardeland. *op. cit.* p. 419.

² E. Mjöberg. *op. cit.* p. 230 (1929).

³ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa* III, T. L. V. LXXVI, pp. 102-02 (1920).

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 29.

tune (the infringement of the taboo has made him unclean), or who finds that he is pursued by ill-luck without being able to avoid it, (a sign that he is under some malign influence)—such a man must perform the ceremony of purification with the blood from the heart of an animal which, as a rule, is indicated to him by the diviner or the medicine-man. The animal is slain, and most frequently eaten by the elders around the sacred fire. The man who is to carry out the rites of purification does not receive any share of the meat. He must anoint himself thoroughly on the upper part of the body and the arms with the blood that had congealed in the heart, and he must rub so energetically that all the greasy deposits of his body, which perhaps has not been cleansed for years, are loosened and mixed with this blood. From the mixture thus produced he will make an amulet, and wear it round his neck. During the purification he invokes the ancestors from time to time, sighing :

O Fathers, let the rain fall down upon us;
 Give us happiness once more!
 Give us yet some other gift!
 May we receive something to eat!
 May death keep far away from us!

“The man thus purified must stay two or three days longer in his hut, and he may not touch foods that are boiled or roasted on the sacrificial fire. He must also abstain from sexual intercourse, and his wife and children may not even enter his hut, for if they did, the purification would be ineffectual, and the whole family would run the risk of disaster. The man is not obliged to fast, but his food and drink must be brought him by men only.”¹

From this description we gather that the effect of these purificatory rites is not immediate, and a certain time must elapse before they become valid. In the meantime he who has been subjected to them is not yet delivered from the evil influences threatening him; that is, the defilement has not vanished, and the Bergdama must accordingly submit to certain taboos during this period. He is still a source of danger to himself and others, therefore he remains isolated; he avoids contact with women, and is afraid of his own wife.

In Kropf's Xosa dictionary we find: “*Hlamba* means the simple act of washing . . . to cleanse, to wash out clothes . . .

¹ H. Vedder. *Die Bergdama*. I, p. 123.

to clean oneself, i.e. to throw off or up, to vomit.”¹ Vomiting that is induced is a cleansing process that is fairly frequent in the Old World as well as in the New. Such ejections rid the body of the impurity that has been introduced within it. On the eve of any important or difficult or perilous undertaking this process is often employed, so that the native may be sure that he does not bear any defilement within him, for this would be the cause of failure or misfortune. To cause an ejection therefore tends to the same end as to bathe in running water or in the sea: both alike aim at getting rid of the impurity which is both material and mystic, which adheres either to the interior or the exterior of the body, and doing away with it. It is not then without definite reason that the Xosa language gives but one word to denote the two operations.

In other districts the natives resort to smoke fumes, as the Euahlayi aborigines do after a burial. Nearly everywhere they “cleanse themselves” from defilement (such as being present at funeral ceremonies, for instance), by taking a bath, preferably in running water or in the sea. They imagine that the water separates the impurity from the body and bears it away, and at the same time it has the power of neutralizing the evil influence. We ought rather to say that to the primitive mind these two effects are one. So too, when they have been able to get a sorcerer to reveal where he has hidden his victim’s belongings, those upon which he has operated to cause him suffering or death, they hasten to find them and they plunge them into running water immediately. The ill effect of his malicious action is at once arrested, and if there is still time, the victim will be saved. The purifying power of the water, combined with the sorcerer’s desistence, has gained a victory over the bewitchment.

Bryant has noted a remarkable difference between the purificatory medicines which the Zulus call “white” and those that are known as “black.” “Black medicine is a generic name for all such as are of a superstitious nature, i.e. administered with the intention of charming away evil, (the maleficent influence) as, for instance, after having killed a man, after a lightning stroke, etc. They are always accompanied by certain obligations of abstinence or by taboos, as, for example, refraining from leaving the kraal, abstaining from certain foods or from

¹ A. Kropf. *op. cit.* p. 149.

seeing certain persons, etc. From these restrictions one is released by the *uku-potula* process (purification) and administration of white medicines. This name therefore denotes such medicine as is used for releasing from or clearing away the binding effects of the black variety.”¹ And in his article on *potula* he says: “This word signifies purify oneself, cleanse away the defilement of ‘black medicine’ by rubbing, anointing or washing one’s body in water or grease medicated with charms, after which generally follows a completing dose of ‘white medicines,’ freeing the individual from all the restraints imposed upon him by the ‘black medicines.’”²

To these Zulus, then, there are two kinds of purifying agents which must be used one after the other. The first, or “black” medicines fight the impurity from which it is desired to rid the person who has become unclean (from the consequences of homicide, contact with a corpse, etc.). But of themselves these medicines do not suffice to obtain the result aimed at. The man who is unclean must at the same time submit to a certain number of taboos and abstinences, though this is not the sole reason for them, for the isolation, sexual and other taboos to which he must be subjected, aim also at preventing the defilement and its accompanying misfortune, from extending to his circle; they are a protection both for, and against, him.

It is only after the black medicines have done their work, and the restrictions and taboos have been properly observed, and the necessary time has elapsed, that the white medicines take up their rôle. The man now enters upon the second stage of his purification, and this puts an end to all the restrictions and taboos, and (to use Bryant’s own expression) cleanses away the defilement of the black medicines. Since it was the object of these to overcome the evil influences set free by the uncleanness, they are on the same plane as itself, and to fight it effectively they must be of the same nature. Therefore when they have gained the upper hand, there must be another purification which sweeps away all this and definitely reinstates the condition of purity. We can thus understand (1) why purification often demands a fairly long time, until these black medicines, true “counter-impurities,” have produced their effect upon the man’s impurities; (2) why, to attain their end, they need the restraints and taboos placed on the man who is unclean, which are so to speak collaborating with them; and (3)

¹ A. T. Bryant. *op. cit.* p. 616.

² *Ibid.* p. 511.

the final need of white medicines to do away with both impurity and counter-impurity, and complete the process.

Junod has observed something of a similar nature among the Thonga, although the distinction between white and black medicines is not so clear there. "The *phungula*, a kind of Turkish bath, is administered in most of the cases where ritual defilement is feared, or is believed to have caused the disease. The kind of poisoning caused by the impurities connected with death, menses, lochia, etc. manifests itself by swelling of the joints of the hands and feet, pains in the bones, etc. This vapour bath is also resorted to in order to cure people who do not succeed in having children."¹ And a little later: "Another ceremony of purification (*hondlola*) is performed *after the cure is effected*, to remove the defilement (*nsila*) of disease. 'In this way,' says Mankhelu (the native who gave Junod the most trustworthy information), 'we disperse the bloods which have made the patient sick, so that they cannot return to him violently.' This ceremony is obligatory after all serious diseases, and after the weaning."² Like Bryant, Junod thus indicates a special ceremony which must take place after the operations that aim at healing and purifying are finished, to round them off, as it were.

Just as one can combat witchcraft only by counter-witchcraft, and poison (as the natives understand it) by another poison, so, too, the medicines used against defilements can only be of like nature to themselves. It is therefore necessary, when the purification is to be completed, to be purified again from the defilement acquired in the earlier process. To put it in other words, in the world of magic in which these operations are carried out, purity is only definitely restored when a man leaves the place in which he has struggled with the defilement and triumphed over it. This is the purpose served by the white medicines of the Zulus, and the *hondlola* of the Thonga. Hopley noted the same conceptions among the Kikuyu in a different form, although one in which they are still recognizable. "The general idea of the purification ceremony is of a dual character; its first object is to cast out the contamination of an evil influence, (this is indeed the work of the black medicines) and, this being done, to re-establish the normal relations between the worshipper and his deity."³ This final religious phase of

¹ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* II. p. 426.

² *Ibid.* pp. 427-28.

³ C. W. Hopley. *op. cit.* p. 137 (1922).

purification corresponds with the influence of the white medicines.

The purificatory rites are endless in their detail. Side by side with those which free a person who has become unclean through the evil influence brought upon him by his defilement, there are others which are prophylactic. Warriors are cleansed before beginning a campaign or a fight; men who take part in a fishing or hunting expedition; novices, at the end of the initiation ceremonies, when they enter the ranks of the adults; the young girl at the time of her marriage—for all these there are special purificatory rites. There are other practices, too, which are hastily adopted when the disaster is already overwhelming them, and these are undertaken in the hope that it may be made to cease. To quote but one example only, "if the rain is delayed, it is thought to be occasioned by some remissness in administering the affairs of the town—for instance, it is a custom that all widows and widowers are ceremonially unclean until they shall have separated themselves from their families, and lived for some time outside the town in booths erected for the purpose. . . . This custom is sometimes relaxed; but should the rain be long in coming, a row of booths may be seen outside the town, the *lingaka* (witch-doctors) having resolved that they could not expect rain unless they attended to the old customs."¹ In such a case, the drought is caused by the uncleanness of mourners who have not been isolated as they should have been. In other districts other disasters of a public or private nature are attributed to the circumstance that some present or past defilements have not been purged by the necessary purifications, and at once they do the best they can to repair such harmful negligence.

II

Some unexpected and inexplicable misfortune suddenly reveals the fact that an evil influence is being exerted upon those it has smitten—in other words, that they have become unclean, and they ask themselves how this uncleanness can have come about, and whether it be by their own fault, unknown to themselves. It may be that the act of some one in the group has defiled it and thus brought disaster upon all of them. In such a

¹ Rev. J. Mackenzie. *Ten years north of the Orange River*. p. 386.

case, if the uncleanness is to be terminated, so that the fatal threat may be averted from the group and it can regain its purity, there is one indispensable preliminary. The guilty party, the man who has become unclean, must confess his transgression. An open avowal of wrongdoing is essential, and as long as it has not been made, the dread consequences of the uncleanness continue to unfold. Certain facts, chosen from hundreds of instances, will make this necessity for confession clear. "The wife of a native missionary was returning home to Fiji from New Guinea. . . . The woman, together with her little son, embarked at Suva in a cutter, for the purpose of returning to her relatives. Some time after they had left, a storm arose, and the waves began to dash over the vessel. One wave larger than usual caught the boy and swept him overboard. The captain very bravely leapt into the boiling sea to rescue the lad. He succeeded in reaching him, for unfortunately the men on the cutter were unable, on account of the strong wind, to bring the cutter about. The captain clung to his charge for some time, until a huge ocean shark came and snatched the boy from his grasp. Horrified by this event, and expecting every moment that other sharks would seize him, the man struggled on in the midst of the waves. It was three hours before the vessel returned to the spot, and by good fortune the crew were able to save the captain. No sooner, however, had he got on board than he looked round on the crew and passengers with almost the air of a judge as he asked 'Who is responsible for this?' Forthwith the mother of the lad that was drowned fell upon her face on the deck, and confessed her wrongdoing in New Guinea before she left that country. All the people on the cutter were immediately at rest in their minds, accepting the occurrences as fully explained, and as inevitable under the circumstances."¹

Certain details of this story, which is rather of the folklore type, cannot fail to be somewhat open to suspicion. The storm arising shortly after the departure, the wave that carries off the child, the monster shark, the captain who finally succeeds in re-embarking—all this seems as if it might have been arranged in order to lead up to the final dramatic moment, but whether it be true or not, the story is none the less instructive as to the ideas and sentiments of those who tell it. The woman who has embarked is already unclean, in consequence of wrongdoing (probably the violation of some sexual taboo) committed be-

¹ Rev. W. Deane. *Fijian society*. pp. 144-45.

fore leaving New Guinea. Her uncleanness contaminates the boat and those in it, and she is the bearer of disaster to them. Her child is lost, and the captain, who did wrong in trying to save him, is about to share his fate, and only escapes it by a miracle. As soon as he gets on board again he demands a confession from the individual responsible for this disaster, and the one who has imperilled the safety of all. The woman confesses her wrongdoing, and at once all are reassured, for the danger has been averted, and the past tragic occurrences are considered quite natural. The woman's uncleanness, since it was concealed, had caused the misfortune, but, the confession once made, the evil influence ceased to operate.

It is with the same idea that before beginning a campaign every warrior is summoned to make complete—and usually public—confession of his misdeeds. This practice is a very common one in primitive, or even fairly civilized, communities, for it has been found in the East Indies, Polynesia, in Mexico, in Peru at the time of the Incas, among the Eskimos, among the Bantus, and elsewhere. All these peoples ascribe great importance to this confession, from a variety of reasons, which Pettazoni has studied in detail.¹ Possibly this custom may have originated in a desire to neutralize the evil influence of uncleanness, and to arrest the disasters which defilement, as long as it is kept secret, infallibly brings in its train.

Thus, in former times in Samoa, "the combatants, before going to the fight, were sprinkled with cocoa-nut water by the priest. Each individual was supposed to confess any offences of which he might have been guilty, and after being sprinkled he generally uttered some prayer for protection and success."² These same Samoans "attached great value to confession of wrongdoing in times of danger, but, as far as I know, there was no expression of repentance or amendment, or any prayer for forgiveness made on such occasions. In a case of danger at sea, the steersman would head the boat to the wind, and each man would make confession of any wrongdoing. One would say: 'Well, I stole a fowl at a certain village.' Another would acknowledge wrongdoing with some married woman at another village, etc. . . . This would continue until every man had confessed, or declared his innocence, when the boat would be

¹ R. Pettazoni. *La confessione degli peccati*. (1929).

² G. Brown. *op. cit.* p. 175.

put before the wind again, with confidence that the crew could make the passage safely.”¹

In Samoa again: “In case of disease, the high priest of the village sometimes told the sick man’s friends ‘to assemble the family, confess, and throw out.’ In this ceremony, each member of the family confessed his crimes, and any judgments which, in anger, he had invoked on the family, or on the particular member of it then ill; and as a proof that he revoked all such imprecations, he took a little water in his mouth and spurted it out towards the person who was sick.”² This last instance throws light on the bearing of confession to the Samoans’ minds and to those of primitives in general, who consider it indispensable in such a case. To harbour a feeling of anger against anyone, and more especially if this be expressed in strong words, is tantamount to casting a spell upon him. (Cf. *supra*, Ch. II, pp. 72-74.) To have contracted defilement by committing wrongdoing that is concealed, and that brings disaster upon the group or on one of its members, is also a kind of bewitchment. Therefore the avowal of this wrongdoing is to “undo” what has been done; it is to break the evil spell. We know, however, that to break the spell does not materially differ from purifying. Confession, then, is in principle a process of purification, indispensable to the removal of the disaster which is threatening or has already occurred, as the result of uncleanness contracted by a member of the group who has concealed his misdeed. And just as the natives demand that the sorcerer shall undo his nefarious work, so they demand that those who have concealed their wrongdoings shall confess them, so that the uncleanness may lose its power for evil.

Among the Dayaks, “when the chief of the Bahu Tring tribe has decided to go out kidnapping and head-hunting, the people, women as well as men, are called together to confess.”³ In Nias, “when there is a persistent fine rain, or when the drought is continuous, the priest declares it to be a sign that some young girl is pregnant. He immediately begins to search for the culprit, and when he thinks he has found her, he tries to induce her to confess by pricking her calves with a sharp piece of

¹ *Ibid.* p. 229.

² G. Turner. *Nineteen years in Polynesia*. p. 124.

³ C. Bock. *The head-hunters of Borneo*. p. 218.

bamboo.”¹ It would seem to suffice for the misdeed to be known, so that they can proceed to carry out the purificatory rites, but, as a matter of fact, this is not so. In order that the uncleanness may vanish and its effects cease to be felt, whether the rain is to stop, or to fall, it is essential that the guilty person shall have confessed the misdeed.

The Bantus attribute the same rôle to confession, and among the Thongas, if the sexual taboos relative to mourning, which are very strict, have been violated, confession is regarded as indispensable.² Some of the Bechuanas think it necessary, if the anger of the irritated ancestors is to be appeased. “The sacrifice by itself is not considered sufficient. It must be accompanied by confession, and the confession usually, if not always, precedes the sacrifice (in cases of illness, etc.). But if it is a case of prolonged drought, or a murrain among the cattle, or an epidemic of sickness which is carrying off the people in large numbers, then public confession on the part of the tribe must be made.”³ In East Africa the Safwa make a practice of confession before engaging in a fight. “When the men start a campaign against the enemy, or go to attack lions and leopards, if there are many lives lost they ask themselves: ‘Why should it be only we who are dying, and not the enemy? There must have been some adultery or debauchery in our village.’ Any one who knows himself to be guilty must confess his wrongdoing to the rest *beforehand*. This is the reason why, when they are about to depart, the chief calls them together and says to his warriors: ‘Let those who have had unlawful sexual intercourse withdraw.’ The guilty are obliged to stay behind.”⁴

III

It is perhaps among the Eskimos studied by Rasmussen and Stefánsson that we most clearly perceive the significance and the importance of this confession of misdeeds. Rasmussen tells the story of a woman named Uvuvnak, who had fallen into a trance one night and when she came to herself found that she possessed a shaman’s powers. Henceforward nothing was hidden from her and she began to reveal all the sins committed by

¹ Kleiweg de Zwaan. *op. cit.* p. 218.

² H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I, p. 153.

³ J. T. Brown. *Among the Bantu nomads*, p. 151.

⁴ E. Kootz-Kretschmer. *op. cit.* I, p. 229.

the people in the house. In this way, she purified them all. . . . "Uvuvnak, as if inspired, began to sing. (Every shaman has a special song of his own, which comes to him from the spirit-world.) She was intoxicated with joy, so that all in the house felt the same intoxication of delight, and without being asked, began to state all their misdeeds, as well as those of others, and those who felt themselves accused, and admitted their offences, obtained release from them by lifting their arms and making as if to fling away all evil; all that was false and wicked was thrown away. It was blown away as one blows a speck of dust from the hand."¹ This confession which, under the guidance of the shaman, is enlivened by a kind of lyrical movement, assumes the aspect of a purification which is at once symbolical and actual. In the literal and the figurative senses it cleanses those who confess their misdeeds aloud. As very often happens with primitives, the symbol participates closely in that which it symbolizes; it *is* what it prefigures. Confession puts the defilement to flight, just as the cries of women imitating water-birds cause the rain to fall.

On another occasion there is a threat of famine; the seals and the other marine animals remain invisible, and the hunters are in despair. What is to become of them? Are they doomed to die of cold and hunger? A shaman goes down into the depths of the sea and visits the Mother of the animals; he finds her angry with human beings, because a miscarriage has been concealed, and the noxious emanations from the guilty woman are accumulating around her and suffocate her. By slow degrees he manages to appease her, and at length she allows the animals to reappear, so that the hunting may be resumed, and the tribe is saved. Then the shaman goes up to earth again, and re-enters his village with the good news.

All is not yet at an end, however. The shaman now demands general and complete confession. He is not satisfied until every woman who has had a miscarriage has confessed it. "I had a miscarriage," said one, "but I said nothing, because I was afraid, and because it took place in a house where there were many people." "As a matter of fact, as soon as a woman has had a miscarriage in a house, all those living in the same house, men and women alike, must throw away all that the house contains of soft things, i.e. all the skins on the sleeping place, all the clothes, in a word, all soft skins, thus including the seal-

¹ Kn. Rasmussen. *op. cit.* p. 122.

skin covering used to line the whole interior of a snow hut, and this was so serious a matter for the household that women sometimes dared not report a miscarriage.”¹ For a long time to come, nobody would have either clothes or coverings; they would have to depend on the charity of their neighbours; and when they had been able to collect a sufficient number of new skins, there would be so much trouble and labour necessary to make them supple that it would be disastrous. But if in such a case a woman maintains silence about the event, the consequences will be yet worse, for the concealment arouses the anger of the Mother of the animals, and she keeps them in the depths of the ocean, so that the village will die of want. The guilty woman is therefore obliged to confess. Should she in her terror have kept silence and the shaman succeeds in extorting a confession from her, the people are so relieved to have escaped catastrophe that, far from wreaking vengeance upon her, they do not think of calling her to account for what she has done. “They are now assured that there will be abundance of game on the following day; and in the end, there may be almost a feeling of thankfulness towards the delinquent.”

Further on in his book Rasmussen reproduces *in extenso* the official report of an interminable enquiry held by the shaman at the bedside of a sick woman. Upon the shaman’s adjurations the invalid enumerates one after another all the violations of taboos, whether slight or serious, that she had committed. . . . When he is quite satisfied that none has been forgotten, the listeners leave the house, believing that the avowal of all the offences has “taken the sting out” of her illness, so that she will soon be well again.² The illness is the result of the uncleanness brought upon her by these offences, which acts like bewitchment. The confession brings this action to a standstill, breaks the evil spell, that is, it purifies and cleanses. The evil influence, neutralized by a contrary one—that of the confession—can no longer exert its power, and the woman is cured.

Possibly if we penetrate yet further into these Eskimo ideas it is well to discriminate between the mere revelation of the hidden misdeed, and the confession made by the delinquent. As long as the defilement is kept secret it spreads and gains force. The ravages wrought by the evil are multiplied and aggravated, and the worst is to be feared. It is therefore of vital importance

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 98, 128-29. Cf. *supra*, Ch. X, p. 3.

² *Ibid.* pp. 132-41.

that it should be declared; moreover, a secret is always a source of danger. "People," said the shaman Inugpasugjuk, "must have no secrets. All the evil deeds one tried to conceal have grown and become a dangerous, living evil. If one took the life of another human being, this must likewise not be kept secret from the neighbours, even though it were certain that the relatives of the person slain would have the blood of the slayer in revenge. . . . The slayer who, for any reason, sought to conceal what he had done, always ran the risk of exposing himself to a danger which might be even greater than that which threatened him from those seeking vengeance. Evil deeds might always recoil upon the evildoer. . . ." (for instance, in the case of a secret murder, the dead man himself might return as an evil spirit to take his revenge).¹

Even if there be no bad action or crime in the case, a secret may be dangerous. Thus a seal-hunter who had been carried up to the moon, and who, on his return, said nothing about it, was almost dying, and could not open his mouth. "Happily a shaman was called in, and discovered what was the matter with him. He had concealed the fact that the Moon had carried him away, but as soon as this was discovered and talked about, he was saved."² If one has a vision and says nothing about it, one is endangered thereby. Orulo tells the story that once in her childhood she saw the mountain spirits. "Quite without thinking, I made no secret of what I had seen. But my little brother kept it secret, and died of it shortly after. One must never keep the matter secret when one has seen spirits."³ The secret is all the more harmful when it conceals an action that renders a person unclean, and thus brings an evil influence upon him and his circle.

Such actions therefore must not remain unknown, for only through their being made public can dire consequences be averted. Yet to have them known is not always enough: very often it is necessary that the wrongdoer should himself confess his misdeeds. In the story given above, when the shaman returns from the depths of the Ocean after having softened the heart of the Mother of Animals, his battle is not yet won; it demands a general confession. He must have the explicit avowal of the woman who has concealed the miscarriage. Again, the sick woman who has been subjected to a formal interrogation

¹ *Ibid.* p. 102.

² *Ibid.* p. 83. Cf. other similar stories, pp. 75-83.

³ *Ibid.* p. 49.

will be cured, not only because her wrongdoing has been revealed, but because her confession of it has made it henceforth powerless to injure her.

Were all cause for fear removed when the wrongdoing is known, it would seem that, the revelation once made, the other members of the group would pay no attention to the culprit, or else they would make him rue his act. But on the contrary, even then, they beg him to make confession himself, and when he can be persuaded to it, they almost thank him for it. It is clear, then, that such confessions have a virtue of their own, essential to the neutralizing of the evil influence set free by the defilement. On the boat going towards Fiji, as soon as the wife of the native missionary has confessed her wrongdoing, everyone at once feels comforted and reassured, and the storm is calmed. In communities where it is customary to hold "trials" for witchcraft, the natives endeavour to make the accused wretches confess at all costs, and they usually torture them until they decide to do so, or until they die. But do they need these confessions to assure them that they have not been mistaken? Certainly not; such scruples do not occur to them, for the enormity of the charge does away with any need to seek for proofs; besides, the trial by ordeal is infallible, and nobody would dream of wanting any confirmation of it.

What is the reason, then, for this determination to extort confessions that could well be done without, if it were of no consequence to know who the guilty party is? The motive actuating the natives here is something quite different. They are convinced that the confession they are determined to procure, produces certain results by the very fact that it has taken place. Between the doer of the deed which has caused uncleanness and the deed itself they imagine, they actually feel, some mystic bond, some sort of participation like that which unites a living man and his belongings. As long as the doer of the deed keeps it a secret, it is like a being that has issued from himself, living a life of its own, and in its turn engendering fatal consequences. The man is responsible for it; he is the silent accomplice of the evil which is being propagated thus. On the other hand, if he openly confesses that he is the doer of the deed, he withdraws from it the life with which he had endowed it, and takes away its power to harm. As the Eskimo shaman put it, he "takes the sting out" of the evil, and its results are cut short. This is what the East Indians call "neutralizing" a malign influence.

We can now understand why it is essential to obtain the sorcerer's confessions, for they are tantamount to a dis-enchantment, and if the victim still lives, he or she may be saved. We see, too, why the Eskimo shaman demands confession. As long as the culprit, even when known, has not confessed, the consequences of the uncleanness may go on developing. As soon as confession has been made, they are no longer to be feared.

On this subject Stefánsson's observations are in the same vein as Rasmussen's. "One of the most fundamental of the religious ideas of the Eskimo is this, that supernatural punishments come not so much on account of evil things being done, as on account of their remaining unconfessed. If a famine occurs, for instance, a shaman will magically inquire from his familiar spirit why the food has become scarce, and the answer is likely to be that some member of the tribe has done such and such a thing in secret. A woman may perhaps have eaten the meat from the wrong rib of a mountain sheep. When the spirit informs the medicine man that the woman has done this, he calls upon her to confess that she has done it. If she confesses, the famine will end and all will be well, but if she brazenly asserts that she has done no such things as charged with, then the most serious misfortunes will continue to fall upon the people. A person who stubbornly refuses to confess is therefore a public enemy, and will be treated accordingly. In extreme cases it may become necessary to kill a person who is incorrigible. This is rare, however. Seeing that no punishment will fall upon one who has broken a taboo, provided he confesses, it is obviously simpler and better to do so."¹

IV

The views we have been discussing find confirmation in a very prevalent custom which, apart from them, would be difficult of comprehension. In many communities, when a delivery is difficult and the infant is slow in coming to birth, so that affairs begin to look serious, the natives believe the cause of it to be an act of adultery committed by the woman either during or prior to her pregnancy, and kept secret. They ask her to confess, for a frank and complete confession is her sole remaining chance of safety. When this has been made, the child

¹W. Stefánsson. *The Stefánsson-Anderson Arctic Expedition. Preliminary Ethnological Report.* p. 238.

can be born. As in cases we have already cited, confession alone has the power of neutralizing the evil influence set to work by the misdeed, and only that can at once arrest its consequences.

In Rossel Island, "in the case of a married woman, if there is any difficulty in delivery, she is urged to mention the name of the man who has had connection with her and helped in the formation of the child, for if this is not done the child may refuse to come out."¹ Here there is an allusion to the fairly prevalent belief that fecundation is not accomplished in one single act, and a definite number of sexual connections is necessary for a child to be normally constituted. If a woman is entering upon a pregnancy, and yields herself to other men than her husband, there may be complications. (In Rossel Island precisely, natives find no difficulty in admitting that a child may have several fathers.) In the Fiji Isles, "adultery and larceny are synonymous terms. . . . Women are strictly brought up in the faith that concealment of illicit love will inevitably engender a long train of ailments and bad luck, which may be avoided by open confession. When childbirth is difficult the sufferer is exhorted to make a clean breast of all her affairs. When she does not do so, the midwives mention the names of those they suspect, and when at last they utter that of the real father, the babe comes forth without further difficulty."²

"There would seem," says Junod, "to be no relation between an illegitimate birth and a difficult delivery; but for the Thonga a protracted and difficult birth proves that the child is not legitimate. This conviction is so strong that when a woman knows that the child she is going to bear is not the son of her husband, but of a lover, she will admit this secretly to the principal midwife in order to spare herself the pains of a difficult birth, as it is taboo to bear a 'child of adultery' hiding the fact; it would cause the mother untold suffering. Therefore, if the delivery lasts too long, the midwife will begin to have doubts as to the legitimacy of the child."³ With the Waschambaa, "they regard a protracted travail as a proof that the woman has had sexual connection with several men."⁴ Among the Azande of the Belgian Congo, "the midwife begs the husband to withdraw. She then interrogates the woman in labor, saying: 'Now you are

¹ W. E. Armstrong. *Rossel Island*. p. 101.

² A. B. Brewster. *The Hill Tribes of Fiji*. p. 198.

³ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I. p. 39.

⁴ Karasek-Eichhorn. *op. cit.* I. p. 188.

about to bring forth a child. Tell me now whether this child is really your husband's. If, after you had conceived him you have had sexual relations with other men, confess it. Give me all their names, for if not, the delivery will be difficult, and we do not know what may become of the baby.' The mother tells the truth to the midwife."¹ "When a Bambara woman is about to be confined, she must make her confession to the old women who are there to help her, and they go to the husband and ask pardon for all her misdeeds *en bloc*, but they do not tell the husband that he has been betrayed, even if this should be so. With the Malinke, the woman must make a full confession to the husband himself, at the time of delivery, or else she will suffer greatly, or have a miscarriage. And among them, too, the lover's name must be given, if there is one. It is the same with the Wassuluki and the Khassonki. This practice of confession is found also among the Mossi, Mosossi and Gurunsi; in short, it seems to be the general Sudanese custom."²

To bring to an end this collection of evidence, which it would be wearisome to prolong, "Alaskan Eskimo generally believe that if a woman has difficult labour it is because she has had sexual relations with some one, and failed to tell about it. For that reason a woman in labour will rehearse all her relations with men from her youth up, but especially any that have occurred during pregnancy."³

These testimonies which have been collected in districts that are widely separated, and from peoples who are not all equally civilized, yet agree upon the subjects that interest us here. A painful confinement is proof that the patient has had illicit amours, probably during her pregnancy or prior to it; and as a consequence the child, like herself, is endangered. In conformity with the unvarying habit of primitives who, when confronted by anything unusual or abnormal, at once ask "What does this portend? Of what is it the sign?"—obstetrical complications take on a revelatory significance. As a rule, native women give birth to their children speedily, and without much suffering. If, then, the labour-pangs should last for some days and nights, or even more than a few hours, they do not doubt the fact that some kind of transgression has been com-

¹ C. R. Lagac. *op. cit.* pp. 168-69.

² L. Tauxier. *op. cit.* pp. 356-57.

³ W. Stefánsson. *The Stefánsson-Anderson Expedition. Anthropological Papers.* XIV. p. 355.

mitted. A malign influence is being exerted on both mother and child, and it arises (for so tradition has taught them) from the uncleanness due to illicit connections. It is therefore urgently necessary to neutralize it, i.e., to remove the obstacle which prevents the child from being born.

Will the revelation of the criminal relations be enough to bring this about? We have no testimony that affirms this; besides, it is frequently an open secret. In the primitives' villages, as in so many others, people are generally well-informed as to what is going on around them. It may happen that a husband is the only one who does not know what the neighbours are aware of, or even that he is not ignorant of it either. However this may be, all observers are quite explicit in this respect: in order to bring a difficult labour to an end, and for the baby to be ready or to be able to come forth, it is essential that the mother shall formally acknowledge her misdeeds, and reveal the name, (or names if there be more than one) of her lover. As long as she refuses, the danger lasts, and it grows increasingly grave, but once she has made confession, the child is born. The mother's frank avowals are of sufficient power to neutralize the evil influence, and thus they prevent the disaster from being fulfilled. In other words, they have a purifying effect, and this very term has been employed by Rasmussen with reference to a confession. (Cf. *supra*, p. 353.)

Thus the case of the adulterous wife in danger during her confinement may be compared with that of the Eskimo group reduced to famine because a woman has concealed a miscarriage. In both of them, the serious danger is the result of uncleanness that has been kept hidden. This is done away with only through becoming known, and more precisely, through the confession of the misdeed, for this alone is able to neutralize the evil agency which the keeping of the secret has set working.

Many other infringements of taboos are also defilements which bring misfortune, not only upon the perpetrator, but upon his circle, and if they remain hidden they will bring an avalanche of calamities upon the group. The defilement is then equivalent to a bewitchment, and, to free the group from the fatal spell, or, if you prefer, to purify it, the confessions of the culprit are essential. This accounts for the excessively energetic measures taken to obtain confession, and also for the universality of such a practice.

V

That which is unknown inspires mistrust. Whether it be an animal or a plant, it is possible that in touching it—or in eating it, if it appears to be eatable—an individual exposes himself to the risk of becoming unclean. But it is possible that it may be a good and useful food, and how can he be sure, without running any risk? He will not venture to make the attempt himself; he will see it done first. In many of the primitive legends, before eating a fruit till then unknown, or trying a new food, (some special fish, for instance), the man gives some of it to an animal. In a Kiwai legend, the hero "opened a coconut, and by way of trial let his dogs first eat a little of the kernel, before he ate himself, and he found it good. The people were summoned to the place where the tree was growing, but did not dare taste any of the nuts until they had let a blind man do so." ¹ In an island of the Torres Straits, the hero of a story "seeing the white kernel inside, wondered if it (a coconut) was good to eat; and scraping a little off, he threw it on the ground, where the ants soon devoured it. Seeing that, he then tasted a little himself, and finding it palatable, soon devoured the whole coconut. He then reported the matter to the other natives, who were at first sceptical; but on seeing Gedori eat it without apparent harm, they all followed suit, and soon the coconut became one of their chief dishes." ² In another version of the legend, "Gedo gave the scrapings first to ants, then to many dogs, before he ventured to taste it." ³

When it is a case of having relations or coming in contact with some person or thing that is new to them, primitives as a rule maintain the same suspicious attitude as when encountering new foods. They fear the evil influence that may emanate from them and bring disaster to the group. Like the legendary hero who, before tasting the coconut, made dogs and ants try it, they are fearful of making the first experiment. We remember the Mosuto chief who would not himself wear the presents sent him by the first white men to arrive in his country; he is too much afraid of being bewitched by them, and wants first

¹ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 100.

² A. E. Hunt. *Ethnographical Notes on the Murray Islands, Torres Straits.* J.A.I. XXVIII, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*

of all to see whether they have any ill effect upon one of his subjects who makes the experiment. Again, with the Nagas of N. E. India, "an Ao usually wears cloth woven by his wife, and if he buys a decorated cloth he must be careful to brush it six times with a bunch of nettles before putting it on, while he utters a prayer that all ill luck there may be in it may depart. A man of the Mongsen group goes further. Besides brushing it with nettles he lays it on a dog before wearing it himself, and prays that all misfortune attached to the cloth may pass to the dog, and not to him."¹ The Sema Nagas take the same precautions.²—Among their neighbours, the Lhota Nagas, a very curious custom is observed whenever they buy or sell a buffalo, or ivory armlets, or wild boar's tusks. These objects are particularly prone to being "infected by ill fortune," (this is a very noteworthy expression: such things bring misfortune, i.e., they cast a spell, they are unclean, defiled), and certain marks upon them are considered to be of very bad omen, etc. This is the reason why an old man is always chosen as the intermediary between the parties, and he finally fixes the price when the bargaining has gone on long enough. In this way any misfortune that may attach to the object will fall upon him, the nominal buyer, rather than on the actual buyer.³ And so again, with the Sema Nagas, "at the time of formal betrothal, the prospective bridegroom goes to the house of the parents of the girl, and eats and drinks there. He is accompanied by a person called *anisu*—in the Yepothomi clan an old man, in the Ayemi clan an old woman—who drinks and eats before the prospective bridegroom does so, and blesses the match. This is, no doubt, to assure if possible that any evil influences attending the proposed marriage shall fall on the *anisu*, who is old, and therefore unimportant or less susceptible, rather than on the bridegroom, just as the reaping and the sowing of the crops are initiated by old persons who have in any case little to expect of life, are of little value to the community as fighting, working, or breeding units, or perhaps are so tough as to be able the better to withstand evil influences, for it is clear that young infants are the most vulnerable."⁴ Therefore the old men would seem to be the least vulnerable, and we may remember

¹ J. P. Mills. *The Ao Nagas*, p. 104.

² J. H. Hutton. *The Sema Nagas*. p. 11.

³ J. P. Mills. *The Lhota Nagas*, p. 44.

⁴ J. H. Hutton. *The Sema Nagas*. pp. 238-39.

(cf. *supra*, Ch. VIII, pp. 238-240) that to Bantus young children are considered unclean, that is, feeble, and more exposed than others to the pernicious effects of evil influences.

The first sight of a new region sometimes arouses similar fears. "The temporary occlusion of vision, as with tobacco and peppers, on the occasion of visiting for the first time any strikingly peculiar landmark of natural scenery," says Dr. Roth, "especially in the way of mountains, or even on entering a new region, would seem to have been a custom very prevalent among the Guiana Indians. . . . Its object, partly perhaps to placate the spirit of the place, and so turn aside the sickness or any other evil it might otherwise choose to send, is mainly to prevent the visiting individual attracting it towards himself. The procedure is protective or defensive in the sense of thwarting evil," and instances of this are given.¹

The desire to avert an evil influence seems also to inspire the precautions natives so often think essential in any commencement. The first time that a young man takes part in a hunting or fishing or warlike expedition; when he first cuts down a tree or hangs up a beehive; when he kills game and takes fish; undertakes a piece of work, etc.—on all such occasions he runs the risk of danger. In order to protect himself from it therefore, he must scrupulously observe the traditional taboos. Here is a characteristic one from Central Celebes. "When a tree, of which the wood is to be used for a coffin, is felled, a young man who has never hitherto assisted in making such a thing may take no part in the felling. When then the young man is to help in this for the first time, he must go and stand near the tree to be felled, and an older man, already experienced in such matters, must stand near him. The novice holds the axe in his hand, and the senior grasps his hand likewise. Then the axe that both are holding must be brandished in the air six times, without being allowed to touch the tree. The older man counts: one, two, three . . . six, and the seventh time he lets the axe strike the tree, crying 'X. will never suffer ill when he makes a coffin!' and thus the initiation comes to an end."² This expression is noteworthy, for in cases of this kind, it really is some sort of initiation that is given. Any fresh form of activity, any new work undertaken for the first time, entails some

¹ W. E. Roth. *An inquiry into the animism and folklore of the Guiana Indians*. E.B. XXX. pp. 298-300.

² A. C. Kruyt. *Measa*. III. T.L.V. LXXVI. p. 97. (1909).

magic peril on the doer, and it is therefore essential to combat it beforehand by a preparation which is equally magic in its nature.

Among the Akamba in East Africa, "beginners at big game hunting, and indeed those who take part for the first time in a military campaign have to submit to certain observances. Something similar applies to those who are out on their first long journey. The Akamba seem even to have a special word for these last, and before such a person may drink from a stream on the way, someone first dips the point of his bow in the water and lets the novice suck it. Otherwise some mishap might befall him during the journey."¹

Without stressing this subject, we may note one example of the precautions adopted by the Thonga, the first time that any new thing is used. "When a pot has been fired, it must still be tested; this operation . . . is performed as follows: a little water is poured into it, and the potteress washes it thoroughly; then some grains of maize are cooked in it and thrown away. This must remove the *nkwangwa*, i.e., the danger attending the use of an untested, unpurified pot. People using such an implement would suffer from an eruption on the arms, and even on the whole body. To give someone food to eat from a pot which had not been purified is considered as an act of hatred."² To "purify" is the right word here, for the operation is indeed aimed at neutralizing any evil influence that may adhere to the new pot. For lack of such a precaution it would bring ill-luck to the first person using it.

VI

The customs relating to the firstfruits, which are prevalent almost everywhere, are themselves too—at least very largely—due to the necessity of averting the danger inherent in all things new. To eat for the first time the product of the new harvest without the necessary precautions, is to expose oneself to evil influences and attract ill-fortune. Sometimes we are expressly told this. In Kiwai, for example, "to the mabusi (a mixture of mashed taro, coconut milk and grated coconut kernel) a medicine is sometimes added, to preserve the stomachs

¹ G. Lindblom. *op. cit.* p. 347 (1920).

² H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* II, p. 100.

of the people, for there is always a certain danger when starting to eat the firstfruits from a garden.”¹

Very often, as we know, the firstfruits must be offered in sacrifice to the dead; out of respect, no doubt, but also because the fruits, like the soil, the plants and the animals have belonged to them, and still do so belong, and possibly too, for the reason above indicated. By eating first, the dead “purify” fruits and crops, and after them, the others may enjoy them without anxiety, for they have done away with the danger. These dead are powerful enough to neutralize any evil influence which may be attaching to the firstfruits. To give but one of many examples: “In Santa Cruz (Solomon Islands) the new canarium almonds cannot be eaten till the first fruits have been offered to the *lio'a* (spirits of the dead).”²

Among the Bantus the consecration of the firstfruits is the occasion of an impressive ceremony. The descriptions of it given by most observers very clearly show that it is of a purificatory nature. Among the Zulus, “before the people disperse, the most important part of the feast takes place, and this is the consecration of the whole nation. It is carried out thus. The king, surrounded by his witch-doctors, mixes together various products of the soil—sugar-cane, mealies, calabashes—with the blood of a sacrificial beast, and some medicines, and he has the whole cooked in large pots; then he helps himself to some with his own hands, and gives a taste, one mouthful merely, to each person present. Every man who has eaten of this is consecrated for the whole year, and he can begin to reap his harvest and enjoy his products safely. Some of this medicine is sent all round the country, for the use of those who were unable to be at the ceremony.”³ From these concluding words it would seem as if the main object of the feast were to put an end to any danger there might be in the consumption of the firstfruits.

In Bryant's dictionary we read: “*Elekeza*, to fortify oneself against evil by eating medicinal charms of some kind, as when a person mixes certain charms with the firstfruits of a new season, so as to secure himself against any ill that might be in the crops about to be harvested.”⁴ For the word *eshwama*,

¹ G. Landtman. *op. cit.* p. 86.

² R. H. Codrington. *The Melanesians*, p. 138

³ F. Speckmann. *op. cit.* pp. 151-52.

⁴ A. T. Bryant. *A Zulu-English Dictionary*. p. 129.

Bryant gives some details of the annual feast of the first fruits, which takes place about a month before the great annual festival of the *umkosi*. "This ceremony is performed in a more particular sense by the chief . . . the whole nation is not required to put in an attendance, as for this latter festival. . . . A private ceremony of a similar kind, and on a minor scale, is at the same time performed in each kraal, where the fruits of a number of plants are taken and boiled along with a decoction of the *u-sanvreni* plant, and then eaten. This latter plant is supposed to act as a stomach tonic or corrective, and to prepare it for the sudden change to the new 'green' foods."¹

With the Amandebele Kafirs the feast of the firstfruits "has both a political and a religious meaning. The time for its celebration is when the early maize and calabashes are ready for eating, and it continues for seven days. . . . The king makes his offerings to the ancestors. When the shades have been thus propitiated, the king, with the priests present, bites the tenderly cooked calabash and the raw sweet reed. In this way the whole increase of the current year is said to be sanctified, and the ceremonies of the feast completed.

"But the business is not over yet. Priests are now sent to all the towns of the land to repeat this last duty, and anxious, indeed, are the people to see them, as no one dares before this ceremony . . . is over, to taste the fruit of even his own garden, however abundant and ripe it may be, or however great his hunger. For, say they, should he do so, death will inevitably be the consequence."²

"The ritual sense of what the Thonga call *luma* is to remove the injurious character of a given food by a certain ceremony. The *luma* is a necessity before eating the flesh of certain wild beasts. But it is of still more importance, and one of the great laws of the clan, that the official *luma* shall take place before the subjects eat the products of the new year. There seem to be two ideas at the root of this strange taboo: (1) To eat certain kinds of food is dangerous for one's health, and the first mouthful taken must be seasoned with the royal drug; (2) the gods, the chief, and elder brothers have a prior right to enjoy the produce of the soil. To precede them in doing this is a sin

¹ *Ibid.* p. 135.

² T. M. Thomas. *op. cit.* pp. 301-02 (1872).

which would bring them misfortune. . . . The law of *luma* seems to have applied to all kinds of food in former times.”¹

Lastly, among the Herero people the ancestors must be the first to taste the new milk every morning. In Brincker's dictionary we have: “*makera*, to taste something, like the headman of an *onganda*, to whom early every morning must be brought all the milkpails to the *okuruo* or sacred place, so that he may take a drink from each, for in this matter he represents the ancestors who have the right to drink first. After this, the people are allowed to take theirs. Thus the *makera* is a religious action, and whenever the headman is absent his place is taken by the man nearest to him in rank and birth.”²

Despite some differences of detail, the preceding testimonies agree in the main, and there is little doubt as to the chief object of the ceremonies relating to the firstfruits. They are largely designed to remove the injurious character, as Junod expresses it, from the firstfruits, and do away with their possibility of causing misfortune. The dead, the king or the chief, must taste of them first of all, and they alone, thanks to their magic powers, are able to eat them with impunity. By doing this, they neutralize the evil influences which may attach to the new harvest; they have taken out its sting, and purified it, and since they were the first to taste the food, it is thenceforward harmless to others.

VII

Married life is in the highest degree a new experience for husband and wife, though this is not always so, no doubt, as far as sexual relations are concerned, for it most frequently happens in primitive communities that neither bride nor groom has anything yet to learn on this point. As a rule they have had the greatest possible liberty, and both have profited by it. They may often have spent the night together, and the marriage only serves to make their union definite and public. But, viewed from another aspect, it is the beginning of a new era in their lives and a serious change in their ordinary existence. In many communities the husband goes to live with his wife's family; in others, she comes to live with his people. Elsewhere, they have

¹ H. A. Junod. *op. cit.* I. pp. 394-95.

² H. Brincker. *Wörterbuch der Otji-herero*, p. 83. Cf. *ibid.* p. 146.

their own home from the start; the man has built a hut for his young wife, or else they live in an "apartment" in the communal house of the group. The husband will no longer sleep in the men's house, and henceforward he will eat the food prepared by his wife. Very often, too, it is she who very largely procures it for him, if she cultivates a plantation, whilst the man goes from time to time either hunting or fishing.

If, then, everything that is new entails danger, and if one may not run any risk without having taken the customary precautions, the beginning of married life certainly is no exception to this rule. There is therefore nothing surprising in the fact that, as with the firstfruits, certain delays and taboos are indispensable here also. In a very large number of communities, in fact, custom forbids the young couple to live as man and wife directly after the marriage. Some delay is essential, and this may vary from a few days to several months. If this rule were not observed the married pair, especially the husband, who is usually the only one mentioned, would be in the power of an evil influence and in imminent danger.

Among the Arunta and the Loidja, as among the Queensland aborigines studied by W. E. Roth, to mention Australian tribes only, the husband is not the first to possess his wife. She is handed over to a certain number of other men who are her "potential husbands." The reasons for this custom are manifold, and possibly among them is the need to protect the husband from danger.—"With the Banaro tribe of New Guinea the young wife remains apart from her husband until she has had a child, and this child is the offspring of her relations with the 'Sippenfreund' or group-friend of her father-in-law; it is known as the 'child of the spirits.' It is expected that before the birth of this child the husband shall have finished building a new house, and the wife have made a large sleeping-sack (as a protection from mosquitoes). The married pair then come together without any further formalities and begin their life in common."¹ In Bougainville, "on the night that follows the marriage, the parents and brothers and sisters of the bride sleep in the husband's house, and she herself in her father-in-law's. That he exercises the *jus primæ noctis* does not seem unlikely, from the hesitating replies I received to my inquiries. A house is being built for the young pair, but there is apparently no hurry about it. In the meanwhile the wife cooks her father-in-

¹ R. Thurnwald. *op. cit.* p. 22.

law's food, and her husband cannot eat anything she has prepared. When the house is finished . . . the conjugal life begins." ¹

Similar facts, though with some variety in their detail, have been noted in divers tribes of New Guinea. Here, among them, is one that expressly states that the reason for delaying the consummation of the marriage is the danger to which the husband is exposed. In the Oromokoromo tribe, "on the first night all the women and men of the village dance together. The bride's face is painted white on one side and red on the other, whilst her forehead is painted black. After a little dancing and feasting, the bride is given over to the bridegroom's uncle, and they have sexual intercourse one with the other. It is thought that if the husband is permitted to be the first to have sexual intercourse with his wife, he would die in a short time after the marriage. It is supposed also to have the effect of preventing the bride from becoming sick and weak." ²

Beliefs and customs of this kind are common in the Dutch East Indies. Hardeland did not fail to remark on them, and at the same time he indicates the reason for them. "When people are married, or when a feast has been given to the dead, or they have seen any omens that presage disaster, they get into a boat which a priestess (*blian*) plunges under water three times with the man sitting in it, whilst other priestesses fan the man's head with *sawang* leaves, and burn a kind of resinous powder above it. This ceremony is known as *bakakahem*. When those who have been thus bathed come out of the water, they spread rice on their heads, and this must be picked off by hens. It is hoped that in this way all misfortunes are averted from them." ³ These Dayaks therefore think that a man entering upon married life is by that very fact exposed to danger. Like the individual who has just celebrated a feast to the dead, or who is menaced with peril by evil omens, he is unclean. He needs a similar treatment to theirs if he is to escape the malign influence overshadowing him—in short, he needs purification.

Many other tribes of the Malay Archipelago enforce a period of delay before the conjugal life begins. Wilken noted this custom among the natives of Bugin, Macassar, Sunda, Java,

¹ R. Thurnwald. *Ermittlungen über Eingeborenenrechte der Südsee*. *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft*, XXXIII, pp. 339-40.

² *Annual Report. Papua*. 1914. p. 181.

³ A. Hardeland. *op. cit.* p. 202.

Madura, at Geelfink Bay on the New Guinea coast, in the Moluccas, at Flores, in the Philippines, at Atjeh, and other places.¹

With the Karo-Bataks of Sumatra, "the paternal exercise of the *jus primæ noctis* with his daughter on the night preceding her marriage is not regarded by the natives as incest."² Perhaps it should be interpreted like that noted by Dr. Thurnwald in Bougainville.

Nearly all the Nagas whom it has been possible to study up to the present time habitually demand some delay before the married life is allowed to start. Among the Angami, "there is usually no consummation of the marriage for at least two or three months, and it is said that this is delayed sometimes for as long as a year . . . during which time the bridegroom sleeps at the *morung* (men's house). In the Khonoma group a delay of several months is normal."³ With the Ao Nagas, "the newly-married couple must not have connection for nine nights . . . and a newly-married couple of the Mongsen tribe must refrain from intercourse for six nights."⁴ It must be noted that these prohibitions apply only to the marital relations, for both husband and wife are free to continue their illicit amours with mistress or lover, without any one finding fault with them. Mills relates a story that was popular in Ao, in which a young girl was betrothed to a man she did not care for. When she made known her preference for another, "there was no question of stopping her marriage at this late hour, but all the village said that, as a reward for his services, the lover should be allowed to sleep with her for the *genna* (taboo) nights after her marriage."⁵

With the Bobo of French West Africa, "the opening scene of the marriage is the pretended capture of the bride by three or four of the husband's comrades. After seizing her the ravishers take her to the village, or to the place in which she is to live, and keep her there, taking turns in having relations with

¹ Wilken. *Plechtigheden en gebruiken bij huwelijken en verlovingen bij den volken van den indischen archipel. Verspreide Geschriften*, I. pp. 498-503.

² R. Römer. *Bijdrage tot de geneeskunst der Karo-Batak's*. T.L.V. L. pp. 206-07. (1908).

³ J. H. Hutton. *The Angami Nagas*, p. 222.

⁴ J. P. Mills. *The Ao Nagas*, pp. 272, 274.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 320.

her for two or three weeks. While she is there her husband's family, in a very leisurely manner, set about preparing a home, but her own spouse does not come near her. When the habitation is ready, the husband's father sacrifices to the ancestors, asking them whether this is a favourable moment for him to receive his daughter-in-law, and entreating the protection of the unseen powers for her." ¹ In Equatorial Africa, "in a district such as Bugaya, for instance, the married pair spend the night like Sarah and Tobias without intercourse with each other, and if you ask the reason for such abstinence, you will be told that this night still belongs to the betrothal days . . . The Bahima of Nkola also remain continent during the first night, which is spent with the girl's parents." ²

Lastly, to give one instance from South Africa, the ba-Ila, too, defer the consummation of marriage. E. W. Smith, puzzled by this circumstance, has been considering what the reason for it may be. "Possibly it is a desire to escape some mysterious miasma arising from the union of the sexes. A young boy, chosen for the purpose, spends the first night with the bride. Between them friendly relations continue to exist afterwards. . . . It is as if something physical and tangible existed, which needs to be removed by the boy in order that the marriage may be consummated with impunity. It is difficult to reconcile this with the fact of pre-nuptial unchastity. It cannot be the passage from maidenhood, as we understand it, that must be accomplished that night, for the simple reason that there is little or no likelihood of the woman being a virgin when she comes to the marriage-bed." ³

If however, we compare this instance with those which have preceded it, we have, I think, the key to the enigma. The very terms used by such a close observer as E. W. Smith: "mysterious miasma," "something physical and tangible that the boy must remove in order that the marriage may be consummated with impunity" agree entirely with the interpretation of the facts proposed here. The danger is the same as in all untried ventures and new conditions. Whether the bride be a virgin or not, the husband would be exposed to misfortune if, in this new state, he were the first to have sexual relations with her, or

¹ J. Cremer. *Les Bobo*. p. 47.

² P. J. Gorju. *Entre le Victoria, l'Albert et l'Edouard*, p. 311.

³ Smith and Dale. *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. II. p. 58.

were to have them immediately. He would become unclean, as Hardeland puts it, and the kind of defilement he would contract is imagined by the ba-Ila, in conformity with their ordinary mental outlook, as something both mystical and physical, something spiritual and material in one. The boy who spends the night with the bride helps to get rid of this "mysterious miasma," i.e., the evil influence which would work upon the husband if he had been so imprudent as to consummate the marriage at once in his own person. It was therefore a necessary precaution to take, like that of offering the firstfruits of the new harvest to the dead and to the chiefs. In short, strange as the word may appear in this connection, it is a "purification."

Such a custom was not unknown in North America either. I shall give one instance only. Among the Indians of New France, "young married people sometimes live together for two or three months without having any carnal relations. We learnt of this custom when some young Christian converts were recently married, for when we were teaching them about conjugal uprightness and chastity, some of them said: 'Do not be uneasy about us, for it is our custom to respect those whom we love, and to live with them for a long time as relatives without touching them.'"¹

To bring this subject to an end, in primitive communities it often happens that once the preliminaries have been settled between the two families, the marriage is *ipso facto* considered as carried through without any other formality. But often, too, it entails a more or less complicated series of ceremonies, rites and festivals. Among other things the object of these is to acquire the favour of the higher powers, particularly the ancestors. May we not believe that the favour thus solicited comprises also protection against the ill-defined yet dreaded dangers that the beginning of a new existence may bring in its train? The ceremonial consecration of the marriage not only secures the indispensable consent and the goodwill of the supernatural powers, but at the same time, like the delayed consummation which is the usual rule, it combats the evil influences which are to be feared in any fresh beginning. It neutralizes them. As we should express it in our own language, such a ceremonial consecration sanctifies the marriage and, as the primitives would say, it purifies it.

¹ *Relations de la Nouvelle-France*. 1639. p. 193.

VIII

There are yet other methods used to banish, or to remove the evil influences which primitives feel at all times to be near or actually present, ready to bring disaster upon them, or already working their nefarious designs. One of the most usual, and in some respects to be compared with those described earlier in the chapter, consists in transferring the malign agency (imagined as both spiritual and material), to a person or a thing that can carry it away. By doing this, a person may be clean once more. It is the well-known device of employing a scapegoat, like the one sent forth into the desert, burdened with the sins of Israel. I shall consider just a few instances of this. In Central Celebes, "when a man returns after long absence, those who dwell in the same house may not come in contact with him immediately. The traveller (who, in other districts, must submit to a preliminary disinfection or purification, cf. *supra*, Ch. VIII, p. 231-32) first of all lays his hand on a dog, and only after this may the members of his family and his friends come near him. Should he, by chance, have brought back some disease with him, it passes to the dog."¹ Again, "when a Baré 'e Toradja crosses a river, if he remembers having told an untruth, he cuts off a nail-paring and throws it into the water, or he may do the same with a hair plucked from his head. This has not the significance of an offering, but it removes, with something belonging to him, the lying words he has uttered, so that they can no longer exercise any evil influence upon him. If he did not do this, the boat in which he embarks might founder, or he might be carried off by a crocodile."² This possession of the liar's—his nailparing or his hair—is himself. It carries off the evil influence which is weighing upon him, just as the dog on which the traveller rests his hand rids him of his disease, should he have contracted one.

In New Zealand, "a form of vegetable scapegoat was employed occasionally, as when a hamlet was suffering from some epidemic sickness. A priest would loosely attach a stalk of bracken to the body of a person, over whom he then recited some formula that had the effect of locating in the stalk the evil influences that had been affecting the people. The person then

¹ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa*, III. T.L.V. LXXVI, pp. 73-4 (1930).

² *Ibid.* II. T.L.V. LXXV, p. 95 (1919).

entered the water, immersed his body therein, and, while under the water, released the stalk and allowed it to float away. It was supposed to carry away the aforesaid evil influence."¹ The bracken-stalk here plays the part of the scapegoat, while at the same time the purifying virtue inherent in running water can be turned to account.

The Ao Nagas proceed somewhat differently. "If a man have evil dreams and be told by a medicine man that they forebode an *apotia* death in his house" (this is the worst defilement imaginable; cf. *supra* Ch. VIII. pp. 246-48), "he must avert this calamity by performing a ceremony. . . . The medicine man ties the parcel containing the threads, hairs (taken from the clothing and person of each of the inhabitants) round a goat's neck. The sacrificer rubs some of his saliva on to the goat with his finger, and spitting into its mouth, announces that it is now a substitute for him. . . . The medicine man cuts the goat's head open, and tells it to take away all evil on the way. Both sacrificer and medicine man return straight to the morung, speaking to no-one on the way. Then they bathe, and the man for whom this sacrifice was performed must go again to the morung and fumigate himself over a new fire before he can re-enter his house."² Here again, the cleansing virtue of water and of fumigation is utilized. The transference of the evil to the goat is very clearly shown, and the companions of the man who has had the bad dreams derive benefit, like himself, from the purification, for the hair or the thread taken from each of them and fastened to the goat's neck has been the means of its transmission.

Similar customs have often been observed in Africa. Among the Lango peoples of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, at the beginning of the harvest a piece of cane or reed of the bamboo variety is stuck into the ground to counteract the influence of the evil eye which might glance at it. This is a kind of scapegoat, and will take upon itself the malevolent influences which, but for its presence, might ruin the harvest.³

One other method of getting rid of an evil influence by averting it, akin to the preceding, consists in realizing in one's own person, to a greater or lesser extent, the disaster which is felt to be imminent. For instance, should a man, when dreaming,

¹ Elsdon Best. *The Maori*, I, p. 267.

² J. P. Mills. *The Ao Nagas*. pp. 287-88.

³ J. H. Driberg. *The Lango*. p. 97.

find himself menaced by misfortune, he will "make the dream come true" as soon and as far as he can. In this way he finds a "substitute" for the threatened misfortune; he makes it real beforehand, and thus gets rid of it. It has already happened, and cannot occur again. I have already had occasion to mention characteristic circumstances of this kind, among the Indians of New France, for instance. A man has dreamed that he was captured by the enemy, and tortured according to the usual custom, and the next day he makes his friends tie him to a stake, and begs them to flog him severely. Another, who has seen his house in flames during his dream, sets fire to it himself on the morrow, though without letting it be entirely consumed, and so on. "Among certain peoples of the Dutch East Indies there is a singular custom designed to render the dreams which predict misfortune harmless, and that is by representing the scene of which one has dreamed. Here are two examples of it. If a Batak dreams that he has been thrashed, he begs some friend to give him a few blows next day, so that he may escape the real thrashing. The same idea prevails among the Minahasa Alfurs. It is not only dreams, but other evil omens that they endeavour to render innocuous by this proceeding. If a man should dream that a house is on fire, for instance, or if he is convinced by certain signs that the fire will actually occur, he builds a little hut, and sets fire to it. Thus he has made both the dream and the evil omens powerless for harm. The same practices are known to other tribes; we find them in the Dayaks, and in the Hovas of Madagascar." ¹

One very strange instance from the Kuravers, one of the predatory tribes of India, will also show how a "substitution" helps to prevent disaster. "A telegram," says the author, "once came to my bungalow. 'Baloo dead, don't worry.' Baloo was a boy brought up on my compound, but at that time he was a hundred miles away. This is what had happened. A crow had momentarily perched on his head, and his uncle had sent the wire to prevent the fulfilment of this ill omen. There was naturally some amount of worry in the bungalow until the reason was discovered, and a good deal of merriment afterwards; but what was a little worry and expense compared with the evil that was warded off by sending the telegram!" ² Few facts are more

¹ G. A. Wilken. *Handleiding voor de vergelijkende volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*. p. 584-85.

² W. J. Hatch. *The land pirates of India*. p. 97 (1929).

enlightening than this one. The crow, by perching on the boy's head, had doomed him to an inevitable death. The only method by which to fight this disaster effectively, was to "represent" it, to realize it in some way beforehand, and the only way to do this was to *pretend* that Baloo had died, to send a telegram off *as if* he actually had expired. The news thus sent, although false, is real enough to secure that it may not have to be transmitted a second time. The child is figured as having died, just as the New France Indian has suffered torture, figuratively, when his friends bound and beat him, and as the East Indian's house was burned down in effigy, when a little hut, expressly built for the purpose, perished in the flames. In such instances we most clearly grasp the realistic symbolism of the primitive mind. The symbol, effigy, substitute, whatever it may be, *is* what it represents, and by making it real in effigy, i.e., in a symbolical form, the evil dreaded as imminent has been actually made to occur. The power of the evil agency is no longer to be feared, for it has been exhausted in this anticipatory measure.

It would be correct, no doubt, to interpret the following circumstance by the light of the preceding instances. Bryant relates that "when an epidemic of disease breaks out in Zululand, the mothers of the locality assemble together, each bearing a small child on the back, and betake themselves, singing as they go, to a place by the river where there is a broad stretch of sand. Arrived there, they proceed to dig large holes into each of which they plant a child, and cover it up to the neck with sand. Thereupon the mothers set up a wailing as at the burying of a person. By this means they are supposed to propitiate something or somebody of whom they nowadays know nothing, and the epidemic will probably come to an end."¹ I do not think that this is a propitiatory rite; it is a "substitution" rather. The mothers simulate the burial of their babies so that they may snatch them from the death that threatens, and not have to bury them in reality, in the same way as the dispatch of a telegram announcing the death of the Indian boy nullified the evil agency bent on his destruction.

It may be worth noting, in conclusion, that the conceptions we have been studying in this chapter have their rise in what we have called the affective category of the supernatural, in so far at least as the emotional element is common to them all. Hence their resemblance to each other, and their affinity with primi-

¹ A. T. Bryant. *A Zulu-English Dictionary*. p. 344.

tives' ideas of transgressions, evil omens, witchcraft and evil spells. Hence too, the resemblance in the processes by which in all these cases the primitives try to protect themselves from the evil influences which threaten or surround them—in short, to “purify themselves.” As soon as any conception of this kind enters their minds and excites their emotions, at once there appears a defensive reaction, assuming the forms (regulations, taboos, purificatory rites, abstinences, sacrifices, substitutions, etc.) transmitted from their ancestors, preserved by sacred tradition and still binding upon them.

CHAPTER XII

SOME METHODS OF PURIFICATION (contd.)

I

THE evil influences so dreaded by the primitives are usually beyond their reach. In the preceding chapters we have studied the principal means of defence, protection and purification to which they resort in order to neutralize them. Sometimes, however, they believe that they can act upon them directly and by their intervention prevent their injurious effects from being realized.

In this respect again, tradition has given them a sort of general method to employ. If they would neutralize or nullify the dread consequences of an occurrence or an act, they must "reverse" it, that is, produce the same occurrence or accomplish the same act again, but in exactly the opposite direction. This amounts to cancelling it, wiping it out, just as in algebra, if we add to a given number the same number, but with a minus sign prefixed, the result will be zero. When natives of Borneo, for instance,¹ paddling down the river, hear the note of an omen bird on their right, they are convinced it announces disaster. At once they put their boat about, and if, on going up-stream, they hear this bird again, its note will now reach them from the left, and this favourable omen nullifies the sinister prediction lately received. It is the same thing with the Kuravers, mentioned in the last chapter. "I am told that if the Kuraver turns back because of ill omens seen on the way, and the same omens are seen while he is returning, the ill omens become good omens and it is safe for him to return and carry out his purpose and commit his crime."²

So too, if the nefarious designs of some sorcerer are to be rendered null and void, a counter-spell is necessary. When an illness is due to a bewitchment (and it is thus that all serious internal maladies are regarded, as a rule), the only efficacious

¹ Cf. *Primitive Mentality*, Ch. V, p. 145.

² W. J. Hatch. *op. cit.* p. 99.

treatment consists in freeing the patient from the magic spell, i.e., meeting the sorcerer's magic with magic of the same kind, but of more effective power. To quote an instance from the Papago, "certain illnesses are attributed to sorcery, and the treatment of such illnesses was in reality a contest between the psychic ('medium' or 'magic') power of the doctor, and that of the person believed to be working the evil on the patient. Part of the doctor's skill consisted in his ability to determine who was working the evil, after which he matched his power against that of his adversary. If his power were the stronger, his patient would recover; if his were the weaker, the man would die."¹

The idea, almost universal among primitives, that serious illness, like death, is never natural, but has always some mystic cause, being thus firmly established, such contests are of frequent occurrence. The diviner or medicine man makes his diagnosis, and declares that the patient is the victim, not of the anger of an offended ancestor, but of the malice of some sorcerer. An enemy of his must have effected some magic operation on one of his belongings, or else introduced into his body a fragment of bone, an insect, or some other "materialized impurity," to use the striking expression already quoted (Ch. VIII, p. 252). In such a case the only efficacious treatment is to reverse the operations of the latter. The doctor called in by the family as a rule possesses equal, if not superior, powers, and he therefore extracts from the body (most frequently by suction) the small pebble or insect or whatever the vehicle of the evil influence may be; he knows how to find again the "soul" of which the patient has been deprived; he can restore it to his body, and unearth the appurtenances upon which the sorcerer has operated, and so on. In short, he can undo what the sorcerer has done; and by these necessary but adequate means his patient is freed from the evil influence which was about to rob him of life. He is no longer under the fatal spell, that is, he is cured, and henceforth he will be as well as if this illness had never occurred.

There is no doubt that these same primitives know how to use a certain number of remedies, some of them sensible, others ineffectual, and others again ridiculous and harmful. Sometimes they have a really imposing *materia medica* at their command. We have more than once come across a fairly advanced

¹ Fr. Densmore. *Papago music*. E.B. Bulletin 90, p. 82. (1929).

technique, founded upon experience and upon wise and careful observation, existing side by side with a boundless faith in the decisive intervention of the unseen powers. Moreover, as soon as it is a question of a long and serious illness, everything is conducted upon the mystic plane. The remedies employed do not operate through the properties which we should call inherent and positive, and they would have no healing virtue were they not administered by a "witch-doctor" whose power counterbalances and neutralizes that of the sorcerer.

Certain curious instances allow us to see "in the making," as it were, the mental processes implied in this method of "reversal" or "inversion." In Central Celebes, "when a dog crawls on his hind quarters over the floor, it is '*measa*' (bringing misfortune, like a transgression, or an ill omen). . . . The To Napoe say: 'When a dog creeps from the door to the interior of the house, it is a sign that the news of a death will be brought to it, but if on the contrary he crawls towards the door, it means that some one in the house will die. . . . The method of defence then employed almost everywhere in the Posso district is for the person threatened to crawl in a sitting position towards the dog, 'to drive away the hour of death.'"¹ In the same district, the natives are uneasy on account of the evil influence they may have set working through an imprudent act or words, during a journey, for instance. To nullify this, they have recourse to a plant called *pidoea*, "which in the eastern districts of Central Celebes is often used to 'undo,' that is, make the act committed or the words pronounced be as if they had not been done or said. For this reason the plant is often chewed at a reconciliation festival which terminates a quarrel or an enmity. Another name for this plant is *moroei weli*: 'backward thorn,' because its thorns grow down, and it is no doubt to this circumstance that the plant owes the significance attributed to it, for to undo what is done one must do just the opposite."²—In Nias, "Their therapy is always founded on a theory prevalent everywhere among East Indian natives, viz: that a disease can be cured by the very means that has produced it. Thus, the Nias natives assert that the swelling caused by contact with the groundsnake can only be cured if the swollen part be rubbed with the ashes of the snake's tail burnt."³ "In the same way, in

¹ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa*, III. T.L.V. LXXXVI, p. 53. (1920).

² *Ibid.* p. 56.

³ Kleiweg de Zwaan. *op. cit.* p. 113.

Napoe in Central Celebes, they preserve the teeth of mad dogs, and when somebody has been bitten by one of these dogs, they scrape off a little from one of the teeth, mix it with water into which they have put some curcuma, and bathe the wound with this water.”¹

In very many communities, it is absolutely forbidden to step over a person who is seated, or lying on the ground. It is worse than an insult, for it brings misfortune. Should it have been done, however, either through thoughtlessness or from stupidity, the serious consequences can be arrested if the doer at once steps over this person in the reverse direction. In this way, the evil done can be undone, for as soon as the same action, reversed, has effaced the first, the evil influence is nullified and disappears. In Ukamba, says Hobley, “a person who was born feet first must never step over anyone lying on the ground, and if he forgets this prohibition, he must at once step back over the recumbent person. The stepping back is called *njokela*, to go back, and is supposed to reverse the ill-luck which would be transmitted.”² Weeks, too, writes: “To reverse the effect or effects of accidentally kicking a person or touching them with the foot, which is equal to cursing them, the person must turn round and slightly kick again the person touched, otherwise bad luck, etc., will follow the one accidentally kicked. Where we should apologize, they kick again, and this is called *bandola* (to reverse the effects of the first kick).”³

II

It is especially in cases where there is a desire to escape from the terrible, often fatal, effects of a sorcerer’s magic practices that we can note the processes of this method of “reversal,” and their remarkable uniformity in communities that are widely different and far removed from one another.

In order that the evil influence may be neutralized, it is essential that the sorcerer shall have first confessed, as we already know. In South Equatorial, East and West Africa, in the Dutch East Indies, the mountains of N.E. India, and in other districts too, the man suspected of having cast a spell upon another or

¹ A. C. Kruyt. *Measa*. II. T.L.V. LXXV. p. 117 (1919).

² C. W. Hobley, *Bantu beliefs and magic*. p. 158 (1922).

³ Rev. J. H. Weeks. *Anthropological Notes on the Bangala of the Upper Congo river*. J.A.I. XL, p. 395 (1910).

several others, is called upon to confess, whether he has previously had to submit to trial by ordeal or not. If he does not do it willingly, the most terrible tortures will oblige him to make an avowal. Among the Kafirs, for instance, his body may be covered with black ants, or he may be burnt with glowing coals placed on his most sensitive parts. Should he still obstinately maintain silence, he will succumb to his injuries after hours of suffering. As a rule, even when he is convinced of his innocence, he makes confession immediately. It is his sole chance of salvation, and he is fully aware of this.

As long as his accusers are unable to wring a confession from him, they are powerless to arrest the results of his artifices. Once they have succeeded in making him speak, whether willingly or unwillingly, he no longer refrains from revealing how he worked his magic, what things he used, where he concealed those appurtenances of his victim upon which he operated, and whether he has placed them over a slow fire, to consume them gradually, for instance. Immediately they will hasten to withdraw them and plunge them into running water, and at once the evil spell is broken. Moreover, as we have seen, the confession has a virtue of its own; it, too, acts as a kind of "reversal." It "undoes" what has been done, for it is the opposite of the secret. The latter assisted the evil influence, and facilitated the extension of its sphere, and increased the number of disasters it effected. The confession, by nullifying the secret, arrests its malevolent action.

We may recall the fact that when the Eskimo woman who had concealed a miscarriage confessed her violation of a taboo, the effects of this defilement, which ran the risk of being fatal to the whole tribe, immediately ceased, and nobody even thought of penalizing her. So too, it may happen that a sorcerer who makes immediate confession will be spared, or perhaps merely expelled from the community. But even in such cases it is essential for him first to have neutralized, if there be still time, the evil influence he has let loose upon his victim or victims. The natives are usually of opinion that he alone can do it; none but he who has wrought the evil can succeed in cancelling it. The influence which is being exerted cannot be nullified save by an influence which is directly opposed to it, and such influence is the very essence of the sorcerer's peculiar personal power, his real claim to witchcraft. The salvation of his victim therefore depends upon him, and by the confession of his deed he

has already begun to "reverse" it. He must now complete the work, and since he laid the evil spell, it is his business, and his alone, to remove it.

"An Arunta native was hit by a boomerang which inflicted a wound by no means dangerous as such, but the difficulty was that the wounded man declared that the weapon, which had come down from the Ipirra tribe which lives away to the north of the Arunta, had been 'sung' by an Ipirra man. An Arunta medicine man was of no use in such a circumstance, but fortunately there was an Ipirra man in camp, and he was brought and 'sang,' i.e., went through the usual pantomime of making passes, sucking, and muttering over the wound. As he belonged to the same locality as the man who had originally 'sung' the boomerang, it was supposed that he could counteract the influence of Ipirra sorcery, which he successfully did."¹

With the Dieyerie tribe, "should a sick man remain a considerable time without a change, or his malady increase, his wife, if he has one, or if he has not, the wife of his nearest relative, is ordered to proceed to the person supposed to have caused the sickness. She does so, accompanied by her paramour, and on arrival immediately makes a few presents to the person suspected of her relative's illness, but makes no accusation against him, contenting herself with simply stating that her relative has fallen ill, and is not expected to recover; whereupon he sympathizes with her, and expresses a hope that the invalid will soon be well again.

"He knows, however, perfectly well that though not accused he is suspected of having caused the malady, and on the following morning acquaints the woman that she can return to her relative, as *he would draw all power away from the bone* by steeping it in water. Accordingly the woman carries back the joyful tidings that she has seen the party who has 'the bone,' and he has promised to take all the power out of it."² Here we have an allusion to a method of exercising witchcraft commonly employed by Australian aborigines. It consists of "pointing the bone" (which has been treated with magical preparations) at some one, who usually dies forthwith.

This is a very significant instance. The malady which lasts a long time and goes on getting worse can only be due to the action of a sorcerer. Suspicion falls on a certain individual; they

¹ Spencer and Gillen. *op. cit.* I, p. 538.

² S. Gason. *The Dieyerie tribe*. p. 23. (1871).

go to find him, and an intimation which, though covert, is quite definite obliges him to confess. He must then undo what he has done, that is, he must plunge the magic bone into water, to remove its power for evil. Immediately the bewitchment is at an end, and the patient is cured. Should he die after all, however, vengeance will be speedily executed upon the man suspected.

The Bakaua of New Guinea in like circumstances follow very much the same course. The sick man's relatives go to the suspected sorcerer, entreat his assistance and give him presents. "If the sorcerer regards these gifts as satisfactory, and if he is not in the employ of more influential people, bent on the sick man's death, he allows himself to be persuaded to use his powers. He takes leaves of various kinds, breathes on them repeatedly, or else murmurs some formula over them, and sends them to the sick man. Whilst the relatives are returning to their village bearing the leaves, the sorcerer goes into the bush to find the little parcel (containing some belongings of the invalid) on which he has been operating, withdraws it from the fire and puts it in water, which makes its magic power inoperative. From that same instant, the sick man's pains should leave him."¹ "In very serious illnesses," says the same author later, "their medical treatment is almost entirely confined to charms (*Zauberei*). Muscular swellings can only be cured by the man whose magic formulas have caused them."² With the Sulka of New Pomerania, too, when the sorcerer has been discovered, "people try to persuade him to withdraw the appurtenances of the victim from the fire or water, and if he does so, the sick man will recover, but if he should refuse, death is inevitable. To get the sorcerer to withdraw the packet made up of the appurtenances, people have to promise him gifts, but sometimes they have to resort to forcible measures."³

In South Africa the same belief prevails: only he who has cast the evil spell can remove it, and to this a circumstance reported by Vedder bears witness. "I had in my service," he says, "a young Bergdama woman, whom a young man of the same tribe was courting. She had a liking for him, and they would have married, had not her parents decided on another husband

¹ R. Neuhauss. *op. cit.* III. p. 464.

² *Ibid.* p. 468.

³ P. Rascher, M.S.C. *Die Sulka. Archiv für Anthropologie.* N.F.I. p. 220 (1904).

for her. When the disappointed lover saw his hopes vanish, he declared that she would have no child by her husband. This prediction was regarded by the girl's parents as a curse, and as a matter of fact, the union was childless. In order to nullify the curse, the rejected suitor was begged to wash his chest and arms in a basin of water which the girl must also use for that purpose, and she must drink some of the water, moreover. It was the general belief that this must put an end to the curse, in spite of the ill-feeling that continued to subsist between the young man and her own family."¹ Ill-will and anger have a power that is greatly dreaded (cf. *supra*, Ch. II, pp. 72-74). The words uttered by the incensed suitor have brought the young couple under an evil influence, which will prevent their having children, and in order to neutralize it, the consent of the disappointed lover must first be obtained, and he must then be willing to undo his deed, and, for this purpose, place the water he had used at the bride's service.

Bryant's Zulu-English dictionary gives an excellent example of the "reversal" by which a sorcerer cures the ill he has caused. "*I-nJumbane*: poison placed on the top of the forefinger, or the poisoned forefinger itself, of an *umtakati* (sorcerer), which he has only to point at a person so as to cause him to die on the spot, or cause him to be afflicted with an *i-nTelo* (ophthalmia, etc.). Should he wish to stay the effects of this action, he points again at him, but now with the knuckle of the forefinger the hand being closed fist-wise."² In the Herero tongue *tundura* means to cure a sick person by a definite process, when there is a suspicion that he has been bewitched. "The person on whom the lot has fallen as the guilty one must get some twigs from a certain tree, steep them in water, take this water in his mouth, and sprinkle it on the sick man, and he must also entreat his ancestors for him."³ In this way he is undoing what he is presumed to have done.

Junod relates the following story. "An evangelist of the Maryisa region named Abel had taken into his house his wife's daughter. He was himself without children. The girl fell on the threshold of the hut, and injured her leg. Her parents took her home again, but found the leg very much emaciated, and consulted the bones (to find out who had brought this about).

¹ H. Vedder. *Die Bergdama*. I, p. 129.

² A. J. Bryant. *op. cit.* p. 282.

³ H. Brincker. *Wörterbuch der Otji-Herero*. p. 302.

The diviner told them that Abel had bewitched his niece through sheer jealousy because he had no children; he had 'eaten' the girl's leg, but being a hunter he had killed an antelope and introduced the femur of the animal into the leg in place of the bone; the true bone was still somewhere in Abel's hut, however, and the magician offered to go to the evangelist's village, and boasted that he would be able to find it. Fearing a scandal, Abel entreated his wife's parents not to allow this. They said: 'Then take the girl back into your house and treat her.' He did so, and the girl eventually recovered."¹ Convinced that it was he who had made her ill, who had "eaten" her bone, her parents did not hesitate to confide her to his care again, for what he had done, he alone could undo. It was the girl's only chance of having the spell removed, that is, of being cured. On the other hand, the fact that Abel took her back again was equivalent to a confession and a promise.

Among the Azande of the Belgian Congo we find the same beliefs and customs. "If through divination a man is able to discover the name of the guilty person who has induced an illness through the evil eye, he will denounce him to the chief. The latter then orders this person to go to his victim to 'breathe out water' and thus neutralize the wrong done through the evil eye. The individual thus accused does not usually offer any resistance, from fear of reprisals. He therefore betakes himself to the home of the victim, and in the presence of the assembled relatives, he puffs out water, while making this declaration: 'If it should be I who have brought about this illness through the evil eye, I desire that this man shall be no longer ill, and I puff out water as a proof of my good intentions towards him.'"² In another passage the same author depicts the invalid's family, and the presumed author of his illness, agreed as to the steps to be taken to save the patient. "A man becomes seriously ill, and his friends consult the diviner to find out whether he is the victim of a person possessing the evil eye (who is, perhaps quite unconsciously, bewitching him). Very often, too, they appeal to a diviner . . . specially qualified to discover the guilty person's name. If he confirms their suspicions with regard to a certain individual—suspicions which are very often justified by the diviner's statements . . . they go to his house. They explain to him that the *benge* has pointed him out as being responsible for

¹ H. A. Junod, *op. cit.* II, p. 513 (note).

² C. R. Lagae, O. P. *Les Azande ou Niam-Niam*. p. 110.

their relative's illness. The guilty man, presumably in good faith, replies that he was not aware that he had the evil eye, but since the diviner declares him to be responsible, he is perfectly ready to puff out water, not desiring to be the cause of their relative's death." ¹ Another missionary in the same district describes and explains the same facts. "The Zande never attributes any illness to a natural cause; disease and sickness are always occasioned by some individual possessing the evil eye. No doubt he does realize that exposure to cold may bring on pneumonia; that syphilis may be contracted through having relations with a syphilitic; but to the Zande these causes would not have produced their effects unless an evil spell had been laid upon a man. Above all things, then, it is necessary to liberate the victim from the occult influence of this evil fate." They have recourse to a diviner. "When the sorcerer has been discovered, the relatives will go and beg him not to injure his victim any more, and if he is well-disposed, he will take a mouthful of fresh water, and spit it vehemently on the ground, protesting his kindly intentions. . . . The relatives often content themselves with removing the sick man and concealing him in the bush in some spot unknown to his circle, in the hope that thus they can free him from the influence of some native dwelling near him and casting an evil spell upon him." ² (Upon this latter point cf. *supra*, Ch. VI, pp. 186-87).

A criminal matter which was tried by the court of Fort Sibut in French Equatorial Africa in July 1925 very clearly shows the thoughts and the feelings which actuate natives in such circumstances, and the details given are particularly enlightening. A child died, and a woman, accused of having bewitched him, was obliged to take the ordeal poison, and she had been killed by it. The mother, who had demanded that she should be brought to trial thus, is prosecuted. This is the part of her evidence that interests us. "My little boy had been ill for some time. He was wasting away, and I could not discover what ailed him. One day my husband came home with the witch-doctor Redambo; he began by dancing round the fire in our hut, and after he had examined the child he put some remedy in the fire, and then he was able to read the names of the women Bagayette and Yassimandji who were, he said, the cause of my

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 206-07.

² R. P. A. M. de Graer, *L'art de quérir chez les Azande*. Congo. 1929. pp. 220-21.

little boy's wasting away, for these two women had laid him under a spell. Up to that time I had not accused anybody, but when the witch-doctor told us this, I sought out Bagayette and Yassimandji, and said to them: 'It is you two who are poisoning my child; you have been accused of it. Come and remove the magic spell by entering my hut to see him, and throwing some water over him. When you are there you can speak to him, and you will take away his illness, if you are the cause of it.'

"Bagayette came to my hut; she brought water, and in the child's presence she said: 'If I have caused your illness, if I have the evil *likoundou*, it shall be at an end from today, for I verily would not poison your body.' But as for the woman Yassimandji, she did not trouble herself about it. Since she would not come, I concluded that she was indeed the evil genius that was killing my child by slow degrees.'" This woman and her husband had to drink the ordeal poison; the woman died at once, but the husband merely became slightly ill.

The child's father, interrogated in his turn, confirmed what his wife had said. "I went to Bagayette to tell her what the witch-doctor had said, and I asked her to come to my hut that evening to speak before my child, and pour water on him, to take away his illness. In the evening, about five o'clock Bagayette came to me, but Yassimandji stayed at home, and when I went to find her, she refused to come. When I got home again and told my wife this, she was very angry, saying: 'Oh, so Yassimandji will not come, and my child may die tonight! But if he does, she shall die tonight too. I am going to fetch her, and I shall bring her here by force.' I said to my wife: 'Don't do that; her husband is not at home; when he comes back, we will see about it.' My wife would not listen, however; she had Yassimandji seized and brought to our hut. Yassimandji was forced to drink the ordeal poison, and it killed her."¹

The mother's despair and furious anger arise from her belief that her child will inevitably perish if the woman who is "poisoning," i.e., bewitching him, does not consent to come and save his life, for the evil influence which is insidiously but surely killing him can only be arrested and nullified by the very person from whom it emanates.

The Rwala Beduins of N.E. Arabia also believe that "who-

¹From an unpublished document contributed by the Administrator-in-Chief, M. Prouteaux.

ever is possessed of the evil eye has the power also to restore the bewitched to his former health. In the Rassâlin clan there lived, at the time when these studies were made, a fellow named Na-ûs eben Ajde, to whose evil eye much misfortune was attributed. Once he bewitched a young girl, pretty both in face and figure. It happened while she was fetching water; when she returned to her tent, she began to stagger and finally fainted. On recovering, she was unable to stand on her feet. When asked by her frightened mother the cause of her condition, the girl only said: 'Na-ûs looked at me fixedly, he bewitched me,' and fainted again. With much lamentation the mother then reported to the father what the daughter had just told her, and he, calling his sons and relatives to his aid, ran to 'Na-ûs' tent, threatening him with death if he did not take back instantly the look which had injured his daughter. Na-ûs swore by all the powers that he had not bewitched any one on that day, but he was seized by the enraged brothers of the girl, and dragged to the bed on which she was still lying unconscious. Na-ûs took his spittle in his three fingers, besmeared the girl's throat and neck with it, and then walked round her seven times, after which the girl awoke, as healthy as before." ¹ Hobley noted the same method of removing an evil spell among the Kikuyu of East Africa. "If a cattle-owner hears that a man who has this power (of the evil eye) has been admiring one of his cows, he will send for him and insist on his removing the evil; this is done by the man wetting his finger with saliva, and touching the beast on the mouth and on various parts of the body with his wetted finger; this is believed to neutralize the enchantment." ²

Finally, even when it is not essential to apply to the very person from whom the evil influence emanated, in order to remove it, natives are at any rate convinced that a charm alone can be opposed to a charm, and that a bewitchment can be effectively annulled only by a counter-bewitchment. To give an instance from the Shilluks of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, "for one special device of the evil medicine men, the good medicine men have a special counter. The evil man makes a mud image of the man he expects to kill. He sticks nails in the ears of the effigy, and puts it in the fire. The man will either die or go crazy. The good medicine man makes another image of the man when he

¹ A. Musil. *The manners and customs of the Rwala Beduins*. pp. 408-09.

² C. W. Hobley. *op. cit.* p. 177.

comes for help, and it is put in water, and that tends to neutralize the heat on the other image.”¹

In almost all cases, when the sorcerer consents to “undo” what he has done, he explicitly declares his desire to do no further harm to his victim. “If I have been the cause of your illness, I would not have you die through me.” It seems as if some declaration of this kind were a necessary part of the process of dis-enchantment. The sorcerer indeed may have been unaware of the harmful power within him, which brings misfortune to his circle. But from the mere fact of this power being present the sorcerer “in his subconsciousness,” as we say nowadays, entertained a feeling of ill-will, a hostile and malicious disposition, which results in bewitchment. Unknown to himself, he has been desiring the death of his victim, and if he is to be saved, he must cease to desire this, and he must proclaim the fact aloud, so that others may be convinced of it, and he may be bound by his words. This desire was the *vis a tergo* of the evil influence, and when the contrary desire is expressed the effects of this influence will be at an end. Upon this point, of supreme importance to them, primitives consider that a “reversal” is indispensable.

III

It seems certain, then, that in very many cases primitives, when they want to put a stop to, or neutralize an evil influence, act as it were on the principle that to a given act, the same act, reversed, must be opposed; that what has been done must be done again, but in the contrary direction. The reaction, or rather, the counter-action, must be equal and contrary to the action. For primitives, the quantitative equality (like that of two equal amounts with contrary signs before them which, when added, cancel each other) is not the important point; what interests them is that it is on the mystic plane. A fact quoted by Leenhardt, in his recent work on New Caledonia, will help us to understand their attitude in this. “Ordinary marriages are exchanges of ‘cross-cousins,’ arranged between the parents in the children’s earliest years. This oath, taken between members of two different clans, is sealed by an exchange of two pieces of money of exactly equal amount. If later on, one of the parties

¹ Rev. D. S. Oyler. *The Shilluk’s belief in the evil eye*. Sudan Notes and Records. II, p. 133 (1919).

to it proves unfaithful, and no inducement can prevail on him to keep his oath, it is an injury for which no payment can compensate. The guilty party might indeed return the money received, but the quarrel is not at an end until the injured party consents also to return what has been given. Since the two sums form parts of one and the same bond, each of them must be exchanged once more, in order that the oath may be no longer binding. It is a settlement, not a payment, that the injured party demands."¹ Since the arrangement was based upon an exchange, it can only be terminated by another exchange. As long as what has been done is not undone by another exactly similar twofold act which is the reverse of the former, the evil influence set working through the disloyalty of one of the parties continues to make its presence felt. The quarrel drags on, and may engender fatal results.

Do we not once more find here the urgent necessity of which we have already studied other instances? Is this not akin, for example, to the case of the man who has stepped over another, and thereby shown his ill-will, and who must immediately step over him again in the reverse direction, if he is to neutralize the influence? Is not the same thing in question when a man, who has "willed" the death of another, whether consciously or not, must "will" his recovery? The two acts, the two efforts of will, the two movements which are in each case contrary to each other *are* actually the two influences, one of which must counterbalance and cancel the other. If the second expression of these two is to reproduce the first as closely as possible, in the reverse sense, it is because primitives see in it the essential condition of its efficacy. The second expression being thus, as it were, traced over the first, each of them is still represented, or rather, felt singly, in a concrete way without anything abstract intervening. There is no doubt an abstract element that is common to all these cases which appear alike to us, and which really are the same to the primitive's mind, but it is affective in its nature. The primitives do not imagine, they really *feel* that when some dreaded action or event is once "reversed," (that is, reproduced in the contrary sense), the evil influence it started working finds itself powerless. Things are now as they previously were, and what has been done is "undone". The deleterious action is wiped out as if it had never taken place. To use the expressions employed in the preceding chapters, the defile-

¹ M. Leenhardt. *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonnienne*, p. 49. (1930).

ment has vanished, the individual is no longer in imminent danger of disaster,—he is “purified.”

IV

This necessity for a counter-action which is equal and similar to the action is closely linked up with the law of compensation, applied in so many cases in most primitive communities. It is not merely the expression of a harsh desire for vengeance, seeking satisfaction at all costs, by inflicting on the author of some injury or suffering exactly the same injury or suffering. The primitives' attitude in the stress of some great emotion is rarely so entirely material as this. The actual fact does not strike them most; it is the invisible reality they discern behind it that chiefly affects them. The man who is struck or wounded by another can certainly react violently and return blow for blow; but this instinctive and almost reflex action of a strong animal, conscious of its strength, is not concerned about coping with the offence in equal measure; it is something quite different from retaliation. And here the human animal is intensely mystic by nature. From the very fact that he has suffered some attack, received a wound, undergone some wrong or disadvantage, he feels that he is exposed to an evil influence. The menace of disaster is weighing upon him, and if he is to recover his peace and security, the evil influence thus let loose must be arrested and neutralized. Now this result can only be obtained when the act which is the cause of his suffering has been cancelled by a similar act in the opposite sense.

This is precisely what the law of retaliation can give the primitive. It provides him with a counter-action which is exactly proportioned to the action, and which “cancels” it. There are indeed cases in which it is impossible to undo what has been done by a reversal of the deed. The man who has insulted another by crossing over him from left to right can wipe out his offence by crossing him from right to left, and the evil influence arising from his action is nullified. But if he has put out his eye, the deed cannot be undone, and as it is in this case impossible to reverse it, they must make provision for it in some other way, as nearly like it as possible. The man who has done the deed must submit to it in his turn, and one of his eyes will be put out accordingly. Having made his victim lose an eye, he himself will now lose one, and as far as these two are

concerned, things will be restored to their former state. Herein there is "restitution" somewhat similar to the reversal of the action. The man who has been injured is no longer in imminent danger of misfortune; he is purified.

In other words, where it is impossible to cancel the action by repeating it in a contrary sense, the natives have recourse to reciprocity. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Thus the law of retaliation, like the "restitution" already studied, has a supremely mystic virtue and significance. We must not be surprised therefore, that it is often so difficult to put an end to this custom. When the Pahangs for instance, like so many other primitives, prove unruly in this respect, and obstinately refuse to make peace with a neighbouring tribe if they have not had their full complement of corpses, that is, until they have killed as many men as they themselves have dead, it is not only the desire for vengeance and respect for tradition, or the fear of offending their ancestors, that makes them turn a deaf ear to the threats of the white governor. They feel that the law of retaliation must be observed, and that for every corpse on their own side, the enemy must have one too. Otherwise they would remain in the power of an evil agency; they would be "unclean" and exposed to further misfortune.

With the Orakaiva of New Guinea, "the raid was very commonly meant to avenge some previous victim, for vengeance was absolutely imperative to the relations of a slain man; and the expression used for revenge itself is an interesting one, i.e. *diroga-mine*, or an exchange of *diroga*, the latter meaning the spirit of a man slain in fight, in contradistinction to the spirit of one who has died in any other way. . . . To show how imperative is the need for revenge, the former rule was that the widow of a man slain by an enemy tribe must continue her seclusion until the capture and killing of a man from that tribe made it possible for her to emerge from it."¹

As a matter of fact, however, in a great many circumstances they do not hold strictly to this rule. Little by little they have adopted the practice of accepting a "compensation," fixed by custom, for any wrong or prejudicial dealings, for a wound, and even for a death. Sometimes the persons or the groups injured may exercise their choice as to whether they will have the murderer put to death, or accept the blood-money. It is not our purpose here to study the various forms of compensation

¹ F. E. Williams. *Orakaiva society*. p. 170 (1930).

adopted in primitive communities. We shall merely remark that they most frequently retain the characteristic, at once material and mystic, of the law of retaliation which they have often supplanted. Whilst the compensation is a material reparation for the damage done, its effect is also to neutralize the evil influence which continues to act as long as the compensation has not been offered, accepted, and fully paid.

In certain communities, however, compensation is not enough. It must be accompanied or followed by a special ceremony, after which alone the injured party is definitely freed from the evil influence, beyond the reach of disaster, purified. In Southern Sumatra, for instance, "a reconciliation penalty, a peace fine (consisting of a buffalo, a certain amount of rice, a feast), the *tepung tarwar bumi*, is imposed on the guilty party. In its ordinary sense *tarwar* means method of defence, means of neutralizing sinister influences or the harmful consequences of anything, and *tepung tarwar*, flour, used as a means of defence, which is spread over persons and also things to protect them from misfortune. The feast which accompanies the compensation (the blood-money) paid for a homicide, is also regarded as the *tepung tarwar* of the earth (*bumi*), the method of doing away with all harmful and fatal influences, all the disasters which the crime may bring upon it; it is the means whereby it is cleansed and purified. This is clearly evident from the other names given to this feast; which are *tjutji bumi*, from *tjutji*, to clean, to purify, and *bumi*, the earth; or *pembasuh duusun*, from *pembasuh*, to wash, and *dusun*, country; and lastly, *basah lurah*, from *basuh*, to wash, and *lurah*, district. By this festival the country is cleansed from crime, and the peace which has been disturbed is restored . . . They do the same thing in a case of wounding or of adultery. The Battaks observe the same custom." ¹

With the Kondes of East Africa, in a case of murder, when the legal dues have been satisfied, there is a formal reconciliation between the two families, presided over by the medicine man, who is the master of ceremonies in all matters of this kind. A sheep, purchased at the expense of the homicide's family, is killed, and it is held by the two parties while the witch-doctor divides it in two, each family taking its share. Some "medicine" is put into a pot, into which a red-hot spear is

¹ G. A. Wilken. *Het strafrecht bij de volken van het maleische ras. Verspreide Geschriften*, II, pp. 474-76. Cf. I, pp. 607-09.

thrust. The mutton cooked with this medicine is placed on banana-leaves, and the reconciliation feast is washed down with beer that has also been "medically" treated.¹ "The sacrifice of atonement . . . is an equally essential factor among the Didinga. All injuries, whether compensated for by live-stock or not, must also be purged, by sacrifice, generally of a goat or sheep, but it may be a bull. Without this sacrifice, however much compensation has been paid, the guilt nevertheless remains, and the guilty party would be held responsible for any subsequent repercussions of his offence"² (that is, any disasters which might pursue the injured party).

Similar facts, establishing the necessity of a purificatory ceremony to complete the compensation and make it mystically efficacious and final, have been already given in *Primitive Mentality* (Ch. VIII, pp. 257-260). This ceremony plays a part like that of the "white" medicines used by Kafirs, after the "black" ones have served their turn. These combat the uncleanness which must be made to vanish, if a person is to escape the disasters it entails. They are therefore of the same nature as itself; they are a counter-charm to the charm that has bewitched him. When they have done their work, one last rite is necessary; there must be a final purification to make both them and their opponents vanish, and restore the pristine purity. In like manner the law of retaliation, the compensation, operate on the same plane as the action whose evil influence must be neutralized; they reverse it, and cancel it by an action which is the equivalent or the opposite of it. This result achieved, they must quit the field, and a final ceremony sweeps away all traces of the struggle. Only then can the injured party feel himself safe, beyond the reach of disaster.

Both parties are interested in securing the accomplishment of this final operation after the rites; the injured party, for the reasons already indicated, and the other, that he may not remain responsible for the misfortunes which his action might entail. If there were not complete restoration of the state disturbed by violence or wrong committed, neither side could feel itself fully cleansed and purified.

¹ D. R. Mackenzie. *The spirit-ridden Konde*, p. 87.

² J. H. Driberg. *Didinga customary law. Sudan Notes and Records*. VIII. p. 153 (1925).

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In this index words of foreign origin are printed in italics, names of places and of peoples in capital letters; authors' names in italic capitals; and words borrowed from philosophy, or in current use, are shown in small Egyptian type. (V. Note.)

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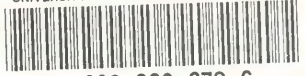
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