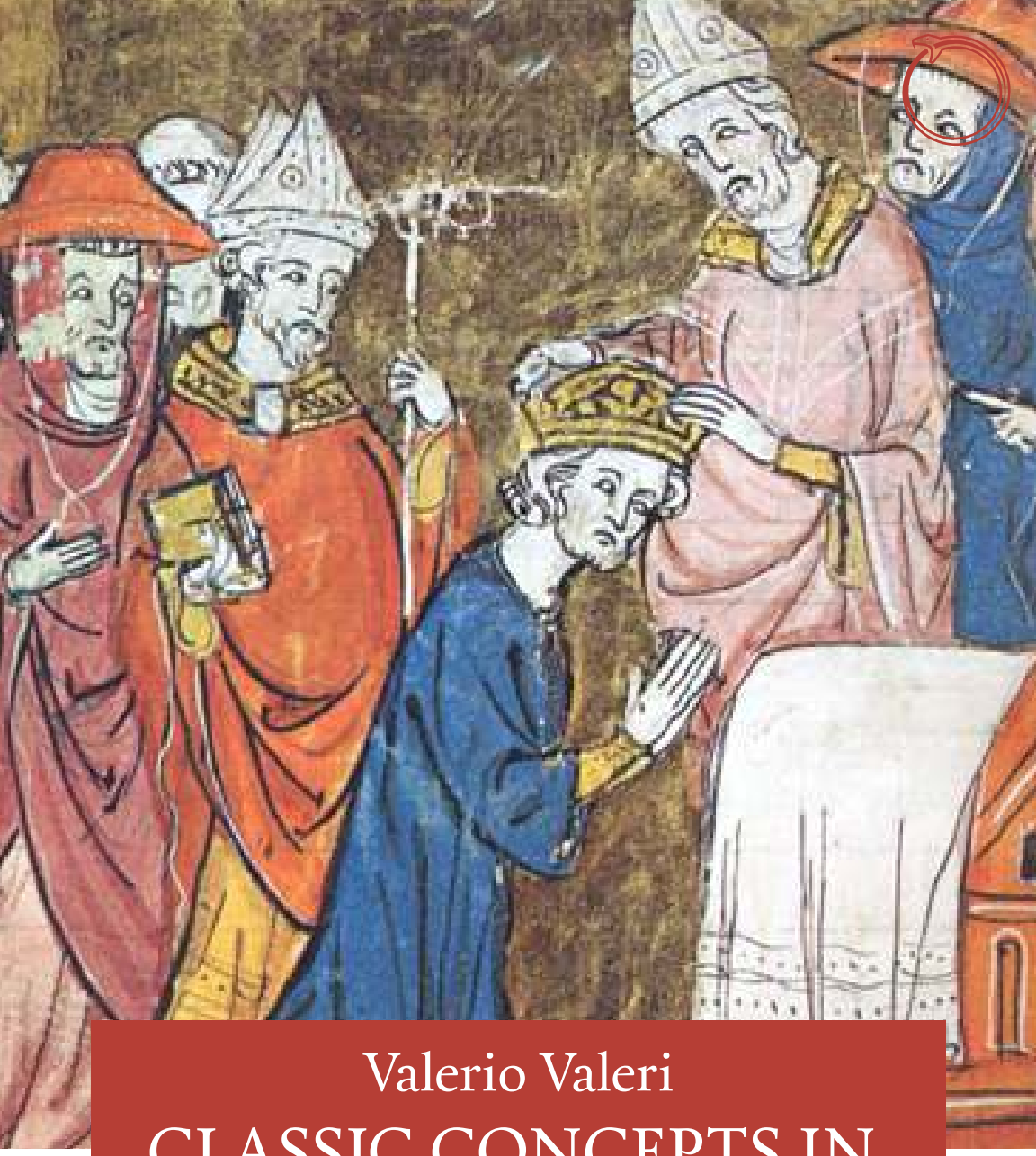

Valerio Valeri

CLASSIC CONCEPTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Edited Giovanni da Col and Rupert Stasch

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HAU Books
Chicago

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Cover and layout design: Sheehan Moore
Typesetting: Prepress Plus (www.prepressplus.in)

ISBN: 978-0-9905050-8-2
LCCN: 2014953506

Hau Books
Chicago Distribution Center
11030 S. Langley
Chicago, IL 60628
www.haubooks.com

Hau Books is marketed and distributed by The University of Chicago Press.
www.press.uchicago.edu

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

Contents

Acknowledgment and sources

Originally published in Italian and French across a number of dictionaries and encyclopaedias, this volume showcases Valerio Valeri's (1944–1988) formidable scholarship with a series of dazzling comparative essays on core topics in the history of anthropological theory. A timely and invaluable pedagogical resource for students, teachers, and researchers in anthropology, this collection is a tribute to the inimitable genius and erudition of the author.

We wish to thank Janet Hoskins, Sean Dowdy, Nicholas Harney, Alice Elliot, Eric White, Rebecca Frausel, Zachary Sheldon, Ned Dostaler, Magnus Fiskesjö, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, Marshall Sahlins, and all others who assisted in the production of this volume. We are also grateful to the publishers and copyright holders of Valeri's work who have generously granted Hau permission to translate and reprint the material in this volume. The original sources and copyright information for each chapter are detailed below.

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Giovanni da Col and Rupert Stasch

CHAPTER ONE

Belief and worship

Translated from the Italian by Lynn Westwater

Belief is a notoriously ambiguous term, but the principal meanings listed by dictionaries can be grouped in two general categories. On the one hand, "belief" refers to a mental state which either takes the form of assent to propositions or the form of faith in somebody; on the other hand, the word designates the objects of the assent, that is, the propositions or notions that are believed, implicitly or explicitly. "Worship" refers to an assemblage of ritual practices which have as their object and justification sacred entities and make it possible to communicate with those sacred entities, to utilize their powers and to render them homage, thus reaffirming their preeminent position in the believers' consciousness.

Beliefs that are associated, directly or indirectly, with worship are called "religious," and it is exclusively these beliefs that will be the focus of this article.

Both the relationship between the two meanings of "belief" and the use itself of this term as a universal descriptive category, however, raise considerable problems. Moreover, of the pair "worship/belief," which is the more important

Editor's Note from Original Translation: The reader should be aware that the original Italian text speaks of "credenze e culti," which we have chosen to translate as "belief and worship," because the English word "worship" has a wider usage than "cult" and does not have the pejorative connotation that "cult" sometimes acquires. We have also chosen to render the word "belief" in the singular for the title, since that signals a more abstract discussion of the notion (Janet Hoskins, editor).

and unifying term? Is worship an aspect of belief, or is belief an aspect of worship? We will begin by examining the question of the legitimacy of the term "belief."

THE CATEGORY "BELIEF"

This problem has recently been addressed by two scholars, W. C. Smith (1979) and Rodney Needham (1972). W. C. Smith's thesis can be summarized as follows: of the two principal meanings of belief, that is, "assent to propositions" and "faith," only the latter is universally applicable to religious phenomena. Smith maintains in fact that it is improper to use "belief" as a synonym for "faith": in our modern culture the true meaning of "belief" is a mental state of assent, which lacks certainty, and is even doubtful, about propositions. Inversely, it is erroneous to consider faith as a species of superbelief, that is, Thomistically, as an essentially cognitive power that allows people to believe in propositions which seem incredible to natural reason. "Faith" should be understood in the sense it carries in the Old and New Testaments, in the Koran and in Brahmanic literature, or in the Buddhist canon: as action and not as intellection, as an attitude (of reverence, acceptance, testimony, commitment, fidelity) toward the transcendent. Contrary to belief, this attitude does not even raise the issue of the reality of its object and for this reason it is incompatible with doubt. In sum, like the Arabic *iman* and the Hebrew *he'min* (from which our *amen* derives), "faith" means "saying yes," responding affirmatively to a divine offer, to a revelation upon which the intellect never dwells because it never casts the revelation in doubt.

W. C. Smith is certainly right in emphasizing (as Fustel de Coulanges and especially William Robertson Smith had before him) that the modem Western tendency to reduce religion to belief in certain propositions is completely exceptional. This tendency has become stronger in modern times owing to the hegemony of scientific rationalism, but it began to manifest itself as soon as Greek philosophy took hold of Christianity and converted it, so to speak, to itself. Quite early on, Christianity—in contrast with all other organized religions (and *a fortiori* with those not organized)—insisted on the necessity that believers adhere to a creed and maintain orthodoxy, which was judged to be more important than "orthopraxis." This tendency reached its peak in Thomistic philosophy in which *scientia* is superior to *fides,* at least from the subjective

point of view (*Summa Theologica,* II–I, 67, 3 *ad* 1), and in which *fides* itself is defined as "*cognoscitivus habitus*" (*Summa Theologica,* II–II, 1, 1) or "*habitus mentis . . . aciens intellectum assentire non apparentibus*" (*Summa Theologica,* II–II, 4,1). We can therefore concede to W. C. Smith that the centrality that belief (in its intellectual, propositional dimension) has assumed in the Western religious tradition makes us risk thinking that adherence to a system of beliefs (instead of, for example, a system of laws, as in Judaism and Islam, or a ritual system, as in Hinduism and in Greek and Roman religions) may have the same importance in all religions. But recognizing this fact does not mean accepting the confusion that W. C. Smith creates between "absence of creed" and "absence of belief," nor his thesis of a radical separation, indeed incompatibility, between "faith" and "belief" (that is, between the two meanings of the word "belief" as commonly understood).

In reality, faith in the sense of acceptance, fidelity, commitment—we could say, in a word, "subjection"—as found in the Koran or in the Bible, presupposes belief in certain propositions. For instance, what meaning would a relationship of subjection to God have if God were not explicitly conceived of as a lord and master who requires, like all lords and masters, precisely subjection and fidelity? It is therefore clear that, far from being a primary attitude, and independently of belief, as W. C. Smith maintains, the faith of the Koran and of the Bible is the correlate of beliefs relating to the properties of God. And it is precisely because the belief exists that God is a "lord" that the necessity of accepting him and being faithful to him are emphasized, rather than the necessity of knowing him in an intellectually correct way. W. C. Smith himself is forced to admit that faith presupposes certain notions; but he maintains that these notions should not be considered beliefs, either because they are considered secure knowledge, or because they are not conscious. The first thesis is only valid if one agrees with Plato's contrast (*Republic,* books V–VII) between belief as opinion, characterized by doubt, and knowledge, characterized by certainty. Such a contrast can certainly be found in the Koran, but this proves only that in the language of that book, the cognitive relationship with God cannot be designated with the word *zanna* ("belief" in the sense of "opinion," "knowledge whose truth is in doubt"), and does not prove that our term "belief" (in the sense of "thing held to be true") is not applicable to that relationship. Mistakenly, W. C. Smith gives our term a narrower meaning than that which it in effect has: so doing, he ignores the fact that the term covers the entire spectrum from "subjective certainty" to "doubtful assent." As for his other thesis, according to which no unconscious adherence to

a notion can be defined as "belief," it slights the difficulty of tracing a clear border between reflexive and unreflexive representations (which many, moreover, put in the category of belief; see Hampshire 1983: 150), and therefore between propositional and non-propositional meaning. In practice, Smith arbitrarily assimilates "belief" to "creed."

He rightly insists on the fact that Islamic, Biblical, or Brahmanic faith is more performative than cognitive, but he seems to believe, wrongly, that the performative aspect is incompatible with the declarative one (see Austin 1975). This prevents him from recognizing not only the intellectual aspect of "faith," but also the pragmatic, performative aspect of belief. In effect, he does not see that, by making belief propositional—sincere and convinced adherence to a creed—the principal criterion of membership in a Church, post-ancient or modern Christianity has given belief an illocutionary dimension, not a propositional one. This dimension is particularly evident in the conventional, public expression of belief that is required in rites of passage and aggregation, such as baptism, confirmation, and so forth, or in rites of abjuration forced on heretics. All this indicates that the external but also internal expression of belief in a proposition is, in Christianity, an actual act of worship, with illocutionary effects.

W. C. Smith also maintains that while religious beliefs vary widely from religion to religion, their notions of faith are extraordinarily similar. This would demonstrate that they all reflect a single, identical reality, the reality, that is, of faith. Not belief, but faith would thus be the appropriate category with which to define and understand the religious phenomenon in its universality. But W. C. Smith characterizes faith in, as usual, an extremely vague and ethnocentric way, especially because he turns the phenomenon into a fundamentally personal fact. According to him, the institutional and intellectual aspect of all religions is none other than a "manifestation" of personal faith, or furnishes faith with the context and language in which it can express itself. But it is sufficient to know religious practices first-hand, especially in non-scriptural religions, to realize that things are much different than Smith maintains, using exclusively textual forms of knowledge as his guide.

The majority of the faithful carries out rites and follows religious laws because, they say, it has always been done so, because it has been so for as long as the world has been the world (namely because religion is an institutional, traditional matter), not because they feel moved by the "faith" described by W. C. Smith. And it would be ingenuous not to recognize that, even in the religions that give central importance to faith, this faith is acquired as a *habitus*

and not as a spontaneous tendency, a natural property immediately available to the individual.

Needham (1972) arrives at conclusions that are more extreme than Smith's. According to him, the word "belief" does not designate an objectively identifiable mental state. On the contrary, the idea of this state would be the reification of a use that is almost exclusively limited to modern European languages. Needham arrives at this conclusion because no precise empiric criteria exist with which to recognize a distinct mental state that may be called "belief." In fact, this supposed mental state is not shown by somatic signs like those that allow the identification of rage, joy, anguish, and so on. Moreover, belief is not one of those phenomena whose universality can be deduced a priori from the fact that they are necessary for every possible social form. Not being able to demonstrate either a priori or a posteriori that belief is a real characteristic of human experience, nothing remains, Needham holds, but to consider it as a *flatus vocis,* valid only inasmuch as it is a communicative convention of certain languages.

Let us take, for instance, the pairs of expressions "I believe in God" / "I do not believe in God," "I believe what he says" / "I do not believe what he says," "I believe he will come for tea" / "I do not believe he will come for the tea." Needham (1972: 121–122) asserts that these pairs have only their grammatical form in common and correspond neither to a class in the Aristotelian sense nor to a "family" of phenomena in the Wittgensteinian sense (see 1953). One could object however that they do in fact share a common element: the credit granted or not granted to a person (God, the person who promised to come to have tea, the person who says something to me) and, additionally or alternatively, the credit granted or denied by an assertion ("God exists," "he is worthy of faith," "I will come for the tea"). Let us observe moreover that the presence or absence of this "credit" is not deduced from its linguistic expression, but from the fact that the speaker is ready to act in conformity with what he or she says: ready to prepare tea for someone, to follow the dictates of divine law, and so forth. The true criterion for identifying belief is not therefore linguistic, but pragmatic. It is thus not with arguments based on analysis of linguistic expressions that one can prove that "belief" is a mere *flatus vocis*, a breath of air.

Clearly, one cannot automatically deduce from the fact that a person carries out the rituals prescribed for the cult of a god that this person believes in that god. In order to explain ritual behaviors or any other behavior it is not necessary to invoke a specific belief. It suffices to presuppose that the behaviors are traditional ones and that the idea of questioning them does not even arise, or

is inhibited by fear of a social sanction. But this reasoning does not at all prove that there exists no belief which is the correlate of those behaviors, much less that it is useless or erroneous to invoke the notion of belief in the description of those behaviors. Indeed, one can carry out a rite without believing in the god to whom it is directed, but not without believing in the value of following the tradition that demands the rite's performance, or in the value of avoiding "scandal," and so forth. Every action, from this point of view, presupposes a "belief," that is, subjective adherence of some sort, some sort of personal reckoning on the part of the one who acts.

In conclusion, only in strongly individualistic cultures like ours is there insistence on the obligation to make explicit those beliefs on the basis of which we act and to believe in the propositions handed down by tradition or sanctioned by an organization (the Church, but also the party, the State, the military, etc.). In most societies, individual adherence to the collective patrimony of ideas is not obligatory and is not considered necessary to the functioning of the ritual system. It is therefore not legitimate to assume that these ideas are also, necessarily, "beliefs" *sensu stricto.* But neither is it legitimate to infer from that that they are never such or, worse, that the mental state "belief" does not exist and is only an arbitrary linguistic usage of Western scholars. On the contrary, the ethnographic experience—that is, in-depth and continued contact with people and situations in cultures different from our own—teaches us that people generally believe that is, they have faith, albeit sometimes with a certain ambivalence, both in fundamental ideas of their culture and in persons (gods, priests, parents, tutors) from whom these ideas come and who are their guarantors. These two forms of faith are inseparable in that they are the two faces of the communicative process of which communal life consists. It is therefore legitimate to use the notion of belief as a universal category, keeping in mind, however, that the strict sense of belief as assent to propositions does not cover the whole field of religious meanings.

INTELLECT AND SYMBOL

What are the distinctive features of religious beliefs, that is, of those beliefs that are related to worship? This question generally receives two types of answers. According to some, religious representations are born of the same rational impulse that is found at the roots of both science and common sense: the impulse

to explain events, to control them, and to render them predictable. From this point of view, religious beliefs form the explicative theories of traditional cultures, and ritual activities provide the practical application of those beliefs. According to others, religious representations and actions have motivations entirely different from those of science or common sense: they should instead be related to artistic expression and communication or to moral phenomena (in a broad sense), whose value is based on their social and psychological effects, not on their explicative power. The first group of answers goes by the name of "intellectualist theory," the second by that of "symbolist theory" (see Skorupski 1976).

The first and most famous formulation of intellectualist theory is indebted to E. B. Tylor (1871), who asserts that magical and religious beliefs differ from one another and from science not because they reflect different forms of thought (as Lévy-Bruhl will maintain), but because their premises, and therefore their content, are different. These differences are in turn due to differences in the concrete possibilities of observation and inquiry, as well as to differences of interest. What strikes and therefore interests primitive man most deeply, according to Tylor, are two phenomena: the contrast between life and death, and the contrast between dream-states and waking. The fact that absent people may be dreamt of because they are distant or dead suggests that every person, and by extension every living being, possesses a spiritual double, capable of separating itself from the body and outliving it. From this stems the belief in spiritual beings, which offers the possibility of explaining not only dreams and the difference between a living body (inhabited by the spirit) and a dead body, but also all the manifest phenomena that are inexplicable in the empirical terms of common sense.

The thesis that systems of religious belief are just theories which, introducing "invisible" entities, help overcome the limitations on possibilities of explanation offered by observation and common sense is the cornerstone of the sophisticated reformulation of intellectualist theory furnished by Robin Horton ([1967] 1970). According to Horton, differences between the intellectual procedures of modern science and those of traditional religious thought are in large part "idiomatic," not substantial, and therefore more apparent than real. It is not possible to discuss here all eight of the characteristics which, according to Horton, religious theories and scientific theories share. It will suffice to hint at a few. He maintains, for instance, that religious explanations, precisely like scientific ones, try to make diversity into unity, complexity into simplicity, disorder into order, anomaly into regularity. These reductions are made possible in both intellectual activities by Correspondence-Rules which make it possible to

translate events that seem like ordinary experience into events within a theoretical schema. For example, an increase in temperature is translated into an increase in the movement of molecules. Analogously, an illness is translated into a divine punishment in order to explain it and act on it. "God" is therefore a principle of explanation like the "molecule": they differ only in that the former is a personal entity while the latter is impersonal.

This argument and others of Horton's are valid only insofar as they recognize the obvious fact that all manifestations of intellectual activity have certain formal properties in common. To think undoubtedly means to reduce the complex to the simple, the multiple to the one, and so forth. But contrary to what Horton claims, these generic properties of thought are at too general a level to explain the characteristics of religious belief. Let us give an example. Lévy-Bruhl (1910) maintains that religious beliefs have a characteristic that, from the point of view of our logic, represents a paradox: a thing can be simultaneously identical to itself and identical to a completely different thing. According to Horton, these paradoxes are analogous to those produced by the Correspondence-Rules between theory and experience. The solution to the paradox, in science as in religion, lies in recognizing that "the 'is' of Correspondence-Rule statements is neither the 'is' of identity nor the 'is' of class-membership. Rather, it stands for a unity in-duality uniquely characteristic of the relation between the world of commonsense and the world of theory" (Horton [1967] 1970: 133).

There is no doubt that some of the paradoxical cases pointed out by Lévy-Bruhl can be explained in the way Horton proposes. But others cannot be because they entail identifications not between entities of different orders (observation and theory), but between entities of the same order, both of which are concrete. In such cases, the violation of the rule of non-contradiction seems to be due to the postulate according to which terms associated metonymically or metaphorically count as equivalents in ritual operations. For instance, the knife that has wounded is identical to itself but also to the wound that it inflicted, and the knife can thus be treated as the wound's equivalent so as to sustain belief in the capacity of the rite to nullify the wound by destroying, let us suppose, the knife. This example also demonstrates that we cannot adequately account for beliefs by making them into simple theories: they are often intelligible only as justifications for ritual actions.

Furthermore, many representations do not have the goal of reducing the complexity and confusion of experience to the simplicity and clarity of theory, but on the contrary shroud social relations and certain phenomena in darkness

and mystery so as to legitimize them or protect them from criticism. Horton's approach does not take into account this ideological, mystifying aspect of religious representations and actions. His approach overlooks moreover the fact that religious theories are not born, as are scientific ones, of a concern with supplying a unitary explanation of natural phenomena in general. Their principal preoccupation is constituted by events of human interest and, more particularly, unusual or negative events like illnesses, misfortunes, and so on. This is one of the principal reasons why religious forces and powers are conceived of anthropomorphically and sociomorphically. As Bergson notes ([1932] 1974), the cause must be related to the effect, and hence must be human and social like the latter. Only when the theoretical interest goes beyond the immediate sphere of human events or human interest do we begin to invoke causes that are natural and impersonal like the effects they must explain. Horton instead provides an unconvincing explanation of the contrast between the personal character (spirits, divinities, etc.) of concepts in religious theories and their impersonal character (atoms, molecules, etc.) in scientific theories.

This contrast would be attributable to different experiences of what constitutes order *par excellence*. In societies that produce religious theories, relationships among persons would appear ordered and predictable to the highest degree; therefore, in this case, the theoretical language would give preference to social metaphors, and the principles of explanation and conceptual ordering of nature would take a personal form. In societies that produce scientific theories, on the other hand, human relations would appear chaotic, and this would explain why the experience of order is linked primarily to things and not persons. But this explanation conflicts with that upheld by various scholars who have studied the passage from religious belief to science in the ancient world. Vernant (1969), for instance, has maintained that the social and spatial order of the Greek πόλις (which was certainly not paradise) provided the model for its mathematical cosmos. The transference of social ordering to nature can, on the other hand, be interpreted, in opposition to Horton, as proof that even in traditional societies it is nature that appears as the paradigm of order. Indeed, this naturalization or reification of social order has the effect of giving it an immutable and necessary aspect, which it would otherwise not have (see Weber [1922] 1968). Whereas Horton sees a theoretical use of society to explain nature, we can then see a pragmatic use of nature to justify society.

As for the differences between systems of religious belief and modern science, Horton explains them not in terms of content, but in terms of behavior

with respect to theories. The scientist's attitude is "open" and critical, because he is conscious of alternative theories; the religious person's attitude is instead "closed": every challenge to established ideas is seen with horror, as a risk of chaos which produce profound anxiety. The religious person's attitude would be the correlate of the absence of theoretical alternatives in traditional societies. Horton uses this to explain various aspects of the religious mentality: the magical attitude toward words (if there is not an awareness of the fact that the same objects have different names in different languages, people believe that words have an intrinsic link with that which they designate and may therefore be used to influence); the lack of reflexivity (and hence of disciplines like logic and philosophy); the tendency to rationalize, with *ad hoc* explanations, events that contradict a theory, instead of criticizing the theory and if necessary abandoning it, and so forth.

But even here Horton's arguments are often less than convincing: for instance, contrary to what he suggests, many traditional societies are multilingual and in any case aware of the existence of different languages; the magical use of language cannot therefore be explained by the lack of awareness of alternative designations of the same objects. Analogously, the very political and cultural fragmentation itself that is characteristic of traditional societies creates awareness of alternative conceptions of the world, an awareness reinforced in many areas of the world by the secular presence of universalist religions like Islam, Buddhism, or Christianity. The same defensive attitude of the believer with respect to theories is found, as Horton (1982) was forced to admit in flesh-and-blood scientists, who are often quite different from the ideal scientists portrayed by the Popperian philosophy of which Horton is a follower.

In conclusion, the intellectualist theory of religious belief has the merit of individuating in religious belief general properties of intellectual activity that are also found in science and a properly cosmological-explicative aspect which should not be underestimated. But the theory seems unable to account adequately for the specific characteristics of religious belief and, even less, for those found in worship, which is reduced to activity of an instrumental, almost technological, sort.

Turning now to the second group of theories of worship and of religious belief, we should note that the "symbolist" position was initially formulated by W. R. Smith (1889) and especially by Durkheim and his school, who reclaimed, contrary to the intellectualism of Tylor and Frazer, the social—and thus the historically determined—character of thought in general and of religious thought

in particular. Religious beliefs are social facts which have social motivations and cannot therefore be seen as simple theoretical constructions of "natural" reason which remains identical over time and is modified only by the quantity and the quality of available information.

In his first attempt to individuate the specific character of religious phenomena, Durkheim (1899) defines them not on the basis of specific content or logic, but on the basis of the relationship that exists between religious phenomena and the individual. He defines them, that is, on the basis of their implicitly or explicitly obligatory character. Religious phenomena share this character with those juridical and ethical phenomena, but whereas the latter imply obligations only on the plane of behavior, the former also imply obligatory representations—beliefs. This definition is obviously debatable, because it is impossible to separate obligatory representation from obligatory actions in law and in ethics.

Durkheim ([1912] 1965) subsequently proposed a definition that takes into consideration the common denominator of all the contents of religious representations: these contents concern the sphere of the sacred, that is, those things that seem eminently respectable and important to a society. But what is eminently sacred and important for the members of the society if not the society itself? From here stems his bold conclusion: it is not the literal, apparent meaning of religious beliefs that can explain their specific character, but their hidden and profound meaning, which relates to the society itself. Religious representations, whatever their form, personal or impersonal, natural or artificial, are allegories of the social world, its reified symbols, which allow its reproduction by acting powerfully on individual consciousnesses. This action is carried out predominantly in actions within the cult, that is, in rituals that inculcate beliefs and consolidate their force while at the same time reviving social forms and, more profoundly, the social bond itself.

Durkheim's attempt to reduce all aspects of religious representations to a social content and in particular to social morphology is debatable (see Needham 1963). This reduction is utterly useless for establishing the validity of the theory's principal point: that religious beliefs receive much of their force and their raison d'être from their social function. In order to explain this fact, it suffices to recognize that they are socially constitutive because socially shared. Durkheim's theory that religious beliefs symbolize society is necessarily true only in the sense that there is a component of "self-referentiality" in every symbolic act. The force of these symbolic acts is the force of the community that shares them and imposes them on successive generations; it is the force itself of the act of

sharing, that actually constitutes society. It is therefore not surprising that symbolic acts may evoke society. But this evocation must, paradoxically, be distorted, must become unrecognizable, because if the intersubjective act—which lies at the foundation of religious representations and, through them, of society as it is constituted—were perceived, the consequent recognition of the representations' conventional character would render them vulnerable to criticism and would therefore undermine them. In order to conserve their constitutive force, social representations must remain indisputable, and therefore acquire the character of things: they must become, like them, unchangeable and transcendent with respect to the subject. Fundamental social values and, in the final analysis, the very power of society to constitute these values and to constitute itself, are therefore reified and alienated.

Here Durkheim's analysis extends those of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx, but like those, and like the "symbolist" positions in general, his analysis encounters a series of difficulties. Indeed, these analyses postulate a state of "false consciousness" which is utterly paradoxical: the true content of religious beliefs seems to need to be at one and the same time recognized ("symbolized") and not recognized ("reified") by consciousness. These analyses do not explain, however, how a thing can be at one and the same time recognized and missed; nor do they explain how it might be possible for analysis, using the fictitious form of representations, to arrive at the representations' real content. Who guarantees that the analysis might not become arbitrary as soon as it goes beyond the literal content of the representations? Who guarantees that instead of "real content," the analyst not extract nothing but products of his own imagination?

Various solutions or remedies have been sought for these problems. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) and his followers, for instance, have attempted to avoid them by radically distinguishing, in contrast to Durkheim, function from signification. According to them, religious representations would have social effects but would not necessarily signify social realities. In any case, the thorny problem of meaning could be left aside because the true task in analyzing these representations would be to identify their function. But the difficulty of this convenient approach is that generally we cannot account for the function of representations without taking into consideration their content. In other words, the problem of symbolism, chased out through the door, returns through the window. Moreover, in the matter of signification (which Radcliffe-Brown links, without further elaboration to "cosmology"), literalism does not lead very far

from, or leads back to, the intellectualist position, since religious beliefs are presented superficially as explanations.

Other scholars think that it is necessary to confront head-on the issues connected with symbolism and the mental states linked to it, despite all the difficulties and risks they entail, In particular, it is a matter of recognizing the difference that exists between propositional and non-propositional forms of signification. The propositional forms are linked to the discursive, argumentative use of language and are the correlate of consciousness. The non-propositional forms make up a much more vast and complex domain, principally connected with the use of visual, auditory, olfactory, and even gustatory symbols, which have as a correlate the unconscious or semi-conscious apprehension of signifying relations. As in language, signification here consists of a putting into relations, and therefore of the perception of equivalences and contrasts. But this is a matter of relations that are not codified in the same measure and in the same way as linguistic signs: in them analogic, and not digital, codes are dominant (see Bateson 1972; Barth 1975). The problem raised by these classes of signs is that it is not possible to analyze them in a properly "objective" way. In fact, part of their very nature is to make possible and even encourage an indefinite number of interpretations. The analyst thus ends up being implicated; and the process that allows an analyst to discriminate between his or her subjective reactions and those of the social group studied cannot be led back to methods reproducible at will. He or she can make recourse only to indirect proofs of the interpretations of these signs-behaviors normally linked to them, social effects, associations of signs of one type with those of another type, and, more generally, the whole context. One thing is certain: in this field it is not the verbal exegesis offered by informants that can provide a secure guide to the effective meaning of signs that function analogically (or through other figures of rhetoric). In fact, there is a profound difference, and at times near incommunicability, between the propositional and non-propositional levels of signification.

These developments lead to the criticism and modification on several points of the symbolist position in the form given it by Durkheim. The first of these points regards the radical contrast between collective and obligatory representations, which are, according to Durkheim, characteristic of religion, and the individual and optional representations, which would be characteristic of the profane sphere. How is it possible to distinguish clearly the public and conventional meaning from the individual meaning in the inchoate and barely codified symbolism that is characteristic of a significant part of religious symbolism?

Where does public interpretation begin and private end? And is not the distinction itself deforming, beyond a certain point, if one of the fundamental conditions of the social efficacy of symbolism lies precisely in the various and indefinite character of its effects on individuals? For the same reason, how is it possible to leave analysis of the properly psychological aspect of symbolism out of analysis of its social aspect?

This last question leads to a more general objection to the excessive sociocentrism of the Durkheimian explanation of religion. Recognizing with Durkheim that the efficacy of beliefs and ritual actions has a social, conventional origin and, ultimately, that the sense of reality associated with these beliefs in consciousness and actions has this same origin does not mean having to conclude, as he does, that their motivations and functions must be found exclusively in the logic of social functioning. It is not by chance that a significant number of religious theories attempt to explain, justify, and make tolerable (often creating the illusion of control) phenomena like death, illness, bad luck, and other imponderable elements of existence. It is misfortune, as everyone knows, that makes one religious. Religion does not console the suffering only under our skies. As Weber noted, one of the fundamental preoccupations of religion is theodicy. We must therefore recognize that religious belief also has its roots in defensive reactions against phenomena of finiteness and suffering and, in particular, against the anxiety that they cause.

To this point of view, illustrated by such thinkers as Spinoza and Bergson, Freud and Malinowski, some object that it is not anxiety that produces religious beliefs, but religious beliefs that produce anxiety (see Radcliffe-Brown 1952). This is because, in creating positive and negative prescriptions, such religious beliefs simultaneously create the fear of violating them. This objection is based, however, on the confusion of two types of anxiety: the primary anxiety, which certain tendencies and practices make controllable and tolerable, and the secondary anxiety, much less severe, which is born from the fear of incurring supernatural sanctions on those beliefs and practices. It should not be ruled out that sometimes the anxiety linked with transgression may be due to anticipation of a return to the primary anxiety.

In short, there is not a radical contrast between sociology and psychology, nor between personal meaning and public meaning, but rather a movement of reciprocal determination. Without collective mediation, personal fantasies lack reality because they are incommunicable or, if they are communicable, they are not accepted as real. But, reciprocally, collective representations derive part of

their efficacy and persuasive force from their capacity to strike the most intimate chords of individuals, to satisfy their desires in an imaginary form, to calm their fears, helping them in this way to live. Religion is thus not simply prescriptive, a system of beliefs and obligatory practices: it is also, and above all, a system of communication, a place where motivations, fantasies, interpretations, and individual projects meet and are realized. Without the energy that these aspects provide the system, it could not exist; but without the system which realizes them socially, creating the context in which they can communicate with one another, they would not exist either.

RITUAL, WORSHIP, AND SACRED BEINGS

The communicative role of religion is realized above all in the system of practices in worship, not only because they provide the concrete contexts in which communication occurs, but also because they incorporate the implicit or unconscious notions that are not reduced nor even reducible to the propositional form of beliefs *sensu stricto.* A significant part of worship consists of rituals: but what is a "ritual"? The many uses of the term "ritual" can seemingly be grouped in two principal classes. The term refers, on the one hand, to formal behaviors, with communicative and operative ends; on the other hand, it refers to fictional equivalents of real actions. Examples of the first class of rituals are behaviors of courtesy, good manners, ceremonies of installation of political and religious authorities, the ceremonial of the court, weddings, baptisms, and so forth; examples of the second class are the so-called "ritualizations" of aggressive behaviors, ritual revolts (quite common during New Year's festivities, or when political and religious offices become vacant), and other imitations of ordinary or transgressive behaviors.

The principal trait common to both classes is evidently the symbolic character of the actions they include. But there are many other classes of symbolic actions: what justifies the association of these two classes? Fundamentally, their constitutive character: these symbolic actions—in contrast, for example, with actions that have an exclusively aesthetic character—are not limited to symbolizing, but bring into existence what they symbolize, because it does not exist except symbolically. Let us consider, for example, a marriage ritual. This ritual consists of gestures and visual symbols, which represent the passage of a couple from an unmarried state to a conjugal state and the correlative transformations (of relations

between the two families, of the relationship of the bride and groom with other people, and so forth). And thus, by social convention this representation effectively produces what it represents: the bride and groom become husband and wife, their families enter into a relationship of affinity, from now on the husband and wife cannot be courted, and so on. Analogously, the ritual use of language is performative: when a justice of the peace (or a priest) says, at the prescribed point in the marriage ritual, "I pronounce you husband and wife," he brings into existence what he pronounces. The same thing happens when a judge says "the defendant is acquitted." In these cases, saying is doing (see Austin 1962).

The constitutive character (see Kantorowicz 1946) or performative character as it is also called, is equally evident in rituals that provide the fictional equivalent of a real behavior. A custom of the inhabitants of the Andaman islands furnishes an example of this type of ritual: when a group wants to make peace with an enemy group, it pretends to attack that group and dances, armed, a war dance, which ends only when every dancer has violently shaken, first from the front, then from behind, every member of the enemy group, which on this occasion remains completely passive (see Radcliffe-Brown 1922: 134–35). The representation of war here produces peace—that is, the opposite of what is represented. Symbolization is performative in this case too, but it becomes such through negation. The performative effect is obtained by putting the truly symbolic character of the action at the forefront, that is, by emphasizing the fact that the symbol of something is different from the thing itself. The representation of war is a war that is no war; it is a pretend war. It can thus represent (and conventionally produce) the transition from actual war to peace. In short, there are two ways to produce reality by conventional definitions, such as marriage, peace, and so forth, through entities which are themselves conventional as symbols: directly or inversely, by a direct affirmation or by a negation, either postulating that the symbol is identical to what it symbolizes (the representation of two people as husband and wife transforms them into husband and wife) or that the symbol is of a reality different from what it symbolizes, in effect, contrary to it.

Naturally these two procedures can be combined, and the above-mentioned Andaman ritual provides the proof of this. For while one of the two sides that carry out the ritual symbolizes peace through a negation of the conflict, the other side symbolizes peace by exaggerating its characteristics: it remains in fact completely passive. Analogously, in numerous rituals the social order is reproduced by combining its direct enunciation in an extreme (and hence "formal") form with its indirect enunciation through a fictitious disorder a Saturnalia or

a carnival. The combination allows the ritual action to be given a dialectical form perfectly fitting to symbolize and produce the transformations that are the principal concern of all rituals. Indeed, as was noted long ago by Van Gennep ([1909] 1960), the majority of rituals have to do with passages: from childhood to puberty or an adult state from an unmarried state to a married one, from life to death, from the status of a commoner to that of king or priest or knight, from the old year to the new, and so forth.

Another common characteristic of all rituals is their fundamentally ludic nature. That is, they feature actions that constitute an imaginary order, which exists in creative tension with the real order either because these actions represent a more ordered, quasi-utopistic form of the real order or because, on the contrary, they represent an alternative to it. Obviously, the first case corresponds to a considerable portion of the rituals which consist of "formal" actions, that is, of actions which, in contrast to ordinary actions, make clear their form, communicate this form, and say: "look, we are acting according to the rules that constitute this action, and therefore it is valid." Although these rules are first and foremost constitutive of the characteristic order of the ritual, and as such are not necessarily applicable to ordinary actions as well, their apperception in the course of the ritual has repercussions on daily life, since the ritual is also a model or a metaphor of the everyday world. For instance, rituals of coronation have their own rules, but they likewise represent the ideal relationships between king and subjects, between political and religious power, and so on, which should be found, if in a more diffuse and less ordered form, in everyday life. Analogously, a ritual such as the Catholic mass expresses ideal relationships between God and the faithful which it is difficult to find in daily life. The artificial order of the ritual is thus a "game," a simulated event which makes it possible to strengthen consciousness of the forms and values that must (or should) guide ordinary actions. But on the other hand, the self-constitutive character of ritual forms allows them an opposite kind of functioning: the ritual can be a reward or a consolation for the chaos of ordinary life, to which ideal values cannot seem to be applied. Relations between the ideal order of the ritual and the order of everyday life are thus complex and ambiguous, with aspects of contrast and aspects of agreement.

Even more complex and ambiguous are relations between ordinary life and those rituals which, inasmuch as they are fictitious imitations of prohibited behaviors, allow an imaginary satisfaction of the desire to transgress order as well as allowing the production of forms that are alternative to the order. These forms can in certain situations be adopted into everyday life: then the feast

becomes revolution. But ordinarily, the subversive character of these rituals is only fictitious: through them one pretends to invert, destroy, and contest the established order, but given that this is done as make-believe, nothing happens but to reestablish indirectly the order itself. In these rituals in any case, the same creative aspect of the game is more important than its role as a model, which instead dominates in "formal" rituals.

These facts indicate that the ritual—beyond constituting specific situations and transformations by virtue of stipulations of an almost juridical character—is constitutive in a more general and profound sense. In the final analysis the ritual contributes to constituting the social community that performs it, to creating a communicative field, and more generally a relational field, among its participants. This is particularly true for those societies in which the community reaches its greatest compass in the moment of the execution of rituals and does not exist beyond this execution. Moreover, whereas language constitutes the community by making it possible to communicate propositions, ritual constitutes it, at a more profound level, by making possible a communication which for the most part is not propositional.

The ritual is not necessarily religious. It is only so when it is believed that the source and ultimate guarantee of its constitutive power are situated not in social convention, but in transcendent entities, personal or impersonal. The constitutive effect of the ritual is then attributed to the intervention of these entities, which means that a religious ritual can be recognized by the fact that it always includes procedures for establishing proper relations with these entities. Why do a significant portion of rituals assume the character of worship? Why do the powers of social convention and human action in the rite become reified and personified? An adequate response to these questions can be given only by a theory of religious action, which cannot be elaborated here. But it is permissible to assume that belief in sacred entities as conditions for the efficacy of the ritual is due at least in part to the convergence of two facts (see Valeri 1985a).

1) The ritual is lived as an objective order, not constituted by any subject or by any empirical relationship since, ultimately, it is constitutive of everybody. Inasmuch as it is the ultimate author, the ritual must therefore remain without author—a principle developed to its extreme consequences by Brahmanic speculation, which holds the sacrificial ritual to be an objective order that embraces and constrains gods and men alike (see Levi 1898) or must have an author who is himself transcendental. In this, the situation of the

ritual is similar to that of language, that is, to the other institution that is highly transcendental because highly constitutive of society. It is not therefore by chance that many gods (beginning with Yahweh) are personifications of the power of the magic word—personifications, that is, of language and of rite at the same time.

2) Reflection leads to the abstraction of various types of authority, of various aspects of the constitutive power of ritual. These types are distinct from concrete ritual actions, but they preserve the objective character common to all of them. They thus appear transcendental, like the ritual itself. And since these types of authority distinguish types of actions, they are inevitably represented as actors—that is, they are personified. Personification is not however always present, nor is it present in equal measure in religious thought. Personal or not, these reified types participate in the constitutive character of ritual. In addition to their generically constitutive character, they have a specific one, with respect to the actions and relations of which they are models.

The gods and other sacred entities are, in short, objects of worship because they are its transcendental subjects. These subjects are the result of a process of rationalization and reflection, which explains why beliefs themselves which have a propositional form, may be found above all in theological discourse, whereas non-propositional forms of signification may abound in ritual action, which utilizes means that are non-discursive and more particularly musical, choreographic, gestural, and so forth—means that are by their nature rich with unreflective or unconscious associations.

Belief and ritual constitute, therefore, the two levels, in part complementary, in part antagonistic, of any system of worship. The level of belief represents the attempt to justify rationally the constitutive power of ritual, but this power is always richer than the belief and thus cannot be completely reduced to it. From this power of ritual springs the visceral anti-ritualism of religions that privilege belief, and its correlate, faith as an interior and subjective relationship with the divinity.

FORMS OF WORSHIP AND BELIEF

Worship is therefore a process of communication between men and sacred entities which has constitutive, that is, conventional, effects. Naturally, it also has

non-conventional effects, but it is the conventional effects that distinguish worship from other types of action, since those non-conventional effects are common to all actions. The constitutive effects of worship involve both the relations between sacred entities and men (that is, between the objects and subjects of worship), and the *status* of each. In fact, it is only in and only through worship that the relationship between gods and men becomes a true relationship, that is, subject to rules and stipulations of an almost juridical nature (as with the famous "pact" between Yahweh and the Israelites). It is not by chance that law is often born of worship and that, as in ancient Rome, the juridical nature of the relations among men is the counterpart of the juridical nature of relations between men and their gods (see Dumézil 1970).

As for the constitutive effects of worship on those who participate in it as "subjects" or "objects," it may suffice to mention the fact that everywhere gods need worship, honor, and even the life and energy with which human recognition provides them. Abandoned, deprived of worship, gods become insignificant and can even die. If instead they are objects of worship, they reward—or should reward—those who honor them by producing the requested corporal or social transformations. Explicitly or implicitly, the center of gravity of worship is always constituted by these transformations, and more generically by the desire for "salvation"—material or spiritual—of the human participants. These participants are often subdivided into two classes: those who commission a particular cultic event and the ritual specialists (priests, mediums, or shamans) who carry it out and function as intermediaries between the divinities and those who turn to them. Beyond those who directly commission the ritual, spectators or indirect beneficiaries also attend, providing the real audience.

Communication between gods and men in worship thus includes processes of communication among men: between commissioners of the ritual and ritual intermediaries, between ritual intermediaries and the audience, between commissioners of the ritual and the audience. Therefore, toward the goal of setting up a typology of worship phenomena, it is necessary to take into consideration not only their aims, the messages transmitted, and the modalities of their transmission, but also the relations among the various interlocutors in the process of ritual communication so much the more since relations of co-variation exist among components of worship. For instance, when a god has a predominantly moral character, the preaching, that is, the direct teaching of the audience by the god through a human intermediary (whether priest or prophet) becomes a prevailing element of worship (see Weber [1922] 1968). This is due to the fact

that in such a case worship consists above all in paying homage to the god by obeying his moral imperatives, and it is thus necessary that these imperatives be reaffirmed and the audience be persuaded to follow them. The ritual intermediary is then more spokesperson of the god to the audience than spokesperson of the audience to the god. In extreme cases, there are forms of worship in which one ceases to ask anything of the god explicitly and leaves the initiative to concede or not concede what the god, in his omniscience, knows is desired.

But it is only in the worship of impersonal entities or personified abstractions like the homeland, the nation, the flag—which have as their explicit aim the reconstruction of corresponding social groups—that communication with the audience predominates over communication with the sacred entity, to which one often turns with non-verbal signs precisely because this entity is not conceived as an actual person. Instead, where the god provides above all a guarantee of the "magical" efficacy of ritual operations, emphasis is put on communication with him rather than with the audience. The ritual intermediaries also turn, albeit indirectly, to the human spectators when these spectators are able to judge the correctness of the procedures put in play in order to communicate with the god. But often the knowledge that allows evaluation of these procedures is accessible only to ritual intermediaries, either because it is a privilege of theirs or because it is too difficult (the use, for instance, of special languages—like Sanskrit, Pali, Latin, Slavonic, classical Arabic, and so forth—is frequent in worship). However, even when excluded from more complex (particularly verbal) aspects of communication with the god, the audience still always remains a necessary interlocutor: it must at least be made to know that the rite is being carried out. In this sense, every act of communication between gods and men presupposes at least implicitly an act of communication among men.

There are two possible aims in communication with sacred beings: either to produce a conjunction between them and a human situation or, on the contrary, a separation. Depending on the case, and particularly on the points of view, the proximity of sacred powers can in fact be either beneficent or maleficent. Let us consider for instance the case of an ordinary man who mistakenly enters a place in which a god is present. He becomes contaminated by divine power and consequently he risks contaminating other people and things as well. This forces him to interrupt his ordinary activities and relationships. So that he may regain these, he needs to persuade or force the god to distance himself from him. The ritual acts that have this goal are called rites of desacralization. We speak of rites of purification when the conjunction with the sacred power is supposed to have

as an effect a state of impurity. Finally, rites of exorcism distance those powers conceived as intrinsically maleficent, such as demons, spirits of the dead, and so forth. While these ritual acts remedy the maleficent connections, others—that is, ritual proscriptions or taboos—prevent them by signaling the incompatibility among different classes of beings and in particular between sacred beings and profane beings.

Ordinarily, contact with sacred entities is dangerous and is therefore avoided, except by those people—priests or ascetics—who consecrate themselves permanently to the god, simultaneously separating themselves, at least in part, from the social world. But in moments that are rendered extraordinary by circumstances or by the calendar, such contact is instead actively sought. At these times, one turns to divinities, seeking to persuade or force them to intervene in theirs spheres of competence, but then sending them away when the desired effects have been obtained.

The means employed to distance the gods or bring them near are substantially the same: they consist of operations effected on or with verbal and non-verbal signs. Verbal operations take the form of prayers, orders, exhortations, and so forth. Non-verbal operations are the most rich and complex: they utilize dances, musical pieces, perfumed or colored substances, sacred images (statues, paintings, etc.), gifts, immolations, and so forth. Some of these means serve to influence only the gods, others only the human participants, but most influence both. In effect, what influences men also influences divinities conceived anthropomorphically. We should note that the transformations of the human participants' mental and physiological state are not a mere side effect of the use of communicative means applied exclusively to transform the state and disposition of the gods, but are explicitly recognized conditions of the efficacy of the ritual. The participants must indeed transform themselves in order to enter into contact with the god by purifying themselves, exciting themselves (sometimes with drugs), or by fasting and practicing other privations that modify their ordinary mental state. Men and gods can therefore encounter each other only by converging. Rites of worship thus have the task of provoking a complex of sensations and associations in which the person encounters, in the alteration of his or her experience, the divine modifier.

By combining the aims of worship with the verbal and non-verbal means that it employs, scholars have created typologies such as "prayer," "sacrifice," "votive offering," "libation," "deification," "inspiration" (that is, the possession of a human intermediary by a spirit or god), and so forth. The use of these terms

creates the risk of reification: *sacrifice* or *prayer* are discussed, without taking account of the fact that these terms can be utilized only to refer to phases or aspects of an always-complex process of communication between men and gods and at the same time between men and men. For instance, it is rare for there to be a sacrifice without prayer, that is, without a verbal rite specifying the reasons for the manual rite, as well as the commissioners of the rite and those to whom it is addressed. Prayer in a reciprocal way almost always involves non-verbal correlates (a respectful attitude, the use of special gestures or garments, offerings, and so forth). And analogously, sacrifice almost always involves a divining aspect, since the sacrificial body (from whose bowels or from whose behavior the will of the god, or his answer to a problem, is deduced) is the meeting-point between human messages and divine messages. This conjunction is also realized by the bodies of the *medium* and of the shaman: from this point of view, sacrificial rites and rites of possession can appear equivalent and be used in alternation or in combination.

Notions such as sacrifice, possession, and deification are therefore useful only insofar as they define certain positions in a communicative structure, in the circulation of constitutive messages (and therefore also of forces) among the various human and divine participants. This structure forms the only true unity in the study of worship. Reciprocally, it is in this structure, which is realized concretely in every culture and every situation, that these terms must find their definition. The same is true for the definition of human and divine participants. The former, as we have seen, can be subdivided into those commissioners of the ritual, intermediaries, and audience, depending on the position they assume in the process of communication within worship. The commissioner provides the motivation for the process and the material means to realize it (but is at times helped by those who are invited); intermediaries provide their knowledge and even their bodies (which can act—in a complementary or redundant way with respect to the bodies of sacrificial victims and with respect to material objects such as images or fetishes—as a meeting-point between human and divine); the audience acts as witness and contributes to rendering the ritual event socially efficacious, spreading word of its success and perpetuating its memory.

The divine participants in ritual can be classified on the basis of numerous parameters, deducible from the acts in which they appear, as well as from the beliefs of which they can be, as we have seen, the explicit object. For instance, sacred beings can be classified in terms of the function of the social units that worship them. Thus various deities—domestic deities, deities of clans, ethnic or

state deities, deities of corporations, of localities, etc.—are distinguished from one another. And it is immediately evident that a certain solidarity and thus analogy exists between the human and divine interlocutors in worship: the god (or saint) of the artisans is himself an artisan, the god of a lineage is often an ancestor, the god of a domestic group is often a personification of the hearth, and so forth. It is not uncommon, moreover, for every individual to have a deity which is exclusively his, a δαίμων that he alone may worship, which guarantees by this his individual existence.

In addition to their relationships with the human participants in worship, sacred entities are defined by their relationships with the material world, that is, by their tangible manifestations. Deities are always conceived anthropomorphically in the sense that they respond to words, they have a will, they have human desires and needs, and they have a sex (or they combine the two sexes). It is not therefore by chance that in places of worship, deities may often be represented by anthropomorphic images and anthropomorphic elements, and even by men in whom they are incarnated or whom they enter for some period of time. Such manifestations make the similarity between gods and men tangible and thus legitimize the use of purely human means (language, gifts, and so forth) to communicate with gods and influence them. But the gods are not only human (and therefore fundamentally comprehensible): they are also transcendent with respect to the human, and from this point of view they are not human. This is one of the reasons for which non-anthropomorphic manifestations of the gods—as mountains, animals, plants, substances, and, at times, their combination in "fetishes"—are often important in worship. The use of "natural" manifestations of the gods, insofar as it reflects the alterity and opacity of the divine, is thus related, by a paradox that is only seemingly so, to the radical prohibition on images professed by Islam, Judaism, and by some forms of Protestantism.

In conclusion, all theological typologies are encompassed by a fundamental contrast: the contrast between polytheism and monotheism. Polytheism seems to be the correlate of forms of social and conceptual consolidation which accentuate the combination and mediation of heterogeneous principles rather than the use of a homogenized hierarchical structure. The tendency towards hierarchical homogenization is manifested instead in henotheism (that is, in the cult of a single god whose existence does not exclude that of other gods, which are often reduced to its manifestations: see Evans-Pritchard 1956; Horton [1967] 1970) and even more so in monotheism. Insofar as it puts a society of gods into relation with a society of men, polytheism always presupposes that the

relationship of the individual with the gods will be socially mediated. Monotheism, to the contrary, favors a personal relationship (which often escapes social control as well as "external"—that is, public and formalized—forms of worship) between the human individual and a god who is conceived as a superindividual: endowed with free will, autonomous, containing the principle of his existence within himself, and so forth. Naturally, between these two tendential extremes (represented, let us say, by the polytheism of West Africa and the monotheism of Protestant Europe), a whole range of complex interrelations develops among theological representations, ritual practices, social forms, and particular historical processes.

CHAPTER TWO

Caste

Translated from the Italian by Nicholas DeMaria Harney

In contemporary sociology, the word "caste" means two different things: a rigid form of class or the component unit of a "caste system" that exists only in Indian society.[1]

For some scholars the first meaning covers all rigid forms of inequality and social "stratification"; for others, the stratification of classes, even if rigid, is a phenomenon different than the hierarchy established by castes. The latter is not reducible to mere inequality and the lack of vertical mobility but involves groups of status whose ritual and economic functions are related systematically and consciously justified by an ideology that subordinates the parts to the whole.

The choice to use an expansive or narrow concept of caste puts into play some fundamental problems in sociology.

CASTE: A CULTURAL OR STRUCTURAL PHENOMENON?

The comparative character of sociology justifies the use of the "expansive" concept of caste for some scholars (F. G. Bailey, G. D. Berreman, Fredrick Barth). The concepts of this science must have a universal applicability, not just regional applications. The specific knowledge of a society or civilization is considered

1. The translator thanks Mario Motti for his advice on translation.

to be cultural facts and these facts do not belong to social structure. The sociologist from a comparative standpoint is dealing only with social structure; therefore the concepts he employs must be independent of cultural particularity (Berreman 1967: 45).

From here arises the dilemma: Is caste a phenomenon of Indian culture or a more general phenomenon of social structure?

Ignoring the ideology of caste and arbitrarily abstracting some traits of the social organization, these scholars do not hesitate to lean toward the second alternative. According to them, everything in the Indian caste system is specific to Indian civilization; it's "cultural" (and therefore unimportant) and not "structural."

One could object to this point of view on the grounds that the ideology is not only the culturally variable rationalization of the "social structure" but an integral part of the latter and cannot be arbitrarily separated from it. The comparative sociologist claims to access a point of view totally free from ideological presuppositions. But, by ignoring the ideologies and the values of the societies studied, one is likely to substitute them with one's own ideology and values.

As we shall see, the method that isolates "economic" and "social" structures and gives them privileged explanatory power depends on an ideology that considers the economic sphere as dominant in every society. But to say that the economic and social structures, artificially isolated from their ideological context, are intelligible "objectively," means to attribute to our "economistic" values a universal applicability and thus project our modern society on the society of caste. It means, moreover, considering the ideology—i.e., the values on the basis of which the humans act within a caste—not as social facts but as illusions of conscience or even rationalizations.

For this reason, we believe the dualism between cultural and structural is false.

CASTE AS THE LIMIT OF CLASS

The ambiguity of the modern definitions of caste are already found in Max Weber, who considers it, as noted by E. R. Leach (1960: 1–2), both as a cultural phenomenon and as a structural phenomenon, and therefore fails to realize what is particularly Indian in this institution. Weber (1922) has, however, recognized the essential distinction in India between "class" and "status group"

(*Stand*), between "economy" and "honor," but for him the caste system is a result of a conjunction between "status groups" and "ethnic communities." The lower status groups are tolerated because they are indispensable on the economic level. Caste society seems therefore fundamentally heterogeneous. But, while stating that the conjunction between status and ethnic group constitutes a *Gemeinschaft*, a political "community," Weber does not explain its systematic organization and juxtaposes the ethnic aspect—that of the division of labor and that of the hierarchy—thus superimposing a European and "historical" point of view (different ethnic origin of various castes) on the indigenous and sociological one.

For Weber, moreover, the difference between *Stand* and caste depends only on a culturally different rationalization of the social structure: a status group is a caste when its separation from other status groups is guaranteed not so much by laws and conventions, as by ritual rules that relate to contact and impurities (cf. Dumont 1966: 308).

The scholar who has formulated in the most clear way the definition of caste as a special form of social class is A. L. Kroeber, for whom caste "at least potentially, are present in every society. However, caste differ from social classes for the fact that they emerged in social conscience to such a point that custom and the law try to separate them from each other in a rigid and permanent manner" (Kroeber 1930: 254). Kroeber partially returns to Weber's definition when he adds that a caste is "an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank, or social esteem, in comparison with other such subdivisions" (1930: 254). However, he does not distinguish, as Weber does, between status and class. Accepted by W. L. Warner and his successors, Kroeber's definition is the basis for those who believe that caste is, ultimately, a rigid form of class.

The inability to render an account of what is characteristic of the concept of caste depends ultimately on a quite vague definition of class (see Leach 1967: 5–16). To Berreman, for example, class systems "define the rank of their members according to their individual attributes and behaviors" (1968: 334). Caste is instead an institution that classifies people as a function of their group membership ascribed by birth—i.e., (as in the definition of Kroeber) in hereditary groups. But it is difficult to understand the difference between a society of classes and a caste-based society, when Berreman says, "That a caste system is a hierarchy implies that it is a system of differential evaluation, differential power and rewards and differential association; in short, a system of institutionalized inequality" (1968: 334). The hierarchy of castes does not therefore appear to

be very different from class inequality. The difference would not be in the relations between groups, which would appear to be of the same nature in the two types of societies but rather in the recruitment of the members of these groups. Membership in a caste is inherited, in a class it is granted to members for their individual attributes and merits.

On the contrary, the opposition between caste (class without vertical mobility) and a true class, characterized by this mobility, allowed several scholars to identify the rigid system of race relations in the South of the United States with the Indian caste system because both were characterized by the inability of the groups to come into contact through marriage or commensality, etc. (see Warner and Davis 1939: 219–45).

But is it sufficient to identify a set of particular traits (endogamy, taboo of commensality, etc.) to characterize the identity of two social systems? The Indian caste system is precisely that, a system, and as such must be compared with other systems (see Dumont 1966: 311). The same traits can have opposite functions in two different systems. In addition, the integrity of an indigenous social system, its ideological legitimacy, must be considered as an element of comparison. In the racial system in the Southern United States, black people do not consider that system to be legitimate; on the contrary they fight against it. In India, the traditional relationship between lower and higher individuals does not necessarily imply an inequality of power that coincides with their hierarchical difference; furthermore, both share values and a common vision of the caste system that justifies in their eyes their relative position. Their relationships change orientation only when, with the modern transformation of caste, the global system is questioned. Status competition then tends to become class conflict, but only because the caste system itself has become contested. The lower castes challenge not so much the higher castes but the caste system itself (see Leach 1960: 6–7).

THE CASTES AND ETHNICALLY PLURALIST SYSTEMS

While maintaining that the caste system does not differ from a system of social stratification, Berreman associates it with "ethnic and cultural pluralism." Caste society would be a system of integration among different ethnic groups that would preserve their difference, while they would lose that difference within a system of classes. In this way, Berreman recalls one of the components of

Weber's definition, developing a more refined theory of cultural communication: the borders between castes prevent cultural circulation, and therefore each caste or each ethnic group would have its own institutions, its own culture, or its own particular way of interpreting the same culture.

On the other hand, the absence of common values would characterize both the "pluralist" society and the caste society: this would mean that these societies must be held together by power more than consensus. Therefore, on the one hand, these societies integrate distinct groups without modifying them culturally and without incorporating them, and indeed they work to build institutional and cultural frontiers to perpetuate the differences, specifically those related to occupational specialization; on the other hand, the dominant group maintains the system by means of exerting coercion. Thus, more than caste interdependence, cultural and institutional independence should be emphasized, as well as the political dependency of lower castes on higher castes (Berreman 1968: 333–36).

Two principles are therefore essential to define a caste system, according to this theory: 1) all caste systems are kept together by the relative power of each caste and by the fact that the sanctions are held in the power of the dominant group. This is due to the cultural, ideological, and institutional heterogeneity of the castes; 2) in caste societies roles are undifferentiated or "added together."

Class systems would instead be characterized more by consensus than by the power of a dominant class, and the roles would be distinct.

In regard to the first principle, if it is true that power relations are important in a caste system, it is also true that hierarchical relationships are conceptually (and largely also factually) distinct from relations of power. Hierarchy is instead ignored by the theory we described, and it is considered incomprehensible or nonexistent as an autonomous principle. The caste system thus appears simply as a perversion of the system of classes.

With regard to the principle of status summation, it is precisely the corollary of the preceding principle and affirms that the hierarchical relationships coincide with those of power. Those who possess a high status from a ritual point of view tend to have at the same time high status from an economic, political, and social point of view. For Barth, this principle allows him to define a caste system "structurally," "as a system of social stratification" rather than as an ideological and cultural system (1960: 145). It would be typical of traditional nonhomogeneous and multiethnic (or pluralist) societies and would be functionally linked to a complicated system of division of labor in an essentially nonmonetary

economy. Only with this definition would it be possible, according to Barth, to compare caste in the Indian subcontinent with elsewhere.

We can note that the concealment of the fundamental distinction between hierarchy and power appears in the expression "status summation" itself. Social or ritual status is put on the same level as economic and political status. In reality, only the status called "social" by Barth would be definable as status in a strict sense, while so-called political and economic statuses should be considered instead as "roles."

As it has been noted by Louis Dumont, Barth's formula is in any case sociocentric because it presupposes the combination of features that are distinct only in modern society, while the Swat Pathan system—of which Barth writes—is characterized by nondifferentiation rather than by status summation (Dumont 1967: 30).

In conclusion, when comparing a system of classes to a caste system, as an open system (Popper's sense) opposed to a closed system, theorists of social stratification define the caste system as an inegalitarian perversion of the class system and they provide a sociocentric interpretation of it (modeled mainly on the system of racial relations in America), which ignores the ideology and values typical of the Indian system, and the fundamental distinction between hierarchy of status and the differential distribution of political and economic power. This interpretation has much in common with the Marxist theory of "Eastern despotism," according to which a dominant group incorporates within a despotic organization of political power communities that are autonomous and without relations of economic and social complementarity (the "village community") (cf. Dumont 1975: 41–48).

CASTE, AS AN INDIAN PHENOMENON

The above discussion has made it apparent for us the necessity to understand the specificity of the Indian caste system instead of starting from a putatively expansive definition large enough to allow for comparison, but in reality, one that is unduly reductionist and ethnocentric. This is not to dispel the difference but to understand it: this is the only starting point possible for a comparison.

To understand the caste system, we must therefore begin from its "ethnographic" definition.

1) The caste (*jāt, jāti*) is a group to which one belongs by birth and that is characterized, in principle, by endogamy. This means that the membership

criterion is ascriptive and not modifiable for an individual. Because caste is endogamous, parents have the same caste and the same status and therefore filiation never leaves the possibility for a choice between membership in the maternal or paternal group, as it happens instead in hierarchical systems characterized by anisogamy (i.e., marriage between groups of different status). For this reason, kinship relations are always horizontal and egalitarian in terms of caste, while nonparental relationships are always hierarchical (see Leach 1960: 8). That is, marriage is between equals—i.e., between people who may have social relationships without major restrictions.

2) Every caste has a defined position in the hierarchy, this position can be changed for an entire group but not for individuals, unless someone is expelled from his caste and thus loses his status. Brahmins (the priestly caste) are at the top of the hierarchy of status and they are the focus the entire caste system.
3) The separation and hierarchical position of castes are expressed by symbols of purity and impurity. Members of higher castes are more pure than those of lower castes and are at risk of losing their purity if they associate with lower castes in the context of food, sex, and ritual (this implies the exclusion of exogamy and commensality and a precise breakdown of ritual roles of each caste).
4) Castes are linked to the division of labor: they are associated with traditional occupations and have rights and duties in a precise system of prestations and counterprestations.

The ethnographic criteria may be modified or multiplied according to the regional variations or the degree of differentiation of a caste system in a territorial unit but the underlying principles remain the same and can be reduced to a minimal definition, given by C. Bouglé (1908) and taken up by Dumont (1966: 64): the caste system consists of separate hereditary groups connected together through: 1) a gradation of status, or hierarchy, 2) rules of separation, 3) the division of labor and the interdependence that results from this.

To define the caste system is therefore necessary to explain what is hierarchy, what are the rules of separation (ritual, marriage, and food), and what is the ideology that established the opposition of the pure to the impure; how is hierarchy distinguished from and articulated to the political power; what is the system of the division of labor and the system of prestations and counterprestations.

The concept of hierarchy

According to Louis Dumont (1966: 269) the fundamental principle of the caste system is the disjunction between religious status and power. This disjunction is not between two categories put on the same level but implies that one is subject to the other. It is therefore a *hierarchical disjunction*, in which power is subjugated to a more fundamental principle that subordinates and legitimates it, giving it a meaning that it does not possess on its own. Without this subordinating disjunction, it is not possible to speak of a true and proper caste system. For example, Dumont excludes the possibility of using caste to understand Ceylon because in that society the representative of the principle of power, the king, is at the top of the hierarchy. The absence of disjunction between hierarchical religious status and political power is found where Buddhism has given the king both religious and political prerogatives. The king is in fact considered to be a "living Buddha" or "destined to be Buddha" (*bodhisattva*) and an "emperor of the world" (*cakkravartin*) (see Heine-Geldern 1956). In this way, Buddhism tries to reconcile the contradiction between the practice of morality and religion and the necessity of politics and use of force.

On the contrary, since the time of the *Brāhmana* (800–500 BC?), Hinduism has radically separated religion and politics, giving the latter its own sphere of action, but subject to religion through the Brahmins. The two activities are distinct but complementary; the Hindu theory of hierarchy defines a social holism in which the human activities are inscribed, each in the place where it belongs in the scale of values, polarized in inherited categories (and therefore excluding individual choice). The social hierarchy therefore corresponds to the hierarchy of values as it is established by a religious ideology that justifies a social holism articulated in complementary functions.

The total vision is religious (see Dumont 1966: 92) but does not exclude partial visions, corresponding to specific activities, which do not necessarily have a religious character. Thus, the "rational" activities (economy, politics, etc.) find a place in the sphere that is assigned to them by the global system but must remain hierarchically subordinate to it, and to its representatives in society: the Brahmins.

Therefore, the subordinating disjunction connected to the hierarchy allows the differentiation of activities and at the same time integrates them in a unified framework, in the system of values of the society. In this way, two complementary types of reflection developed in India: one contained in the literature of *dharma* (religious law), the other in the literature of the *artha* (the laws of

politics and the economy, of "rational acquisition"). Indeed, with the *Arthaśāstra* (the doctrine of the *artha*) India developed before Europe a "Machiavellian" theory of the state.

The hierarchical ideology ensures that there is no contradiction between the religious point of view and the rational one. Each one is perfectly legitimate in its own sphere and can therefore remain separate while preserving, thanks to the hierarchical bond, a relationship to the whole. Hierarchy is defined therefore as a "gradation principle of the elements of a set in relation to the whole" (i.e., by means of putting each element in relation to the whole) (Dumont 1966: 92). At the end, this is a familiar concept in European classical tradition and antiquity in particular (see Finley 1973: 44), but the Indian caste system systematically translates it into social activity, and makes it a sociological as well as a logical principle.

The moral hierarchy therefore does not have the individual as subject but the social totality itself. The social articulation and unity is not the mechanical result of conflicts or transactions between individuals or groups (classes) that act on the basis of the principle of individualistic competition. For the ideology of hierarchy, social totality is the prerequisite, not the result, of the relationships between differentiated groups. Modern ideology implies instead the idea of the autonomy of the individual and of groups, overriding conceptually the importance of their relationships: global society is therefore the product of their interaction (contractual or conflictual). On the contrary, for the hierarchical ideology groups arise from differentiation from the totality, which is an organic prerequisite and not a mechanical result. Relationships precede, conceptually and on the level of values, the things put in relationships; then justice consists of putting the various social functions in their place, where they can exert their activities: priests as representatives and guarantors of the ultimate values and purpose of the society as a whole, are therefore at the top of the hierarchy but they cannot exercise the power, which could contaminate their moral purity.

The ideal of justice in modern ideology is totally different: starting with the individual and with the assumption that all individuals are equal by nature and have the same value, justice has the purpose of achieving this equality socially. Hence the primacy of politics, which is conceived as the activity for which individuals and groups compete to gain control of resources and the systems of production and distribution: in short, for the control of the power.

Symptomatically, caste society subordinates political activity and its representatives. If the Brahman is at the apex of society, he does not, as such, control

power, which is instead reserved for the king. On the other hand, the king is subject to the Brahman and the values that he represents in his activity. Without the guarantee and the moral legitimacy of the priest, political power does not have a relationship with the social entirety. Hence the need for "mechanisms to transform power into status" (Dumont 1975: 20): for example, the gift to the Brahmins. This gift may seem like a confirmation that status superiority corresponds to economic privileges: actually it indicates that the Brahmin has no direct access to resources or right to them. He can only give his own "prestige" in exchange for riches that allow him to live. Reciprocally, he who has wealth can cede his riches to acquire prestige. But without the disjunction between hierarchy and status—tied to moral prestige—and power—tied to the control of resources—this exchange would have no meaning. The inferior ritual activities are therefore *complementary* but *distinct*, compared to the superior activities: they complete each other because they do not exist independently from exchange, which allows them to remain separate.

The Brahmin can remain so (separate) only because he is pure: his purity allows him contact with religious order, contact that benefits the society as a whole. But, purity can be *realized socially* only if the impure activities, altogether necessary for existence, are assumed by social groups that are considered impure just because they practice them. Purity and impurity are therefore not given separately: hierarchy implies complementarity, not just exclusion. From our individualistic point of view it is revolting that pure activities are reserved for certain individuals and impure actives are reserved for others; but from the Indian point of view it is not individuals that count but the relationships that they represent and that allow for their continuity. For the principle of the reciprocity of functions, the Untouchable is as indispensable as the Brahman: one and the other earn prestige conducting their hereditary functions. There is not therefore subjective ethics but an ethics of status; there are no universal obligations because there is no "universal" man. Instead, there are priests, princes, farmers, or servants (Dumont 1975: 23). On the other hand it seems that there is a certain relationship between the caste system and the theory of transmigration, at least for certain variants of the Hindu ideology. Being born into one caste rather than another, and subsequently to have more or less pure functions, has then a religious meaning. The caste into which one is born in reincarnation depends on the behavior in past lives. The principle of membership in a caste by birth is therefore embedded itself in the moral order that presides over the system (see Dumont 1966: 77 and 79; 1975: 32).

This ideology appears to us as scandalous because we ignore the distinction between hierarchy and power. Hierarchy is a conceptual and ritual order bound to only certain spheres of existence: in the political and economic sphere relationships can be different or even inverse to those ritual relations, even if the priority of the hierarchy makes it possible, as we have seen, that complementarity establishes itself between the two spheres. From the hierarchical point of view, a lower caste may hold the political and economic power, while a higher caste may be forced to depend on this level of lower caste members. This possibility is indeed inscribed into the principle of the hierarchy itself, which restricts the control of power and wealth to a subordinate sphere. But, even if the hierarchically superior caste is economically dependent on the lower caste, its superiority is recognized in the sphere of rituals.

What are hierarchically structured are therefore the functions and social activities—and the men associated with these activities—and relations of power are not the global order of society: they also represent an order, a form of organization. But this order is considered secondary, subordinate to the religious order, it organizes the relations between individuals and groups in a different way and as a function of a different "sense." Both orders are legitimate on the condition that each remains limited to its sphere of competence.

In conclusion, at the base of the caste system there is an ideology of interdependence and relativity: of functions, of spheres of activity, and of groups that represent and perform them. The essential value is this interdependence, because there are no privileged units that are considered as elements forming the whole, and from which and for which the whole is produced.

For us, jealously faithful to an ideology that makes "individual man considered as universal" (Dumont 1975: 22) the reference point of fundamental values, it is impossible to admit the relativity of perspectives and values, and it is impossible to admit that a relationship sustained by specific laws at a certain level, will modify itself to another level, in its structure, laws, and "meaning." Even more, we are unable to admit that each level has its place, its meaning, and its relations with the other levels in an overall system that justifies the society as a whole by giving a partial validity to each of its aspects and its spheres. And yet this is the profound meaning of caste hierarchy and its ideology. When we reduce it to a fiction or a rationalization of the level that for us subordinates all the others, namely that of power relations, we unconsciously censure. We risk ignoring the fact that in every society men act and think according to their own values, which we cannot consider irrelevant without running the risk of substituting them

with our own values and political ideology. The relationship between the power of the politico-economic sphere and the religious sphere is, in the caste system, exactly opposite to that which is in force in our system of social classes. It is therefore impossible to assimilate directly or covertly one system to another: the comparison can only oppose the two systems and recognize that their superficial similarity derives from having arbitrarily isolated relations of power that are the only aspect of the caste system directly accessible to our ideology. But, when considered within the system to which it belongs, and by the principles of which we have tried to briefly outline, this aspect reveals itself to be completely different from how it appears to theorists who believe that caste is the limit case of class, and reducible to the latter.

Purity and impurity as symbols of hierarchy

The holism proposed for the ideology of caste is not political or economic but religious. As such, it does not subordinate nature to man but puts them both in relationship to each other. In particular, the basic phenomena of organic life have a symbolic value for social life because they permit the expression of the distinctions between castes. The three fundamental principles that, according to Célestin Bouglé, are the basis for the caste system can be reduced to the sole principle of opposition between pure and impure. In fact, his opposition involves hierarchy (the superiority of pure over impure), separation (pure and impure have to be maintained separate), and the division of labor (pure and impure occupations are distinct but complementary) (see Dumont 1966: 65).

Dumont has shown that the opposition between pure and impure contains the very essence of hierarchy because consequentially it follows that the *whole consists of the necessary coexistence of two opposites*. The maximum opposition is dualistic: on the one hand the purest category, Brahmin, which uses in a pure way certain species (for example, the products of the cow); on the other hand, the "Untouchable," which uses them in the impure way (for example, using the cow in a way that involves its death: either tanning its skin, or consuming its meat, etc.). But this opposition also implies that *both of the behaviors are needed*, that both are necessarily part of the system: "There would be no Brahmin if they did not have at their disposal specialists that allow them to avoid the impure" (Dumont 1975: 29). The unity is therefore made possible by an opposition. In terms of logic, the holistic hierarchy is distinguished radically by a Hegelian type holistic dialectic. The opposition that governs the first is noncontradictory;

the second is dominated instead by the principle of contradiction and the overcoming of contradictory terms, and their distinction.

The conceptual opposition between the pure and impure is transferred to the system of social relations: all men suffer from temporary states of impurity and menstruation, childbirth and death are particularly important examples of it. The inscription into the social sphere of these states justifies the impurities or the relative purity of the castes. In fact, those who have the task of carrying the corpses, or to wash their dirty clothes, etc. are *permanently* in contact with the impurities. Transferred in the social system of the division of labor, the transitory impurities of some (as its effects remain in the private sphere) thus become the permanent impurities of others. In almost the whole of India, the funerary priest (the barber in the South) and the washerman are therefore particularly impure. On the contrary, some activities involve the absence of impurities or the immediate purification: for example, the king is never impure because he cannot be prevented from his activities; the Brahamin student, contrary to other categories of people, is made impure only by the death of very close relatives because, intrinsically pure, he is much less affected by the impurity of death (see Dumont 1966: 73; Orenstein 1968).

If the relationship with certain natural/organic phenomena produces impurities, the relationship with other natural entities, such as water, the five products of the cow (urine, excrement, etc.), is purifying. This hierarchical ideology of purity was formulated since the third century BC and was used to render accounts of the caste system that have gradually developed later. The other criteria of social separation are theoretically traceable to the symbolism of the pure and the impure. However, the multiplication of criteria of hierarchical segmentation produces a certain relativity: every judgment of status formulated according to certain criterion is able to "amalgamate a caste with all those who share the same rules, opposing it to all others" (Dumont 1966: 81).

But the criteria are not always congruent. It is necessary then to evaluate not only the position of each caste segment in relation to a certain criterion of segmentation but also the relative value of each of the criteria, from whose combination results a caste ranking in a single linear series that comprises all the castes in a given territory. From this, then, a certain indeterminacy can be seen: each caste will tend to consider its own status in a different way than how it is considered by others. On the other hand, hierarchy does not exclude competition and mobility (see Srinivas 1966: 4). The vertical mobility implies that the members of a caste try to make themselves recognized as a higher

status by adopting the purity rules connected to the latter. Therefore, at both the local and pan-Indian level there is a constant process of "promotion" that explains the spread of Brahmin ideology, and ultimately of the caste system ("sanskritization"). M. N. Srinivas defines the sanskritization as the process by which a low-status caste, or a non-Hindu tribal group, abandons its customs, its rituals, its ideology, and its way of life, to adopt the behaviors of the higher caste, from a Hindu perspective. If it is a tribal group, it becomes Hindu and integrates itself as caste into a defined position within the hierarchical system; if it is already Hindu, it asserts a claim to a status, expressed in terms of behavior that is generally not recognized by the community earlier than one or two generations.

The rise of a group in the hierarchy involves descent of another but it does not change the hierarchy of status. Only their assignment is modified (see Srinivas 1966: 6–7; Cohn 1971: 134–41).

Hierarchical segmentation and its paradoxes: Varna *and caste*

So far we have spoken of caste as the base unit of a hierarchical system based on its own ideology. Now we must demonstrate the relationship between this system and the specific groups, and, in particular, how the system realizes the segmentation between units of different orders.

Four levels must be taken into consideration.

The smallest unit is the exogamic group, the *birādari,* "band of brothers." The members of this group of relatives are generally stratified generationally: those of the generation of Ego are "brothers," those of the generation of the father of Ego are of the "fathers," etc. Especially in caste of medium or lower rank the *birādari* is a compact group: its members meet, for example, on the occasion of rites of passage. The heads of the component families of the *birādari* attend the meetings (*panchāyat*) that resolve conflicts between its members. The territorial extension of the *birādari* depends on the dispersion or the concentration of its population, and is generally linked to the occupation of the caste to which it belongs. In northern India, the middle-ranking farmers' castes or those of Chamar ("people of the leather," Untouchables) tend to organize themselves in *birādari* whose members are located in only one or a few villages, while the *birādari* caste of artisans or servants (potters, blacksmiths, and washermen) are generally dispersed among a greater number of villages. For the higher castes, especially over the last two centuries, the *birādari* instead has gradually lost its importance.

The *birādari* are part of a group, called *jāti* (subcaste), which is the fundamental unit of the system. This is an endogamus group, which sets the limits within which the *birādari* exogamous may contract marriage. While the *birādari* is mostly a group of agnates, the *jāti* is a group defined by bonds of affinity and cognates. Often it has its own name, its own divinity, an origin myth, and a position in the hierarchical system. It can also have its own rules of behavior, its own costumes, etc.

Different *jāti* are considered in turn members of a caste (*jāt*) that is not a group itself but a general category, with a name, a hierarchical position, and a traditional occupation. This category allows members of different subcastes to be able to recognize their own position in the hierarchy at the regional level and no longer just the local level (even if the criteria are in fact much more complicated) (Cohn 1971: 115–16; 125–26).

In turn, castes identify themselves in one of the four categories (*Varna* "colors, species") that put them in relation to the more general articulation of hierarchy and to the entire pan-Indian world.

The *Varna* system is above all important because it allows for the social mobility of the *jāti*. When a group aspires to a higher status it obviously cannot merge with another *jāti* that already has this status (that would mean marriage with the members of that *jāti*, conflicts, etc.) but it can claim to be a member of different *Varna* from the one that has traditionally been attributed to it, without changing the group boundaries (see Lynch 1969).

The four *Varna* are, in the hierarchical order: 1) the Brahmins, or priests; 2) the Kshatriya, or warriors; 3) the Vaiśhya, or merchants; 4) the śūdra, or servants, the people that count for little. The Untouchables are not covered by this four-part division and do not have a common label (today, they are called *Harijan* "sons of God").

In Vedic literature, the division in *Varna* is generated by a principle of dichotomous opposition. The first dichotomy opposes Ārya and non-Ārya (i.e., Dasyu, identified with the Untouchables). The Ārya are dichotomized into the "twice-born" (the first three *Varna*) and the "once born" (*Śūdra*). The "twice-born" are divided into Brahmins and Kshatriya, on the one hand, and Vaiśhya, on the other hand. Brahmins and Kshatriya, in the end, oppose each other. This division into four units is justified by the myth of *Purusha Sukta*, according to which the Brahmins were born from the mouth of primordial man, the Kshatriya from his arms, the Vaiśhya from his thighs, and the Śūdra from his feet. The *Laws of Manu* (I, 87–91; see Bühler 1886) assign to each *Varna* his

duties: the Brahmins study and learn the *Veda*, sacrifice, give and receive alms; to the Kshatriya the duties are protection of the people, donation, the offering of sacrifices, the study of the *Veda*; to the Vaiśhya, the raising of livestock, trade, agriculture, offering of sacrifices, and the study of the *Veda*; finally to the Śūdra, just one occupation: to serve the other three *Varna*.

The complementarity between *Varna* is partially similar to that between castes. Thus, for example, the Kshatriya or Vaiśhya can order the sacrifice but only the Brahmin can perform it. The king is then deprived of the priestly function: here we find the fundamental disjunction between religious status and political power.

The homology between the system of *Varna* and that of caste (*jāt*), however, should not hide the differences and especially the problems present in their relationship. In Vedic literature the Brahmin is essentially the sacrificer, while in the Hindu period and in the caste system he is characterized by purity. Above all, the theory of *Varna* and the theory of castes imply two different types of classifications and reveal a difficulty in the transition from a conceptual view of hierarchy to the hierarchy of real groups. Castes are hereditary: classification puts the emphasis on the birth. In the theory of *Varna*, on the contrary, the emphasis is on *function*, so that original non-Kshatriya dynasties have often acceded to the status of Kshatriya assuming the real function (rather, according to some, no dynasty after the end of Nanda, which existed between 345 and 321, was ever of Kshatriya origin). This demonstrates that the *Varna* must not be interpreted as hereditary groups, like caste, but as functional categories.

The relationship between *Varna* and caste has been the subject of conflicting interpretations, none of which are satisfactory. Comparing of the points of view of Stanley Tambiah and Louis Dumont is particularly interesting and instructive because it brings into play the very definition of hierarchy and the difficulties we face when we try to render an account of this concept.

Dumont favors, as we have seen, the hierarchy of castes, which is expressed in terms of pure and impure. The classification in *Varna* appears then only similar to the one of the castes. Tambiah, instead, seeks to relate more directly the two systems and to imply that castes follow from *Varna*. Second, for Tambiah only the classification in *Varna* is actually hierarchical because these categories are generated by a principle of segmentation in which a dichotomous level of the higher order incorporates the level of lower order (1973a: 196). Instead, the castes are ordered in rank through the classificatory procedure of *overlapping* between different classes.

The model considered by Tambiah is, in fact, that of the *Laws of Manu* (chapters three and ten), a model that explains the linear hierarchy of different groups of castes by means of mixed unions (i.e., between *Varna* and between different castes) that would be the source of every caste. Given the different value attributed to hypergamous unions and hypogamous unions, and to primary and secondary marriage, a certain number of categories sorted in ranks are drawn, that Tambiah identifies as *jāti* or their analogs. The formative rules of this order reflect the rules of purity.

However, one could argue against Tambiah that it is not possible to relate directly the model abstracted from the *Laws of Manu* with an ideology derived from the sociological study of caste society. But, the fundamental problem concerns the notion of hierarchy. Tambiah starts from a "logical," universal definition of hierarchy as a classificatory procedure: in essence, from the definition of the hierarchy as inclusion between classes. With this definition one can consider hierarchical only the classification in *Varna*. The castes are ordered according to a different method, which cannot be considered as truly hierarchical. But does this "logical" definition of hierarchy correspond to the Indian definition?

Apparently, Dumont uses an inverse process: he starts from the Indian formulation of hierarchy. This formulation considers the rank of castes in terms of purity and impurity. However, when Dumont gives a general formulation of the concept of hierarchy, he can only use the concept of inclusion between classes: "A hierarchical relationship is a relation between larger and smaller, or more precisely between *that which encompasses and that which is encompassed*" (1967: 33). However, it is obvious that if one applies this definition to hierarchy expressed in terms of pure and impure, and indicates that the term superior (pure) incorporates the inferior (the nonpure), we have a contradiction from a logical point of view. The two notions of hierarchy must remain well distinguished: otherwise one should admit that A includes non-A, i.e., its opposite. But in terms of logical class, pure and nonpure, being opposites, are at the same level of generality: one cannot be incorporated in the other without creating the following paradoxes: (a) a class is a member of itself (i.e., the pure is a member of the class "pure," given that this is at the same time the incorporating and the class of Brahmins); (b) a class is considered as an element between the items classified as its nonmembers (i.e., the class of nonpure is not not-pure).

The same paradoxes are found when one moves from the general formula of hierarchy to the hierarchy of concrete groups: if the groups are distinct ritually and matrimonially, how can one say that the hierarchical relationship

is a relationship of inclusion? It is true, instead, that castes are "hierarchized" according to a process of overlapping between different characters (which is not necessarily the same as the ones considered by the *Laws of Manu*). The hierarchy as "incorporating" concerns only the functions associated with the groups: one cannot change from the function to the group without radically changing the notion of hierarchy. This term seems to therefore have different and not always consistent meanings: Dumont's attempt to summarize everything into a general formula of hierarchy (inclusion) is not free from serious difficulties.

Therefore, the caste hierarchy is rather a linear graduation than a hierarchy of "classes." Either on the classification level or on the ritual level, the inferior rank is not incorporated in the superior one but is merely complementary to it. The linear hierarchy thus has two distinctive characters: it is defined by enumeration and it is more international than attributive.

The hierarchical enumerations are a typical characteristic of Indian culture. A "global society" is defined entirely by the enumeration of all the groups that compose it. The inherent contradiction in this process is noted by Dumont himself: the whole and the parts, the incorporating and the embedded, are put on the same plane in the series (see Dumont 1957: 142, 150, and 152 for some examples).

The hierarchical model for inclusion, apart from the difficulties it encounters when translating into the hierarchy of concrete groups, or stops arbitrarily at a term that one decides is the end, regresses infinitely because it is not possible to think without the contradiction of a final class that includes all of the others and at the same time itself (cf. above). But the caste system must necessarily be conceived of as a totality (otherwise it cannot be conceived of as a hierarchy), and then as a finite order. It is therefore forced to the aporia of the class that incorporates all of the others and itself simultaneously, and therefore from a concrete representation of hierarchy in which the whole and the parts are on the same plane, and in which the hierarchical position of each element depends on its position in the order of its enumeration. The entirety is then conceived as linear and it is finished by an opposition between two absolute and ideal extremes: the pure and the impure, precisely. The criterion for hierarchy is then given by the position of a segment between the two segments that represent the conceptual extremes, rather than by the level of generality in which it is placed in the inclusive pyramidal representation of hierarchy. The latter level, however, is preserved as symbolic level by the functions that correspond to each segment.

Caste ideology is the synthesis of the two forms of hierarchy: the lower caste is the segment that, while remaining socially distinct in terms of "purity" is conceptually included within and subordinated to the upper segment. The logical paradoxes involved in this synthesis explain how, in practice, and to a certain level of conceptualization of social reality, the definition of caste hierarchy as a function of their interrelation prevails. McKim Marriott has shown the importance of this aspect, stressing that interdependence and occupational specialization of castes and in particular the performance around food are the key criteria to explain the hierarchical configuration of a territorially limited caste system. To determine the hierarchical order, the *obligation* (the caste characteristic that depends on its pure or impure way of life) is less important than the type of relationship that exists between the castes: and therefore one needs to know from whom and to whom each social category accepts from or gives to different categories of food (fried, boiled, raw) or water from a well; with whom one can smoke the same pipe, which degrees of impurities the lower castes produce and by which means it is transmitted, etc. The criteria vary regionally (see Marriott 1959).

The division of labor and economic power

Caste is traditionally linked to a trade, even though it is not a craft guild. Not all of its members work in the trade, nor all those who work in the trade belong to the caste in question (see statistics in Blunt 1931). What is important is the status of relative purity of a trade: then equally pure trades, or nearly equal, can replace or complement the traditional status of a caste. Above all, certain trades are neutral from the ritual point of view and, therefore, may be undertaken by different castes. The most important "neutral" activity is agriculture and its exercise is reputable for all the respectable castes (only the highest caste may not use the plow): in fact, the relationship between agricultural occupations and castes is the most fluid. After all, in an economy that is predominantly agricultural, it is clear that the occupation of the majority of the population cannot be other than agricultural

Also in the Indian modern economy there is a certain correlation between status hierarchy and occupation: the Untouchables are in lower status occupations (carriers, unskilled labor, etc.). In the definition of the status of a caste, its functional specialization is crucial because it puts it in relation to activities or states of impurity or purity that for other castes are only temporary. Rituals

then characterize most of the trades: *the hierarchy of castes is also a function of the hierarchy of the trades that they practice*. The traditional, symbolic association to a certain trade restricts the real occupational choices of a caste, and it is still used to express its hierarchical position. Also the division of labor is dominated by the opposition between pure and impure and has a hierarchical dimension: one cannot isolate a "pure" economic dimension as it does not make sense in traditional society.

The subordination of the economic aspect to the ritual aspect is also found in the system of prestations and counterprestations in the economy, closed and natural, of a multicaste village. The same etymology of the term often designating this system (*jajamānī*) evokes a religious aspect. *Jajmān* (patron), in opposition to *prajā* (dependent), is a term that is derived from the Sanskrit *vajamāna*, which means "sacrifer": "he who has a sacrifice performed" (see Dumont 1966: 129). The *jajamānī* is a clientilistic system, based on a network of personal relationships and centered on those that have land ownership. In this system, each one has privileges and duties in the distribution of resources, products, and services, which depend on one's hierarchical position.

The division of labor is therefore articulated to a network of *personal hereditary relationships*: every family has a family of specialists for each task. Prestations and counterprestations are not regulated by the market but by custom. Compensation is given immediately for each exceptional or occasional prestation but is distributed throughout the year for the continual and regular prestations. The system is very complicated, and has important regional variations. W. H. Wiser (1936) has given a detailed description of its operation in a village of northern India. One can distinguish the following categories of partners:

1) Dependent workers (for example, a blacksmith, barber, water carrier, washerman) who provide permanent services in exchange for fixed allocations in grains, received twice a year, after the harvest;
2) Dependent workers with ceremonial functions (for example, on the occasion of weddings, funerals, etc.) who receive a customary prestation each time that they offer their services;
3) Permanent and "unfree" agricultural labor, paid by the day or month;
4) Manufacturing artisans paid in kind by a customary proportion of the commodity, which they treat on behalf of their patron;

5) Artisans and sellers paid in cash at prices fixed by custom, which is different for different status categories (Brahmin, for instance, pays less for the same amount of milk).

The latter category of people is not constituted by dependent workers.

The *jajamānī* system has been the subject of major debates. According to Wiser, it is an egalitarian system, because it is based on reciprocity of the functions and prestations: leaving aside the lowest castes, for the others, the rule applies that every member of any caste is—depending on the occasions—patron and dependent, provider of a good and a service and the recipient of another good or service.

In reality, egalitarian reciprocity applies partially only for the castes that are in an intermediate hierarchical position. Wiser's assessment does not take account of the control of the land, which is unequal. Reciprocity is hierarchical (Dumont 1966: 134–35). The system ensures that "land owners" receive the services of specialists and of the labor force, and to the latter guarantees rights on the products of the soil. Some (Beidelmann 1959) consider the *jajamānī* system as a system of "exploitation," but it has been observed (Orenstein 1962) that the well-to-do and dominant families have incontrovertible obligations toward their employees and, on the other hand, they depend on the "poor" because they must have recourse to the ritual services of the latter.

The traditional client relationships imply that certain economic roles are an inalienable privilege of lower groups, and that the dominant caste is forced to depend on them, without the power to change the traditional relations for its own benefit (by, for example, the mechanism of the market): "exploitation" is only possible when the dominant group can decide on its own terms the conditions of exchange (see Leach 1960: 5).

The caste system is "unfair" to the Western observer, for which the measure of justice is the individual conceived as universal, and not what contributes to the perpetuation of the social whole. In the caste system, justice is in the hierarchy. It is a system in which the activities and the rewards of each are interdependent since they are oriented toward the whole, and this is the hierarchical collectivity, which is regulated intentionally (as a function of an ideology) and not automatically, as in the individualistic economy of the market.

We have found that the fundamental principle of hierarchy is the disjunction between status and power. This results from the fact that the dominant

political and economic role (which in the theory of *Varna* is reserved for the Kshatriya) can belong to *any* caste that actually has the force. The distinction between *dominant* castes (who control the land) and castes who have access to land and its products only in relationships of dependency to the dominant castes is therefore essential, because it allows one to introduce the political dimension into the caste system. The political and economic power, however, is divorced from status hierarchy: the dominant caste is not necessarily the higher caste in the hierarchy. In the political and economic sphere, relations of power have their own laws, they can change: hierarchy, based on the system of values, does not change. The autonomy of the power is, however, subordinate; it is a sphere of limited action. Also, it must be put in relation to the social whole, ultimately to values, and therefore subject to the principle of hierarchy, mediated by the caste that, as we have seen, represents the totality. Even in the economic sphere, the caste that has the strength must therefore be legitimized by its relations with the status categories, and with the Brahmin in particular, whose sponsorship is necessary.

We can certainly ask to what extent this relationship to the religious hierarchy changes actual relations. In reality it adds to *meaning*, but it does not change fundamentally. However, the problem raised by the study of the caste system is just this: what is the relative value of ideology and political and economic relations in the society? All in all, the importance given to one or the other dimension is always a function of an ideology, a system of values. This brings us back to the problem of the comparison: one cannot compare the economic and social structures without taking into account the values with which they exist in society. The desire to isolate political-economic structures as intelligible by themselves, regardless of indigenous consciousness, is itself an ideological phenomenon that emanates from certain values. It implies that our economic and political values have a universal applicability because they enable us to understand any type of system that we decide to isolate as a concrete society. The exemplarity of the study of the caste system consists in revealing the absurdity of such a claim. There are no criteria of absolute and scientifically based value that allow for the understanding of any social system and its related ideology. When sociologists suggest similar criteria, at least as far as India is concerned, they project their own ideological system, which itself is in need of justification. Certainly, sociology cannot be only "inclusive," it must also be "explanatory." The exemplary nature of the problem of castes also demonstrates that the "understanding" of an ideological system is necessary for its "explanation."

The latter is sought above all in the political-economic dimension, but the extension to the totality of the system of the principles of explanation of this dimension is a mistake, not only because it involves a refusal to consider the facts of consciousness and values as a part of reality but also because it is a product of the ideology of the observer; consequently, it is nothing else than a value judgment opposite to the value judgment of indigenous consciousness. The "comprehension" is also a manner, therefore, to draw the borders between our science and our ideology.

CHAPTER THREE

Ceremonial

An adequate definition of the concept of "ceremonial" would require discussion of at least three other terms: "ritual," "religion," and "symbol." All these notions are used in an imprecise and elastic way in the anthropological and historical literature because a universally accepted theory of the phenomena that they designate is still lacking. For a long time, the terms "ritual and "ceremonial" were used as synonyms, or nearly so, with a certain preference for "ceremonial." In more recent years they have been distinguished among some scholars, but most of them criticize this distinction, especially the content attributed to each term, and prefer to utilize the notion of "ritual," giving it an extremely broad meaning.

From 1922, with the analysis of ceremonies of the aborigines of the Andaman Islands (Bay of Bengal), A. R. Radcliffe-Brown set the terms of debate, distinguishing three levels of social behavior: 1) the "moral customs" by means of which relations among individuals are regulated by principles of "good" or "bad" conduct; 2) the "utilitarian" activities in which a goal is obtained through some "technical" means, interpretable in terms of "rationality," and finally; 3) "ceremonial" activities, which have no utilitarian end and which are distinguished by moral customs because they stand in no immediate relation with the effects that the action of one person has on another person. For Radcliffe-Brown, ceremonial is a means of maintaining social order. Influenced by Émile Durkheim and A. F. Shand, he thinks this order depends on an accord among the sentiments of the members of a group, that is, on an organized system of emotional

tendencies polarized around certain objects that have social value. "Ceremonial" is the instrument with which these collective emotional states are produced, and without which they could not exist (Radcliffe-Brown 1922).

Ceremonies that constitute a ceremonial system are therefore symbolic acts, expressive of social structure, and as such are not intelligible in terms of relations among means and end—hence in "rational" terms. The theory of Radcliffe-Brown implies that it is impossible to distinguish—as he himself notes—between ceremonial, art, play, dance, etc. All these behaviors, insofar as they are social, are fundamentally the same thing and it is arbitrary to separate them conceptually. The term "ceremonial" thus has an extremely broad significance. From ceremonial Radcliffe-Brown distinguishes partially only magic, which for him has a nonsocial or anti-social dimension.

The successors of Radcliffe-Brown have attempted to distinguish various categories of ceremonial, almost always utilizing "ritual" and "ceremonial" as synonyms. They are preoccupied above all with opposing the various categories of rituals in terms of belief. Certain formalized behaviors (etiquette, for example) can be defined as ceremonials or rituals, but are not associated with religious beliefs. Thus S. F. Nadel (1954: 99) feels the need to distinguish between a general sense of the term "ritual" (that is, "extremely formalized action") and a religious sense.

Establishing that certain expressive behaviors are "irrational" and others only "nonrational" (as Pareto had shown), Monica Wilson (1957: 9) has sought to give content to the distinction between "ritual" and "ceremonial." For her "ritual" is a religious action whose end is to obtain benefits from a supernatural power. Symbols and concepts would be used in ritual, subordinating them to "practical" ends (abundant harvests, success, recovery, etc.). "Ceremonial" would instead be an elaborated and conventional form of expression of feelings, not limited to religious occasions.

Jack Goody (1961), for his part, proposes a tripartite classification among ritual, religion, and ceremonial, which moves away from those of his predecessors. "Ritual" is a category that designates a formalized behavior (a "custom") in which the relation between end and means is irrational or nonrational. Magic is an example of this, since, according to Goody, it has a pragmatic end which its procedures do not lead to. His category "religion" instead corresponds to the category "religious ritual" of Nadel and to the category "ritual" of Wilson: it is a behavior that has as its addressee a personalized, mystic power. Religious behaviors can be irrational (for example, according to Goody, many forms of

sacrifice and prayer) or nonrational (for example, certain feasts). The definition of "ceremonial" is negative: it designates a "category of ritual" that is neither religious nor magical, that neither presupposes the existence of supernatural powers nor has practical ends; it can, however, have certain "ends"—the (ideological) points of view of actors—and certain "latent functions" from the point of view of the observer. Examples: the ceremony of civil matrimony, ceremonies of "settlement" in politics, and so forth.

That which for Radcliffe-Brown was a collection of phenomena of its own nature, the "meaning" of which consisted in expressing and perpetuating the social structure, is for Goody a series of distinct phenomena, founded on diverse "beliefs." In particular, he rejects the idea that religion is definable simply as a reflection of the social structure, since it requires an illusion: the belief in supernatural beings. Ritual and ceremony, on the other hand, do not necessarily imply this illusion and therefore have quite little in common with religion and the "sacred," by contrast with what Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown thought.

Max Gluckman (1962) has elaborated a more complicated classification than that of Goody, in which the opposition between ritual and ceremonial has a meaning related to that given it by Wilson. Like Radcliffe-Brown, Gluckman gives to the term "ceremonial" a very broad meaning, namely: every organization of action which is not specifically technical or recreational, and which expresses social relations by means of particular behaviors that symbolize them. At the heart of the category "ceremonial" he distinguishes between "ceremonious" behavior and "ritual" behavior. "Ritual" refers to mystic notions not derived from experience and therefore from those of "common sense." Without mystic notions, ceremonial behavior is "ceremonious." Thus, for example, the parade for the anniversary of the October revolution is for Gluckman a "ceremonious" behavior, while the procession of Corpus Christi is "ritual." Both, however, have common functions from the social point of view.

The opposition between "ceremonious" and "ritual" permits Gluckman to formulate the following hypothesis: 1) the more important the segregation of roles in the social structure and less important the recourse to "ritual," the less "mystical" ideas are linked with ceremonial behaviors; 2) the more roles are undifferentiated and superimposed, the more recourse to ritual is necessary in order to separate them.

The opposition between "ritual" and "ceremonious" behavior is therefore, in reality, the opposition between two phases of social evolution: on one side

Gluckman puts tribal societies in which roles (for example, those of the father, the uncle, the chief, the priest, etc.) are confused within the same person or undifferentiated, and must therefore be separated in a fictitious way on certain ritual occasions so as to avoid and resolve eventual conflicts between roles and produce an equilibrium that is sanctioned by belief in a "prosperity" ensured by the ancestors or the gods; on the other side he puts modern societies, in which roles are separated in reality, though often in permanent conflict, and exercised in distinct spheres of social life and in relation to different individuals in each one. However even in modern society there are situations and institutions in which the networks of relations intersect and become confused and in which therefore recourse to the ceremonial sometimes becomes necessary. A study by Elizabeth Bott, cited by Gluckman (1962), shows that in the city of London, when the network of kinship relations in a family tends to coincide with the network of relations of neighborhood, friendship, and work, the roles of husband and wife tend to be ceremonially distinct, or [defined] in terms of "custom." That, in turn, permits the conjugal relationship—which otherwise risks being "submerged" in the others—to be kept distinct.

Ceremonial—religious or not—tends to appear above all in moments in which an individual passes from one role to another (for example: matrimony, investiture in a political or administrative task) and must therefore be "separated" symbolically from his or her preceding role and "aggregated" to the new role; or when the passages concern the calendar of a whole society (ceremonies of passages from one year to another, etc.). These ceremonials presuppose "spectators," who are members of the social group which represents itself or modifies its own internal relations or its relations with the individual who passes from one role to another.

According to the theory represented by Gluckman, two aspects therefore characterize ceremonial: 1) it distinguishes, using particularly impressive symbols, the categories that risk appearing confused in social life; 2) it represents by means of metaphors associated with social relations that which those relations ideally ought to be and the values that they imply. In this way, by "dramatizing" the social structure, ceremonial acts upon real relations so as to modify or readjust them (cf. Nadel 1951).

Ceremonial phenomena therefore are "theatrical" phenomena and are not fundamentally different from aesthetic ones, even if they have a more directly social dimension than artistic phenomena in modern society. With ceremonial,

society stages itself, representing its values, its lines of fission and its contradictions. The actor in a ceremony legitimates his status by "playing" his part according to a prescribed model and in a symbolic situation: this holds whether for the ritual installation of a sacred king or a priest, or for the "ceremonious" (Gluckman) or "ceremonial" (Wilson) behavior of anyone who gives or receives a greeting, takes off his hat, or carries food to his mouth with a fork instead of a knife.

If formally and functionally "ceremonial" and "ritual" are therefore the same thing, why distinguish them? The authors cited above justify the distinction in terms of belief: ritual or religious ritual imply belief in a supernatural sanction; they refer to mystic notions "not verified by experience." Ceremonial would instead be only nonrational and would do nothing but "dramatize" the social structure.

But it is easy to counter that even ceremonial behavior implies emotions and mixed notions, as well as recourse to a "mystique," which is not lesser than that of "primitive" religious rituals. In ceremonial, notions like that of "charisma," attributed, for example, to a person who has a certain status, are expressed in a more or less conscious way (similarly for the notion of the opposition of the sexes and above all for the mixed and emotional ideas of "honor," "shame," and "appearance"). R. H. Lowie even thinks that ceremonial behavior may reflect some "essentially nonrational nature of man," an "end in itself," justified by the need for aesthetic satisfaction and social stability (cf. Lowie 1930: 314).

The classificatory distinctions and subdistinctions therefore risk losing sight of the fact that we are in the presence of a unitary phenomenon. In fact, any social behavior entails a relationship to norms: as such it has a "ritual" or "symbolic" or "ceremonial" dimension, whatever one wants to call it, which communicates the relationship to those norms and the position within the social system of the one who is acting. From this point of view, every form of communication, even spoken language, has a "ritual" dimension. But if it is true that the opposition between sacred and profane does not coincide with that between "ritual" and "pragmatic" (by contrast with what Durkheim and his school claimed), it is therefore also true that one cannot limit oneself to formulating a definition that ignores ideological differences between the various levels of ritual communication. In no society are all systems of communication put on the same level and considered equivalent. The ideological code in which each type of "communicative" behavior is inscribed must therefore be considered part of this behavior.

The opposition between "sacred" and "profane," between "religious" and "nonreligious," is pertinent in many societies and gives rituals a value and a different status. No believer would be disposed to admit that the ritual of the mass is a phenomenon of the same nature as that which consists in removing one's hat in a house. The two phenomena are conceptualized in a different way and have a different significance for a social subject. Naturally both forms of behavior are associated with vague and even mystical notions; they are not explained and accepted in "rational" terms. However, in terms of consciousness, they are lived and valued differently: they signify and communicate in a different way.

The code chosen for social communication is therefore an important element of the message; it communicates something in and of itself. In this sense, unless one decides that religion is a negligible form of "rationalization" of the social structure and is not a pertinent object of sociology, it is necessary to introduce some distinctions into the vast field of "ritual."

In every ritual situation, communication among the real "actors" happens by referring to an imaginary "actor," but one who serves to sanction the content of the communication and gives it a specific form. In religious ritual, communication among real actors takes place in an indirect way—that is, it passes through god, or an ancestor—who is the imaginary receiver and emissary in the communicative process. By communicating with god, men communicate in reality among themselves. The reference to the imaginary even exists in nonreligious ritual, but communication happens *directly* among real persons; it does not pass through god. The imaginary intervenes as a sanction and a guarantee of the content of communication and of the position of everyone in the channels within the system of communication, but it is a more abstract and less personalized entity whose function is only regulative.

Imaginary entities of this type are "honor," "shame," "appearance," "tradition," "opportunity": they are vague notions with which men hurry to justify their nonreligious ritual behavior. Let us propose to identify this last with "ceremony."

The notions that intervene in ceremonial ideology all have something in common: they refer to social prestige, to recognition of the intrinsic value of a person or group; they confer a legitimacy on their status, their titles, their roles. In order to indicate this legitimacy, many societies utilize the notions of "honor" or equivalent notions, all of which for convenience we will call "honor." Since this notion is familiar to us but we use it in a vague way, we will be able, by

clarifying it, to understand the presuppositions of ceremonial behavior by starting from our own experience.

THE NOTION OF HONOR AND CEREMONY

The notion of honor utilizes the ideal personality that a society associates with individual roles, and with the individual in general, as a yardstick for judging the value and rank of everyone (cf. Peristany 1965). This is characteristic of societies or of sectors of social life in which personal relationships predominate. When relationships are personal, they tend to take a codified, ceremonial form and to be sanctioned by honor or by dishonor. Honor expresses itself by means of pride, which is authorized by possession of a certain status, by a certain social identity, and more generally by the correct use of rules that govern behaviors in which symbolic content is preponderant.

But the pretension to honor and status must be ratified by the community; it requires a consensus. This consensus can be constantly up for discussion, and social approval can diminish and with it honor—the prestige that accompanies it. Honor, "appearances," "fame" are hence always submitted to the tribunal of public opinion. Anyone who pretends to honor must show himself worthy of it by complying with prescribed forms of behavior, indeed accentuating them; from this comes the importance of the "point of honor." The dependence of honor on consensus and public opinion makes it such that it can be acquired and lost, so that every pretension to honor and status implies necessarily a *faith* in whoever already possesses that status and that honor. Honor is then acquired by being made lost to someone else: one's own honor implies the dishonor of others. As Julian Pitt-Rivers has noted, the emblematic personality of the code of honor is Don Juan, who seeks honor in its defiance or acquisition by dishonoring others through their women (in Peristany 1965: 33). The man of honor is one who insults his fellow creature with impunity and who is not himself insulted with impunity: he is in perpetual defiance; he is always on stage. In Renaissance Italy the offender acquired honor that he had removed from the offended: "to take away" honor meant "to remove it for oneself" (cf. Bryson 1935: 85).

In its extreme forms, this competitive ideology implies an individualism which, however, is always moderated by the necessity of taking stock of public opinion, by the necessity of following a code and of representing it in its own act—of acting "ceremonially." The insult, the "denial of honor," and so forth,

therefore follow minute codes, which cannot be violated with impunity without provoking dishonor.

In some societies, honor and its connected ceremonials have a less mobile and personal character. Personal honor would have to legitimize precedence but it is precedence that gives personal honor, since no one can challenge anyone who precedes him in the hierarchical order, at least to acquire the necessary power. The king, for example, is above challenges to honor; he cannot be dishonored. The affirmation of the king's honor is one of the themes and principal objectives of all ceremonies of the court.

In societies wherein hierarchy is hereditary or more fixed, defiance of honor is limited to persons who belong to the same social rank. In relationships of inequality, honor is created and perpetuated by ceremonies of acceptance on the part of the inferior, of the precedence of the superior one. Honor then consists in "sticking to one's proper place," in being legitimately, by common consensus, in a certain position of status.

The necessity of the challenge, or its hereditary character, assures a certain permanence to the hierarchical distribution of honor. This permits it to function at a political level. Anyone who has honor can in fact, without losing it, violate a certain number of rules of honor if no one can either succeed in contesting him in a challenge or "putting him to shame." Honor therefore requires the power to keep it. But at the same time honor gives power, because it permits the one who has it to violate certain rules without being disapproved of. There are rules for violating rules, and these rules are fundamentally "political." The political enters into conflict with honor, and therefore only the man of honor—the man who does not risk losing his honor—can utilize it.

Hence a conflict, but also a complementarity, between honor and power, which explains why political power is often exercised by means of control of ceremonies. One is then dealing with a power that expresses itself through personal charisma, in which norms appear as facts of experience: the honor of a person is seen, felt, manifested. The ceremony of honor is expressed in fact, as Pitt-Rivers has noted, by means of a corporeal symbolism: honor is an "aura," which circles the body of the man of honor and defines an inviolable, "sacred" space; the head of the man "honored," the man "of respect"—symbol of his individuality—is the place of maximum concentration of his "sacredness," of his personal charisma, his "personality." Ceremonies frequently involve his head, which is uncovered and bowed; the man of high status walks "at the head," "at the fore"; he is "at the head" of a social group, and so forth. The installation of

an individual in a position of honor is made by means of rituals focused on his head: the imposition of a crown, of a headdress, etc. The head of a person of rank cannot be touched with impunity; in Polynesia it is the object of a particularly rigorous taboo.

In all these ceremonies there is at play not so much reference to a "god" who transcends social relations as the "divinization" of one of the partners in the relationship: the partner in whom the legitimacy of power and honor—and thus its sanction—is manifested as a fact of experience. If the touch of the French and English kings cured scrofula, the touch of the Polynesian chiefs produced sickness or death. In all these ceremonies, status is ratified by means of a test (Does charisma exist or not? Does the individual who carries out a task carry it out legitimately?), which directly concerns the persons and their powers, without which the relationship would need to pass through a third, imaginary person (a god).

It is naturally difficult to draw a clear distinction between "religious" rituals and "nonreligious" rituals. Even in Europe, attempts to lead ceremonies of honor back into the bosom of religion and to sanction the human hierarchy in divine terms have not been lacking. In one and the same society, two different ritual languages can coexist and interfere with one another. But in relations in which the ideology of honor dominates, there is only one god, one sacred thing: the person and his value, his charisma. Everyone possesses a bill of honor, of fame: everyone is therefore, in his way, a "person." But this can be so for him only insofar as he "represents" his own honor, his own value, on occasions and in relationships in which it is put to the test; and only insofar as he incarnates in his own behavior an ideal and normative personality accepted by society—insofar as he transforms the rules that govern society through *deeds* that assume a symbolic value in others' experience. The person is then a *person*. The "ceremonial" ideology, the ideology of honor and of fame, divinizes the man without necessarily referring to an imaginary god who is not already incarnate in the man himself.

SOME CEREMONIES

We may now seek to show through some examples how all the behaviors called "ceremonial" are more or less narrowly tied to the ideology of "honor," "fame," and "glory," and reflect it in their structure. From what has been said up until now, it emerges that the existence of ceremonial behaviors is more likely in

hierarchized societies in which a competition for honor and rank exists. The examples that follow illustrate this thesis.

Hierarchy is often manifested in linguistic "ceremonial" forms, that is, in forms in which the lexical or stylistic choice depends on the hierarchical context and rules of social interaction. Linguistic behavior must then be expressive of the range and relationship of each partner: it is thereby "ceremonial." One of the most impressive examples of the ceremonial functioning of the linguistic is offered by the Javanese language, in which sometimes "the simplest conversation seems to be a grand ceremony" (Geertz 1960: 254).

In Javanese there exist three linguistic levels: *ngoko*, *madya*, and *krama*, called "stylemes" by Clifford Geertz. Every styleme is characterized by its own lexical forms. Furthermore, there are "honorific" terms, partially independent of the lexical triads of the three stylemes. These terms refer to persons, parts of the body, objects of property, human actions. They are utilized, in general, in *ngoko* and in *krama*. The rules are quite complicated, but suffice it to say that a Javanese person can choose among at least six linguistic levels:

l) the lowest level;
2) the lowest level with honorifics at an inferior level;
3) the lowest level with honorifics at a superior level;
4) the middle level;
5) the superior level;
6) the superior level with honorifics at a superior level.

For example, the phrase "will you eat rice now?" is executed this way at level 6)*: menapa spanjenengan baḍe ḍahar sekul samenika*?; and this way at level 1): *apa kowé arep mangan sega saiki*?

The linguistic choices depend on the relative social position of the speakers, the place in which they are speaking, the occasion, the subject of their conversation, their sex, their age, their occupation, their wealth, the family to which each of the speakers belongs, and finally their attitudes and individual idiosyncrasies. Roughly speaking, *ngoko* is spoken among rural people or among any persons who share intimate relations and the same status among them, or by a person of an elevated rank when speaking with a country person. It is the first form learned by children, but it is utilized only up to a certain age when addressing their parents. *Madya* is used among city people who do not have relations of friendship, and sometimes by city people when they speak with strangers of

their same class or with their superiors. *Krama* is used among aristocrats who do not have intimate relations. Honorifics are used by differentiating even more minutely the social position of the speakers and their relations.

The system is extremely complicated, but it permits the status and "honor" of everyone to be expressed. It also permits challenges to status, the inflicting of offense or dishonor by using inappropriate forms. It thus has an important "ceremonial" dimension because it communicates not only at the semantic level, but also at the "pragmatic" one. Every linguistic exchange confirms or restructures hierarchical relations among speakers, communicates their "honor."

Language is also used ceremonially in other societies, but not necessarily at the lexical level. Among the Māori (New Zealand) speeches are the principal component of *hui*, that is, of all ceremonial gatherings that happen in *marae* ("temples," gathering places) on occasions of matrimony, funerals, inaugurations, acts of submission, arrivals of guests, etc. The *hui* are "ceremonies of encounter" in which the status and honor of groups that meet one another are expressed and put to the test in a challenge that consists of oratorical duels and prestations of gifts (cf. Salmond 1975). The main preoccupation of Māori is the acquisition and preservation of *mana* (prestige, honor, etc.). The *hui* permits everyone's *mana* to be manifested and occasionally modified. The greater the distance between groups that meet one another, the more perfectly executed, formalized, and complicated the ceremony must be. The crucial moment is an oratorical challenge between the two parties. Speeches must follow precise rules: if they are violated, the orator and his group lose "face." Sometimes the challenge is manifested in a more direct way, with a feigned violent attack (*wero*) against a person of high rank who enters into the ceremonial ring.

The orators are specialists who know myths, genealogies, and so forth, but they are also consummate actors. The public judges them, attributes honor and prestige to them, confirms or lowers their rank.

In the ceremonial sequence there are moments in which what counts is fidelity to traditional texts and rules, and others in which the sequence of arguments to be treated is prescribed but the way of treating them is not. The personal *mana* of the orator can then manifest itself more easily. But in both cases language functions as a ceremonial, because it does not have as its principal function communication at the semantic level. What counts is not what is said, but *how* it is said. The mode of speaking and the choice of arguments express the pretension to a certain status, which the orator seeks to have legitimated by the public. Ceremonial is essentially a game in which the rules are used in

order to make the adversary lose. According to Anne Salmond, there are three possible strategies: 1) to make use of the option, permitted by the rules, which is most appropriate to the situation of encounter (social distance among parties, unforeseen events, etc.). The choice of one possibility rather than another is indicative by itself of a certain judgement of rank relative to the parties and of the value of each of them; 2) to oblige the adversary to violate a rule. For example: an orator can utilize certain songs that the adversary had intended to use in his speech and which, once his turn has come, he will no longer be able to use. Being short of material, he risks having violated the prescribed sequence and being "shamed"; 3) deliberately violating a ceremonial rule, but with such brilliant results as to steal away the applause of those present. He who shows himself to be above the common rules is greatly honored.

The case of the Māori shows that ceremonial has the same structure as a game: it carries a challenge and a regulated conflict, but the adversaries utilize the rules by obtaining honor and prestige and by drawing dishonor and shame down upon their adversaries. Ceremonial expresses and sanctions status, but at the same time makes possible its modification.

Classic examples of ceremonial behavior, in which the challenge and acquisition of honor are closely associated, include the potlatch of the Indians of the northwestern coast of North America (Canada). It consists of ceremonies in which groups of persons, as numerous as possible, are invited to attend a feast wherein the host affirms a pretension to status or assumes hereditary privileges. The assumption of the title of status or privilege is validated by the guests who receive gifts commensurate with their status. If the gifts are insufficient or poorly distributed, then a consensus is not created and the host "loses face."

Some potlatches are given at critical moments of existence: on occasions of birth, adoption, accession of a child to puberty, matrimony, death. Another type of potlatch is that given in the guise of reparation for ritual errors; to "save face" when events of bad luck occur which diminish the prestige of a group or an individual (the overturning of a canoe, wounding of a member of the family, birth of a deformed son, etc.). A third type of potlatch, the most important, consists of competitive ceremonies, of rivalry or vendetta, in which an individual or a group seeks to make an adversary lose face by crushing him under the weight of prestations.

Potlatch is essentially an exchange of goods in which value is measured by a "monetary unity": the blanket. It is also accompanied by oratorical contests. However, as in language utilized ceremonially, information is not transmitted at

the semantic level, and thus the exchange transcends its economic function and expresses the status of those who participate in it. What is ceremonially communicated are not just words and objects but, by means of words and objects, relations among members of society.

Boas defines potlatch as "the method of acquiring rank" (1966: 77). As has been seen, in order to obtain rank it is necessary to accumulate wealth so as to distribute it among the greatest possible number of persons. Wealth gives honor, but only insofar as it is ceded to others. The life of a Kwakiutl is a "career" in which names, privileges, and titles successively change and, above all, one makes "a name" as a generous man. From adolescence boys compete among themselves in the system of gifts and counter-gifts, and are incited by their parents to beat their rivals. Individuals, clans, chiefs, and tribes seek to "crush" one another reciprocally (one of the ceremonies is called precisely "crushing the name of the rival"), according to complex ceremonial rules. The recipient of a gift cannot refuse it, but must instead reciprocate after a certain amount of time with one hundred percent interest, if he does not want to "lose face." Every prestation is therefore a challenge, but certain prestations have a directly competitive and conflictual character. In this case a rival is invited (with his clan or tribe) to a feast, and they are given a great number of blankets. The guest must accept them, but cannot do so before having placed on the heap of blankets an equal quantity plus interest of one hundred percent. A similar procedure is utilized when a canoe is given to an adversary. In both cases the challenged must validate his own rank and his own name by responding adequately to the challenge: otherwise he loses and it is the adversary who increases his status.

The most complex form of challenge is the acquisition of a copper plate. Copper plates are used along the whole north Pacific coast, divided into two sections: on the bottom there is a part in the form of a "T," and on the top an engraved part (the "face") with a figure that represents the emblem of ownership. The copper plate represents the value of an enormous quantity of blankets: it is worth as much wealth as was spent on the feast in which it was obtained. The more times it has been sold, the greater its value; one copper plate that bore the significant name "all plates were ashamed to look at it" was worth 7,500 blankets.

The capacity to acquire a copper plate is therefore a sign of great distinction. Copper plates are always sold to rivals and often to enemy tribes. Not accepting the acquisition of it equals a recognition of the incapacity to pay for it, and this casts a shadow over the "name" and "honor" of the tribe or clan.

Rivalry has its strongest expression in the destruction of property. Potlatch is thus an exchange of destructions, or of goods destroyed, which proceeds until one of the rivals abandons the match and recognizes himself as beaten, as inferior: his name "is broken," that of the victor is raised.

The challenge to break a copper plate is one of the most feared. A chief can break one of them and give the fragments to the rival. If he wants to keep his prestige intact he must in turn break a copper plate of equal or superior value, and offer it to his adversary with the fragments received shortly beforehand. The adversary can then pay him again with the destroyed copper plate. If, however, the challenged one tosses his copper plate into the sea, he acquires a superior prestige, for he shows himself so rich as to disdain compensation. He who succeeds in acquiring all the fragments of a destroyed copper plate on one of these occasions, and thereafter the dispersed bits in the exchanges, can reconstruct it and thus give to it an immense value since each destruction immediately symbolizes passages of enormous quantities of wealth.

On other occasions, potlatch is associated with exchanges of direct offenses to throw discredit onto the rival: during the feast, the guest is put beside the hearth and risks being roasted by flames that leap out of the enormous quantities of fish oil that the challenger puts on the fire. The challenger provokes the challenged with songs, which tease the challenged and proudly exalt the challenger's own ancestors and his own clan. Finally he offers an enormous spoon full of oil to the guests: if they accept it and drink the contents, he recognizes himself as having been beaten; if he refuses it, the competition continues.

If some particulars surrounding the development of potlatch have been given, it is because the institution perfectly illustrates all aspects of ceremonial: the acquisition of honor by means of a challenge and of the defeat of the rival; the idea that the challenge allows one to put the contenders to the test and to reveal their intrinsic value, thus justifying their pretenses to honorability, their relative rank; the role of the spectators and of public opinion, which functions by judgements; the necessity for the chiefs to make a continual display of their value, of their wealth, of being good actors always on the scene, of "representing" and incarnating certain ideal personalities.

It does not seem, on the other hand, that potlatch has a true and proper religious dimension or that this is even important. The ancestors and the gods can intervene, but as emblems, as motives for pride and challenges among the living. The latter can sometimes impersonate ancestors, by wearing masks of them, but only because the man of rank must incarnate the ideal personality symbolized

by his ancestor. Legitimately wearing the mask means being a person, giving proof of a value equal to that of the ancestor. In the ceremonial of potlatch, the "mystical" sanction is immanent in the human relationship: it is the charisma, the honor of the parties, recognized by a public whose approval was won by force of gifts, not by that of the gods. The "gods" of a ceremonial are the men who are "gods" for other men.

* * *

The opposition between "ceremonial" and "religious ritual" remains an ideal because it is difficult to find, in the majority of cases, a "pure" type of ceremonial or religious rite. The intermixing of the two forms of ritual is frequent; they are distinguished more by their conceptualization in certain cultures than by a radical difference in their procedures. To fail to recognize this ideological difference in societies in which it appears important would mean precluding understanding of the specific characters of numerous ritual behaviors and the ideology of "honor" and "prestige," which puts the accent on the intrinsic value of persons rather than on the rank obtained by the privileged relation with an external "god."

CHAPTER FOUR

Cosmogonic myths and order

Translated from the Italian by Sarah Hill and revised by Alice Elliot

You deep thinkers
ask yourself in your own hearts,
what base did he stand on when he set up the worlds?
— *Rig Veda* 10.4[1]

COSMOLOGY AND COSMOGONY

"Order," as Nicola Abbagnano (1993: 638) says, is "any relationship between two or more objects that may be expressed by a rule." But as a phenomenon of consciousness, order cannot be reduced to this definition. The fact that our sense of order turns on relations that—at least in theory—can be described with rules does not mean that the formulation of these rules is necessary to order. We feel ourselves in the presence of order whenever we are able to anticipate future experience to some degree based on past experience. This capacity for anticipation exists in practice, that is, it is embodied in certain activities and cannot be easily separated from these. Indeed, at its most extreme it is inseparable from them, as shown, for example, by the ultimate irreducibility of aesthetic

1. Doniger O'Flaherty 1981: 40.

knowledge to discursive knowledge, or of the sense of order that derives from listening to a piece of music to that which derives from its translation into rules of composition.

Whether or not they exist in the form of rules, two types of relations are fundamental to the experience (and idea) of order: serial relations (the relation between before and after) and relations between parts of a whole (and therefore also between the whole and its parts).[2] The first type is obviously preponderant, given the intrinsically temporal nature of our experience, in which one thing follows another, one thing produces another, and given that our actions and our own personal identity exist in a form of succession.[3] This preponderance, this immediate evidence of the relations between before and after as the source of intelligibility, explains why in pre-scientific cultures cosmology, that is, the description of the order of the world in its widest expanse, for the most part takes the form of "cosmogony." In other words, in contrast with scientific cosmologies, which explain the order of the world legislatively (invoking the constant operation of eternally valid laws), mythical cosmologies explain it narratively—as the result of a process. While for science order is necessary because it is eternal, for myth it is contingent because it has not always been there, and therefore will not always be there. Rather than the atemporal intelligibility of the law, myth prefers the temporal intelligibility of experience. But it should be added that this contrast is only relative. "Myth" and "science" are ideal notions that are often difficult to discover as such in reality.[4] Many cosmogonies have surprisingly "scientific" aspects to them, and science is not

2. A third type of relations of order—rank—seems to me to be fundamentally reducible to the second type.

3. We see ourselves as identical to that which we were only inasmuch as we are its closest approximation (cf. Nozick, 1981: 36–37). In other words, among the various temporal chains that constitute our experience, we recognize one which we identify with the "I."

4. I do not intend to discuss here what myth is—if indeed a class or family of phenomena that might all be brought back to a useful definition of "myth" even exists. Suffice it to say that myth is understood here as a traditional narration with explanatory and legitimating values. Myth is authoritative and therefore only those who are authorized can give voice to it: its use is rarely free. In other ways, myth is not differentiated from other forms of traditional and even nontraditional narration (given that traditional elements exist even in the most apparently revolutionary narrations). Its fundamental intelligibility and its authoritative nature connect it instead—*horribile dictu*—to history or at least to the "monumental history" of which Friedrich Nietzsche spoke.

immune to myth, particularly when it makes itself cosmogonic (cf. Feyerabend 1975: 295–309). It should also be said from the outset that if mythical cosmologies are narrative because they are dominated by order as series, no narrative is reducible purely and simply to this order. Its own dominance requires that it subsumes other principles of order, and form complex interweavings with them.

MYTHICAL IMAGES OF ORIGINS

The majority of cosmogonies situate two contrasting but complementary principles at the origins of the cosmos. These can be found excessively close to one another—and must then be distanced—or excessively distant, in which case they must be brought closer together. The final result is identical: an optimal combination of conjunction and separation, which is precisely the fundamental principle of the order of the world.

The two principles are often either the sky and the earth,[5] or the sky and the ocean,[6] or salt and fresh water.[7] These couples almost always have a sexual connotation. That is, they exemplify the opposition of male and female, which is a principle of order and at the same time is generative in an extremely generalized way. In this sense, the origin is not only the cosmos' initial state but also its most general principle: the relation of the parts to the whole is temporalized. Or, more precisely, it is temporalized if the process that follows the original state manifests, at least in part, the sexual principle. Otherwise, sexual duality is positioned at the beginning as the premise of a negation. For example, the castration of Uranus in the Hesiodic cosmogony (*Theogony*, vv. 177–82) constitutes, among other things, a negation of the purely sexual principle of creation and so announces the kingdom of Zeus, the sovereign who creates and maintains the order of the cosmos with more varied means than mere sexuality. In short, it is already evident that myth temporalizes relations of inclusion and logical

5. Widespread across the entire world, for example among the Māori of New Zealand (Best 1976: 83–87), in eastern Indonesia (Roeder: 1948: 99–101), in Japan (Aston 1972: 1–2), and in Mesopotamia (Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 471–87).

6. See Eliade (1959: 479, 487–9); Williamson (1933, I: 33, 48, 78 [Samoa], 55 [Tonga], 18 [Fakaofo]).

7. A very important motif in Mesopotamia, for obvious reasons (Bottéro and Kramer: 1989: 656).

negation and that it is not merely reducible to the relation between before and after, as it exists in experience. We will return to this point.

These originary couples differ from one another by virtue of the degree of heterogeneity or homogeneity of the terms that constitute them. The greatest degree of heterogeneity is found in the couple sky/earth, a lesser degree in the couple sky/ocean (which seem to be the mirror images of one another), and the least in the couple salt water/fresh water (two forms of the same substance rather than two different substances). Aside from the representation of the initial state as an irreducible sexual duality, what emerges is the idea of a monism founded on a more abstract principle—represented by water, an element without a form of its own but for this very reason capable of assuming every possible form and at the same time the fertile element *par excellence*.[8]

Because of the sky's apparent curvature, and because of the horizon's circularity, sky and earth, water above and water below are often conceived as the two halves of a spherical cosmos.[9] From here to conceiving of the cosmos explicitly as an egg, and thus as a generative "sphere," is a short step, and one which has been made in almost every region of the world (See Eliade 1959: 479–82; Williamson 1933, I: 19). The cosmic egg constitutes the point of greatest unity of the two sexual halves of the cosmos—a unity that implies, ultimately, their dissolution. A less extreme solution is the representation of the beginning as an androgyne (Eliade 1959: 481), one that does not abolish the sexual distinction, but renders it a priori impossible to turn coitus into the representation of unity. Correlatively, the process of generation is desexualized: the androgyn procreates through extraction of the non-sexual parts of its own body—namely, through dismemberment. But the gigantic body from whose dismemberment the cosmos derives is not necessarily characterized by androgyny, as the Scandinavian myth of Ymir (ibid.) or the Indian myth of Puruṣa (the Man) demonstrate (Doniger O'Flaherty 1981: 29–31).

At this point, it should be clear that the various representations of origins form not separate types, but rather a family of phenomena with unstable boundaries, and thus often coexist (and not just as possibilities) within the

8. Note the similarity between this idea of originary water—well represented in Mesopotamia—and the cosmology of Thales, according to which the ultimate reality is water (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and opinions of eminent philosophers*, I: 27).

9. For example, in Chinese and Japanese mythology (Aston 1972: 1–2).

same culture. Since these types all have common dimensions, it is sufficient to accentuate one of them to the detriment of the others to transform one representation into another. For example, if I accentuate unity a little with respect to duality, the opposed terms are transformed—from sky and earth they become two forms of water. A further accentuation of unity leads to the desexualization of the opposites, or of the form of their union (from coitus to androgyny). Ultimately, duality and sexuality disappear altogether—as in various versions of the cosmic egg theory. These transformations are not just theoretical stratagems: they contribute to making the coexistence of different images in the same culture or the passage from one image to another recognizable over the course of time. The accentuation of unity to the detriment of duality—and accentuation of dismemberment (and, more generally, of creation) to the detriment of procreation—is historically documented in Mesopotamia and its sphere of cultural influence, as well as in Vedic and Brahmanic India.

The representations that I have so far considered are all concrete—extensions to the entire cosmos of phenomena that are sufficiently general to assume a certain explanatory weight at the global level. But mythic cosmogonies are capable of abstraction. For example, in Polynesia the origin of the cosmos is often situated in a generic "Darkness" or "Silence" (denoting the absence of activity) or even in "Nothing" (Williamson 1933, I: 3, 19–22; Best 1967, I: 58–60). Elsewhere, the initial state is characterized by the symmetry and reversibility of the relations of cause and effect—symptoms of the intrinsic unthinkability of an ultimate cause.

Particularly vivid examples are found in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*: "From Aditī (the female creative principle) was born Dakṣa (the male creative principle) and from Dakṣa Aditī was born" (*Rig Veda* 10.72.3–4). The Creator creates water and water creates the Creator (Doniger O'Flaherty 1981: 26). Puruṣa (the Man), the primordial man, is dismembered in order to create everything, including those who sacrifice him. "From him (man) Virāj was born, and from Virāj came the Man" (ibid.: 30). The gods, who receive the sacrifice, make sacrifices to the gods—and to the sacrifice itself. "In the late Veda, the father is expressly identified with the son" (ibid.: 27). The world of beginnings is characterized by the most total logical circularity: Man presupposes Man; the gods presuppose the gods; the sky and the earth presuppose the sky and the earth; heat presupposes heat; every origin is a derivative and every derivative an origin. Perhaps Russell read the *Rig Veda*, or perhaps his path crossed that of the wise

Indians in the dark wood where all paths of thought inevitably end up.[10] At that point some fall silent, others recount myths. Still others ask themselves, like Putouarey: "And what if the myth were the truth? Ah! My reason tells me no, and no again, a thousand times no . . . of course, I don't believe. But I doubt, and my doubt is in favor of the myth" (Larbaud [1924] 1991: 207).

COSMOGONIC PROCESSES

Representations of beginnings are ultimately inseparable from representations of the cosmogonic processes that follow them. As I have indicated, if the point of departure is a state of separation, a mediation is necessary. This takes a variety of forms. For example, if the sky and the earth are originally separated, the sky will have to unite with the earth to make it fertile, and then to be separated from it so that their offspring may grow (Williamson 1993, I: 41–45). Or, if the initial state is the separation of sky and ocean, they will need to be mediated by fishing the earth from the bottom of the ocean,[11] or by throwing stones or sand from the sky.[12] Or else the celestial gods will stir up the ocean with a stick, and islands will develop from the brackish foam that remains attached to the stick.[13]

But the most common cosmogonic process is one of differentiation by separation and division. We are speaking here of the obvious correlate of every representation of the beginning of the cosmos as a unity of that which is normally and presently divided: the sexes, the sky and the earth, the earth and the water, fresh water and salt water and, later on, gods and men, the king and his subjects, social classes, "us" and "them." In such a case, cosmogony is nothing more than the manifest inversion of its latent conceptual presupposition: the diminution or obliteration of differences necessary for thinking about origin. The world is

10. The original Italian is a play on words on the first lines of Dante's *Inferno*: "Forse Russell lesse il *Rig Veda* o forse il suo cammino si è incrociato con quello dei saggi indiani nella selva oscura dove tutti I cammini del pensiero inevitabilmenta finscono." —Ed.

11. By a divine fisherman, like Maui and others in Polynesia (Williamson 1993, I: 32–41), or by a bird that descends from the sky and dives into the sea, bringing back sand from its depths (Eliade 1959: 488).

12. Which is often conceived, it should be remembered, as a stone vault (cf. Williamson 1933, I: 77).

13. Cf., for example, the Japanese Nihongi (Aston 1972: 10–12).

unmade mentally in order to be remade through narrative. Only in this way can it acquire meaning within a way of thinking where the deed is the paradigm of meaning.

The originary cosmos can divide itself spontaneously (thus demonstrating the immanence of a certain generative principle, for example procreation), but, more often, it resists all attempts to break its unity. This resistance thereby provides proof of the superiority of the force that finally trumps it—hence guaranteeing the existence of the differentiated world. For example, in a famous Māori myth, Tane (the personification of the tree) manages to separate Rangi (Sky) and Papa (Earth) by pushing with his feet against the former and with his head against the latter (Schrempp 1992: 58). Or, in the even more famous Hesiodic myth, Cronus castrates Uranus (Sky) to detach him from Gaia (Earth). The stronger the originary unity, the stronger the motif of dismemberment—especially when unity is represented by a single body rather than two united bodies. Thus, in the Babylonian *Enûma Elîsh*, Marduk produces the fundamental divisions of the cosmos by cutting his female ancestor Tiamat, personification of the primordial Ocean, into pieces (Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 662–63). In Scandinavian cosmogony, the world was produced by cutting up the malformed body of the giant Ymir—imperfectly divided, like a premature fetus; in Vedic cosmogony it is Puruṣa, the originary Man, who is mutilated in order to produce not only the natural world, but also the social one. A final example: in the cosmogony of Mangaia the originary being (who lives at the bottom of the cosmic coconut) differentiates himself through self-mutilation. From the six pieces of flesh that he tears from himself are born, one by one, six sons, corresponding to an equal number of provinces of the cosmos (Gill 1876: 1011).[14] In all these myths the idea of division is combined with that of sacrifice, that is with the idea that order has a price that must be paid with what is most precious: life.

If in Mangaia the motif of the primordial egg (or more precisely, the coconut) is combined with those of mutilation and generation, in a myth collected in Porapora and Mo'orea (Society Islands) it is associated with a cosmogonic process modeled on the birth of a bird. The myth narrates that the god Ta'aroa was formed inside an egg of multiple shells laid one over the other and that he remained closed in it for countless ages until, tired of his solitude, he broke the

14. The theme of self-mutilation is combined with that of fishing for islands in a myth from Tongareva. The god Vatea tries in vain to fish for them until, tearing a piece of flesh from himself and using it as bait, he succeeds (Williamson 1933, I: 38).

shells. One shell became the sky, the other the foundations of the earth, whose plants were born from the yellow and red feathers that Ta'aroa shook away from his body (Henry 1928: 336–68).

The cosmogonic process is sometimes modeled on verbal magic. An example universally noted is offered by the first chapter of the *Genesis*: "God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light" (*Genesis* 1, 3).[15] But here the magic word is also (and perhaps above all) a political word: the world obeys God as subjects obey their sovereign—and indeed the story of creation justifies His sovereignty (or rather that of His representatives, the priests of the second temple who drew up the myth) over the Israelites (cf. Burke 1970: 174–83, 186). The implicitly political character of the creation of order by means of the word is clear in the Babylonian poem *Enûma Elîsh*, where Marduk creates the order of the world not only by commanding the elements directly, but also and above all by commanding his subordinate gods to work for him. Cosmogenesis, therefore, takes the same form of political action (Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 488, 496, 655). Like a human sovereign, the divine sovereign acts on the world through the word—the word through which he elaborates a plan and through which he orders his divine and human subjects to realize it (ibid.: 638). Or rather, according to this particular cosmogonic story, men are created to substitute for the lesser gods in the work of supporting the su-perior gods, and, through these, of the cosmos that depends on them.

But the idea of a creation explicitly or implicitly modeled on sovereignty—where the sovereign's job is essentially that of command—exists only where there exists the experience of the State. Much more widespread is an idea of creation modeled on artisanal, agricultural, and even predatory activities. An example can be found in *Genesis* itself, and in particular in its second chapter (*Genesis* 2, 5 ff.), which contains an account of creation very different from (and older than) the one of the first chapter. Here God, who is called Yahweh instead of Elohim as in the first chapter, creates the world not like a sovereign, with the word, but with his hands like an artisan (he molds Adam from the earth), a farmer (he plants the garden of Eden), and perhaps even a bonesetter (he creates Eve from Adam's rib). Elsewhere, creation is modeled on fishing, as we have seen, but also on hunting and, above all, on war. Indeed, war, and more generally conflict, is one of the great cosmogonic motors. It is found again, for example,

15. This idea is in turn derived from Babylonian cosmogony (Bottéro and Kramer 1969: 661) and from the so-called theology of Menfi (Knight 1985: 142).

in Mesopotamian cosmogonies, in the Hesiodic cosmogony, in Indo-European and Polynesian cosmogonies, and even in the so-called naturalistic cosmogonies of the Presocratics.

Another fairly widespread cosmogonic procedure is procreation. In almost all cosmogonies there is a procreative aspect or stage. Cosmogony is then reduced to genealogy. The reason for this elective affinity between cosmogony and genealogy appears obvious. Procreation is the most elemental, intrinsic, and, at the same time, generalized form of creativity. If doing is the fundamental source of meaning, then that doing which is realized through sexuality has a quality that is immediately obvious. The entire cosmos is made, elementally, in the act of reproduction—which is not just replication, but creation, since the offspring is never identical to its parents. From here, the possibility of extending the genealogical-reproductive model to relations between species emerges. Genealogy thus acquires an evolutionary character: the simple generates the complex. But there is more. Genealogy resolves the opposition between the two principal forms of order. Since it is productive, the most elementary form of the relation between the parts of a whole (the sexualized couple) is realized in a series of replicas that are infinitely different from the couple itself. In sum, reducing the entire cosmos to genealogy is the most elementary and persuasive way to represent the unity of the world as the expression of a single order. Multiplicity is reduced to a unity that is resolved in the most fundamental form of intelligibility: succession. Cosmology is wholly translated into cosmogony, order as the synchronic relation of parts into order as temporal succession.

The total reduction of the cosmos to the genealogical principle is, however, a rare phenomenon, as cosmogonic thought tends to combine different principles. For the most part, genealogical cosmogonies have been neglected by scholars because they are seen as less interesting than those that contain the feats of gods and heroes.[16] Perhaps the most complex and totalizing genealogical cosmogonies are found in Polynesia, the most grandiose example being the Hawaiian song conventionally entitled *Kumulipo* or "beginning in the dark."[17] This song situates humanity, and more precisely the royal Hawaiian lineage, at the final

16. Such is the case with the Sumerian texts which, unlike later texts in Akkadian (such as the *Athrasis* and the *Enûma Elish)* privilege procreation (and therefore genealogical description) over creation (Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 471–87). Many of these texts have not even been translated.

17. Cf. the edition and partial translation in Beckwith (1951), and a brief analysis in Valeri (1985: 4–8).

stage of a long series generated by the successive coupling of the principal species and other forms of being in an increasing order of complexity—so much so that one can speak of an evolutionist cosmogony.[18]

Evolutionist cosmogonies do not, however, necessarily have a sexualized form (cf. Frazer 1967). In reality, we are talking about conceptual genealogies which move from the abstract and general to the concrete and particular, combining in a complex form ontological, epistemological, and orectic categories. Here, once again, Polynesia provides abundant and extraordinarily complex examples. One of the simplest examples, a text collected in Samoa, describes a process that begins with Nothing (Leai), from which emanates Fragrance (odor is something and nothing at the same time and as such appears frequently as an element of transition between nothing and being); from Fragrance is born Dust (more concrete than Fragrance, but equally undifferentiated), and from this is born the Perceivable (we now move on to an elementary cognitive category); then the Obtainable (the presupposition of every practice or action); then Earth, then High Rocks (contrast of the horizontal and the vertical); then Small Stones (mediation of the preceding contrast); then Mountains. At this point, the first "sexual" union takes place—between Mountains and Changeable Meeting-Place (that is, the antithesis between stability and instability). The result is a "daughter," Piece of Dust, who marries her vegetal counterpart: Down of the Sugar Cane's Flower. From their marriage three sons and a daughter, who appear to be the first human beings, are born (Turner 1884: 3).

The motifs and processes that I have taken into consideration are enough to suggest that mythic cosmogonies extend the fundamental experiences of the order of daily life to the entire world: the experience of one's own body and those of other living beings (as in the case of reproduction), the experience of human and animal behavior (struggles and agonisms, the chick that emerges from the eggshell, the marine birds that dive into the sea and bring back sand or algae from the bottom), the experience of political organization (command) and ritual (sacrifice, magic). These experiences all have a fundamental structure in common: they are processes and actions, and so they are characterized by the succession in time of cause and effect. Their extension to the entire cosmos means precisely that the order of the universe is apprehended narratively and not synoptically or tabularly, that is, as cosmogony and not as cosmology.

18. Cf. Williamson (1933, I). This is a kind of example of the great chain of being idea (Lovejoy 1936), which evidently does not exist only in Western thought.

The fact that cosmogonic myth utilizes daily experiences of causality does not, however, mean that it reproduces these exactly. Rather, its outcomes are often in conflict with those of experience exactly because, as we have seen, cosmogonic myth condenses, within the dimension of time, relations that are not themselves temporal. The contrast between before and after manifests and sustains conceptual, religious, moral, and even political structures. The sensible elements do not appear in myth as such, but rather inasmuch as they allow for the embodiment and symbolization of principles and relations. The order of myth—like that of art—exists therefore in a state of tension with experience: it never renounces it, but it never leaves it exactly as it is. This is demonstrated by a well-known text: the already cited cosmogonic story of the first chapter of the *Genesis* (1–2, 1–4).

STRUCTURE AND TEMPORALIZATION

In this myth, the god called Elohim[19] does not create the cosmos ex nihilo,[20] but by differentiating a pre-existent unformed mass—"the waters"—on which he breathes a "powerful wind" (*Genesis* 1, 2–3). We are presented here with a well-known representation of the beginning of the cosmos: the primordial ocean surmounted by a sky that is not yet still (the "firmament") but rather has the unstable form of the wind. The process of the division of this initial mass takes place over six days, divided into two periods of three days each. On the first day, light is separated from darkness, and thus day from night. On the second day, Elohim, exactly like Marduk, separates water from water—that is, he creates a solid celestial vault (the firmament) between the water below and the water above (from which rain comes). The third day is characterized by two successive divisions: the separation of earth and water under the sky; and the separation of the earth from its products: vegetation. On the fourth day, the sun and the moon are created with the other stars "to separate day from night and serve as signs for feast-days and for the days and the years" (*Genesis* 1, 14–15). On the fifth day, the creatures of the water and those that fly beneath the vault of the

19. Elohim is actually a plural form and seems for this reason to be a remnant of polytheism (Burke 1970: 204; cf. Knight 1985: 141).

20. The idea of creation ex nihilo appears much later, in the second century BC.

sky are created. On the sixth day the terrestrial animals are created and finally man and woman.

The systematicity and symmetry of this narrative make the fact that it contains an absurdity stand out even more: light (with the contrast between day and night) is created on the first day, while its sources, the sun and the other stars, are created on the third. Furthermore, the vegetation, whose development depends, as all farmers know, on the sun, is created before the sun. Paradoxically, the myth that ought to justify the order of the world seems to contradict both itself and the very experience of the world. Is this an absurd myth, or one that exposes the absurdity of confusing the succession of before and after of myth with that of experience?

Leo Strauss (1981) and Edmund Leach (1969) have noted independently of one another that the six days of creation are really two parallel periods of three days. The clearest sign of this parallelism is that day and night are separated twice: on the first and the fourth days.[21] In short, creation seems to have happened twice. Nevertheless, the parallelism of the two periods highlights a fundamental contrast that was brilliantly identified by Strauss. The separations created in the first three days are all static; those created in the last three are dynamic. In effect, in the first period, light is separated from darkness, the water above from the water below, the earth from the water, and vegetation from the earth. Once moved by God (that is, separated from one another), these things do not move again—rather, they must not move. During the second part of creation, on the contrary, the principle of separation is that of local motion (separation with respect to a place): stars move in the sky, animals and man move in their respective spaces.

The fundamental preoccupation of the myth is therefore that of organizing the fundamental phenomena of the cosmos on the basis of a hierarchical opposition between stasis and dynamism. In fact, as Strauss demonstrates, given that God is essentially movement in this story, the mobile is superior to the immobile. Furthermore, the more a being is mobile, or the less it is static, the closer it gets to God. Man, who is characterized by the maximum mobility, and therefore liberty, is created in the image of God. The stars—which move, but

21. Strauss maintains that the third and sixth days are also structurally identical. The reason given is that the third and sixth days are the only ones which present double creations. But in reality, there is a double creation on the fifth day too (birds in the air and fish in the sea.)

not freely, since they are constrained by their orbits—are inferior to animals. In their devaluation, which contrasts with the Greek and Babylonian overvaluation, Strauss sees an awareness of the risk that stars may compete with the single God. Static things are also hierarchized in relation to the privilege accorded to motion. Light and shadow are created first, since they are the most static realities, while vegetation, which is at the limit between static and dynamic, is created at the end of the static period of creation, and so just before the stars, which represent the inferior form of motion.

In short, a hierarchical structure is temporalized in myth: the static precedes the dynamic, and the relatively more static, or less dynamic, precedes the relatively less static, or more dynamic. Since it has a privileged position in consciousness, temporal succession possesses an obviousness that other kinds of succession do not: the latter are reduced to the former. But in this process of reduction of a hierarchical series to a temporal series, there necessarily emerge conflicts with experience, with the relations between cause and effect as they are perceived in the temporal flux of consciousness, where the sun precedes light because it is its cause. In the biblical myth, light instead precedes the sun, as that which is static precedes that which is dynamic in a hierarchy of progressively superior values.[22] Analogously, vegetation, which does not move, or which moves less than the sun that nourishes it, must precede it in such a hierarchy, and, given that this hierarchy is temporalized, precede it in time.

Myth therefore has a paradoxical character: since it is narrative, its predominant form is temporal succession; but structures of equivalence, implication or logical inclusion, and above all hierarchies of values, which are not temporal, are also expressed in this form. It would, however, be erroneous to deduce from this, in the way of Leach and fundamentally even of Lévi-Strauss, that the temporal dimension is extrinsic to myth, because it is reducible to a communicative fact: one thing has to be said after another; verbal communication is necessarily linear. It seems to me, on the contrary, that many mythic structures cannot be read indifferently in any and all directions. Cosmogonic myth, in particular, is firmly

22. It should be noted that this is my explanation, not Strauss'. For Strauss, the creation of light is at the beginning of creation because light symbolizes separation. But in reality, god separates with the word, not with light. Light is not used to separate the water above from the water below, or the earth from the sea, or vegetation from the earth. My explanation seems to me to be more consonant with the contrast between static and dynamic specified by Strauss, which I have liberally refashioned here.

orientated, because it is a movement from the simple to the complex, from the general to the particular, and above all from that which is presupposed to that which presupposes it. Precisely for this reason, it has an elective affinity with temporal succession, which is the most orientated form of experience. Just as the qualities of gold make it suitable to become the general equivalent of value, without however being reducible to that value, so the qualities of the temporal series make it suitable to become the general equivalent for the logical relations of myth, without however being confused with these. In other words, the temporal form of myth is not irreducible; what is irreducible is the persuasive power that it lends to the multiple forms that intersect in myth, as in every other kind of poetic production.

COSMOLOGY AND SOCIETY

What, finally, of the relationship between cosmogonic myth and that part of experience that includes social and political life? As is well known, the Durkheimian school maintained that social structure provides the model for thinking of the cosmos. The order of nature would be modeled on that of society. This thesis was taken up by Vernant (1969) in a justly famous essay. Vernant identifies mythic cosmogonies with myths of sovereignty—that is, with the creation as it is described in the *Enûma Elîsh*, in *Genesis*, or in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The world is not intrinsically, and therefore spontaneously, ordered, but is, on the contrary, intrinsically chaotic. It must be ordered by a force which is external to it, by a god who dictates laws to it, by a sovereign who commands it. For this reason, the diagnostic characteristic of mythic cosmogonies, says Vernant (ibid.: 112), is the distinction between origin and order, between,

> that which comes first from the temporal point of view and that which comes first from the point of view of power, between the principle that is chronologically at the origin of the world and the beginning that presides over its present order.

By contrast, in the naturalistic philosophy of the Ionian philosophers the same principle of order holds from the beginning to the end of the cosmos. Order, rather than chaos, is spontaneous. There is no ordering sovereign, and there is no difference between origin and order.

> Mankind, the divine, and the world form a unified, homogenous universe, all on the same level; they are the parts or aspects of a single and same physis that puts the same forces into play everywhere, that manifests the same life-force. (ibid.: 101)

Furthermore, it is not, as in mythic cosmogonies, the beginning "that illuminates and transfigures the quotidian; it is the quotidian that renders the beginning intelligible by providing models for understanding how the world had been formed and ordered" (ibid.: 101).

According to Vernant, this contrast between cosmogonies corresponds to a contrast between political forms. Cosmogonies "of sovereignty" are the counterpart of a social order produced and personified by the king: the divine king in the cosmos corresponds to the human king in society. Naturalistic cosmogonies correspond to the impersonal order immanent in all the citizens of the democratic city-state. In short, social and cosmic order depends in one case on the dominion of one part over the rest; in the other case, on the equilibrium between the parts. Historically, this contrast between hierarchy and equality is found in Greece between the Mycenaean monarchy (in turn re-echoing Eastern models) and the *isonomia* of the classical period. Free Science in a free State: Vernant serves up in a Durkheimian sauce the foundation myth of the liberal West in its two dimensions—political and cognitive. It is not the first time that a beautiful theory has been spoiled by a few ugly facts. The ugly facts in this case are numerous. Just for starters, there is no synchronism between democratic reforms and the birth of naturalistic philosophy in Greece.[23] Also, the Ionian philosophers' naturalistic cosmogonies are much less different from the myths of sovereignty than they appear to Vernant.[24] In any case, it is arbitrary

23. As is known, Cleisthenes' democratic reform took place at the end of the sixth century, while the philosophy of Thales and Anaximander is situated in the first half of the same century. Furthermore, Cleisthenes' reform was in Athens, while the Ionian philosophers lived in Miletus. In a subsequent essay, Vernant (1974, I: 215 ff) attempted to demonstrate that these temporal and local discrepancies have no importance, but his arguments are not, to me, totally convincing.

24. The very idea that the real world must be explained as the result of a process of differentiation from an originary "unlimited" *apeiron* is a presupposition that Anaximander derives from mythic cosmogonies, and that does not have any basis in Vernant's "quotidian." Furthermore, the unlimited is conceived as being intrinsically gifted with movement because alive. It is therefore equivalent to the sovereign gods of mythology; the only true difference is that it is depersonalized. Another

to identify these myths of sovereignty with mythic cosmogonies *tout court*. The latter are extremely varied and cannot be reduced to a single formula, as we have seen. Many of the characteristics that Vernant attributes to naturalistic philosophy are also found in types of mythic cosmogony that he does not take into consideration. Finally, and above all, if it is true that in Mesopotamia or ancient Greece sovereign cosmogony corresponded to a political life where the sovereign dominated, this correlation is not necessarily found in other parts of the world.[25]

The two last points seem to me particularly important. I would like to illustrate both with a single example: that of the genealogical and more generally evolutionary cosmogonies. Their chief characteristic, as we have seen, is the continuity of principle from the beginning to the end of the cosmogonic process. The distinction between origin and order which, according to Vernant, characterizes myth is therefore not found here. Order is immanent in the world, not the product of a sovereign creator. The point of departure is not even anthropomorphic, but is an entity that, like the Pō ("night/darkness") of the Hawaiian *Kumulipo*, is no less abstract than the "unlimited" *Apeiron* of Anaximander. As in the Ionian cosmologies, it is the present that illuminates the past, given that the interpretive principle of the cosmos is borrowed from the experience of sexual generation and the interconnection of individuals and forms. The difference between Ionian and Polynesian philosophers does not therefore lie in the idea of the immanence of order, but in the very manner of conceiving of order. The Ionians' order is essentially spatial (and, according to Vernant, modeled on the space of the *polis*), that of the Polynesians is dynamic, realized in time. There

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mythic presupposition preserved by Anaximander is that this world will end and will return to the originary state of undifferentiation, which is the only state that is eternal. A new process of differentiation, followed in turn by another collapse into undifferentiation will then take place, and so on. Anaximander does not therefore totally abolish the difference between origin and order: the present is illuminated by the original and not just the original by the present. In this cosmos—as in those of other Presocratics—certain principles dominate. These are the principles of conflict, conquest, and compensation, which are found again in myths of creation, and the principle of generation by opposed elements which attract and combine the generation of parts of opposed elements, which are attracted to one another and combine with one another—a barely veiled transformation of the principle of sexual generation in comogonic genealogies (on all this, see Cornford 1971: 159, 201).

25. Not to mention that although the majority of Greeks lived in a city-state like the philosophers, they continued to believe in cosmogonies of sovereignty.

is no intrinsic reason for preferring one to the other, nor for believing that one is more mythical than the other.

In any case, were Vernant's theory true, the absence of a discontinuity of principle between origin and order in the *Kumulipo* and similar cosmogonies would have to be the ideological correlate of an isonomic social organization like that of the *polis*. In particular, these cosmogonies would have to be incompatible with kingship. On the contrary, the *Kumulipo* was produced in a Polynesian society characterized by the most developed form of sacred kingship, of which the *Kumulipo* is to the contrary one of the instruments of legitimation. More generally, the principle of social hierarchy is important in all Polynesian societies, whatever cosmogonic model they have elaborated.

How can one explain how in one case (Mesopotamia, Ancient Greece) human sovereignty is translated into a cosmogony centered on divine sovereignty, while in the other (Hawaii) this translation does not exist? Or, to put it better, why in one case do we have an analogic relation between the sovereign as the one who gives order to society and the sovereign as the one who gives order to the cosmos, while in the other case the relationship—or rather, the principal relationship—is metonymic (the human sovereign is at the terminal point of the cosmogonic process)? Naturally, it is possible to maintain that the question has been badly formulated, that, contrary to what Vernant's Durkheimian thesis assumes, there is not necessarily a direct relation between cosmogony and political organization. But it seems more likely that a relation does exist, although one that is infinitely more complex than what is supposed by the Durkheimian thesis. For example, it can be observed that genealogical ideology is extremely important in Polynesia because it justifies the king's supreme hierarchy in society, or, as in Hawaii, in the aristocratic stratum. In such a case, the relation between king and society that is projected onto the Polynesian cosmos is not the relation of command, as in Mesopotamia, but the presupposition of command, that is genealogical "seniority." There remains the fact that mythic cosmogony cannot be identified with myths of sovereignty, nor myths of sovereignty with the Babylonian or Mycenaean type, which are the only ones considered by Vernant. But above all it is clear that the idea of the immanence of order in the cosmos, which Vernant reserves for the "scientific" cosmology (*in pectore*) of the Greeks, is not necessarily related to the practice or ideal of *isonomia*. On the contrary, it can be inspired by hierarchy.

My conclusion is perhaps banal, but I hope at least to have argued it through: cosmogony's relation to social experience is as complex as its relation to other

forms of experience. The order constructed by myth is never the simple echo of a pre-existent order. On the contrary, perhaps it can be said that myth is order's principal form of existence in so-called "traditional" societies. And, in the final reckoning, *all* societies are traditional.

CHAPTER FIVE

Cultural relativism

Translated from the French by Eléonore Rimbault

Cultural diversity is a fact recognized by everyone. However, some disagreements remain as to its scope, its elucidation, and its consequences for anthropological knowledge. Two positions can be distinguished: rationalism and cultural relativism.

According to rationalism, cultural diversity presupposes the universality of certain logical processes of inference and elements of perception, without which it would be impossible to identify the utterances of the members of a culture different from ours, and therefore to raise the question of their diversity. Some thinkers, like Robin Horton (1982), go as far as arguing that one can find in every culture the same interest in explaining, predicting, and controlling events. In this perspective, every culture is a theory of the world, the specificity of which results from the application of the same basic rationality to an experience that varies as a function of social and technological conditions which are themselves definable in a universal system of reference. Cultural plurality is thus reabsorbed in a certain universality.

By contrast, relativism entirely denies universality, since it is founded on the principle that any expression, any belief, is only meaningful and valid within its context of use: "form of life" (Wittgenstein 2010), "scientific paradigm" (Kuhn 2012), or "culture." To understand an expression or an action, it must be located in this context, which implies that the latter can be known objectively. But how can we know it in our language, in our system of beliefs, if it is true that our

own convictions are only meaningful in relation to the entirety of our culture? How can one explain that one may exit one's culture to describe another? And if, on the other hand, one claims that it is truly possible to do so, how is it possible to argue simultaneously that the meaning and the validity of our culture are internal to it?

In short, by denying that any term borrowed from a culture may be applied externally, by holding that any extra-contextual use of a term is ethnocentric (Winch 2008), the contextual theory of meaning renders theoretically impossible that which it advocates: the contextualization of the expressions uttered by members of another culture. Therefore, relativism should not only dismiss as illusory the rationalist claims of using its fundamental concepts non-contextually: it should also conclude that the idea of a contextual comprehension of the members of another culture's actions and expressions is just as illusory, because it is not possible for the interpreter to rationally decide that he really has stepped out of the magic circle of his own cultural presuppositions.

Relativism and rationalism ultimately depend on two contrary theories of knowledge that must be decided between. Rationalism maintains that experience or reason, or their conjunction, are able to determine theories. This allows the theory to decontextualize, at least in part, the criteria of signification and truth, because they depend on conditions and constraints external to the world of cultural communication. Relativism insists by contrast that although there may be logical dispositions and natural perceptual segmentations, these do not matter in the determination of the criteria of signification and truth, which are matters of cultural convention (Barnes and Bloor 1982). In short, what constitutes signification and truth is the accord between what people say to each other, not between what they say and an autonomous perception and reason. This accord is crystallized in the language it uses to voice itself, and it modifies itself through the dialogues that this language makes possible. Thus there cannot be a universal truth, because there is no universal language and consequently no universal system of belief.

From these premises two relativist positions can be articulated. One of them, which traces itself to W. V. O. Quine (1960), argues that relativity only exists at the level of the interpretation of perceptual data, because different interpretations ("theories") can be equally compatible with the same data. According to the other, relativity is found in the perception itself, because the latter is influenced—in fact, constituted—by the categories of language and culture (Whorf 2012). The users of different languages and cultures belong to different and

distinct perceptual worlds. Similarly, according to Kuhn (2012) and Feyerabend (1978), if a researcher were to change his theoretical paradigm, he would perceive the world in a way entirely different from what he formerly perceived. In this perspective, lived worlds are as "incommensurable" as the epistemic paradigms that constitute them. Several objections, both theoretical and empirical, can be raised against this extreme form of relativism. It has been noted, for instance, that Benjamin Lee Whorf refuted himself (somewhat like Zeno who denied the existence of motion while walking), since he was perfectly able to provide, in English, Hopi sentences meant to illustrate the incommensurability of English and Hopi "worlds" (Davidson 2001).

On an empirical level, attempts were made to demonstrate that, contrary to Whorf's theses, color perception is not culturally variable, that it is in fact this very perception which determines linguistic categorization, rather than the other way around (Berlin and Kay 1999). This example additionally illustrates a more general idea: the fact that perception is imbued with interpretation (Hesse 1980) does not allow us to conclude that it necessarily depends on cultural categories. According to several epistemologists and psychologists, perception is to a great extent constituted by the schemes of interpretation of a "primary theory," which is presumably universal, and which culturally variable "secondary theories" presuppose (Strawson 1959; Hampshire 1982; Horton 1982).

CHAPTER SIX

Feasting and festivity

Translated from the Italian by Sarah Hill

THE END OF FEASTING

Our festivities are reduced to a shadow of what they once were. Cocktail parties and receptions are enclosed like contagious diseases within the rigid limits of a time and space measured with avarice. Oozing the ennui of carefully controlled excitement, followed by the anxious calculation of one's successes and faux pas, our modern festivities transmit an impoverished image of what festivities once were. As Jules Michelet mourned: "We don't have parties any more that expand and dilate our hearts. Such cold salons and horrible dances! It is the opposite of festivity. One is more dried up the day after, and even more haggard." ([1870] 1895: 583)

From the second half of the seventeenth century onward "the victory of work over free time in the organization of life became irreversible" (Bercé 1976: 152). But the process of rationalization begins earlier, in the field of religion. During the Council of Constance (1413), Jean Gerson had already proposed a reduction in the number of feasts, which according to him were too numerous to be adequately sanctified. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, more than one day out of three was a feast: it was inevitable that non-ritual activities (seasonal work, markets) should profane festive periods. To avoid this confusion between sacred and profane, holiday and work, the Church sought to reduce the number of feasts and to control their organisation (ibid.: 136–50). With the constitution

Universa (1627), Urban VIII reserved for Rome the right to establish feasts and limit their number. In the Protestant camp, the elimination of feasts dedicated to saints extended the time reserved for work. Montesquieu and Voltaire saw the consequences: the "marchandise catholique" was disadvantaged with respect to the "marchandise protestante" (Voltaire [1764] 1769). And it was not long before the interests of the saints were to be declared contrary to those of the people (Villette 1792).

But monarchical absolutism, the clergy, and utilitarian rationalism had already been fighting together against feasts for a century. From 1669 onwards Colbert's directives had the effect of reducing by a third the number of feasts in a large number of dioceses (Bercé 1976: 153).

For the rationalist mentality, the feast was an activity and a form of association which is not motivated by utility and therefore intrinsically subversive. The feast seems to sum up everything against which the *philosophes* fought: laziness, wastage, superstition, vice, ignorance, fanaticism, enthusiasm. . . . For Voltaire, there was no doubt that innkeepers were the ones who had prodigiously multiplied the number of feasts, above all in accordance with the tastes of the religious customs of the peasants and artisans who knew only the cult of getting drunk on saints' days. It was on those days of idleness and dissoluteness that all the crimes were committed. For Voltaire, therefore, feasts are what fill up the prisons and keep the clerks of the court and executioners in business. Voltaire believed moreover that feast-days perpetuate poverty: in Lyon feasts constrained silk-workers to idleness for eighty-two days a year. It is not festive sloth but work that "sanctifies."

Forty or so years later, the archbishop of Dijon, in a pastoral letter, seems to echo Voltaire: "The habit of work is the guarantee of morality; we become immoral only when we are unemployed; we must not sanctify festive days with the cessation of work, but with religious works; those who lament the suppression of feasts and want to celebrate them by abstaining from work sanctify them less than those who work" (quoted in Bercé 1976: 155).

And in an imperial edict, Napoleon I announced the sad age of the religion of work: "One realises how ruinous, rather than useful, is the Sunday rest; one sees in how many arts, in how many trades this interruption has regrettable effects" (quoted in ibid.: 230).

By this time, however, Rousseau had already denounced the contradictory character of a concept that seeks to reduce the social bond to pure utilitarian rationality. Taking feasts away from the people takes away their will to live and in

this way eliminates their very motivation for working (Rousseau 1759). Above all, individuals become isolated, making them "bad" (ibid.: 264), the occasions that promote sociability are eliminated and thus the foundations of society are destroyed. "Make the spectators themselves the show, make them become actors themselves; do it in such a way that each one sees and loves himself in others so that all may have stronger bonds of friendship" (ibid.: 269). Feasting was "the true cradle of all peoples"; thanks to primitive feast-days "we became milder with one another; struggling to make ourselves understood, we learned to explain ourselves" (Rousseau [1761] 1781, Italian trans.: 221). From here emerged language and the social contract.

Mindful of Rousseau, the revolution was to put an end to the traditional feast-days and festivity only to substitute for them its own (Ozouf 1976; Mastropasqua 1976; Durkheim [1912] 1965). But the revolutionary festivals managed neither to supplant the old ones nor to eliminate the conflict between festivity and utility in modern ideology. The feast continues to be seen either as an organicist utopia in a society fragmented and threatened by individualism, or as a phantasm of transgression. From both sides of the barricades, until "May '68," revolution and feasting have appeared synonymous.

THEORY OF THE FEAST

The feast as transgression

According to Freud, a "feast is excess that is permitted, or indeed offered, the solemn infraction of a prohibition. Men do not abandon themselves to excess because of some command they have received. Rather, excess is part of the nature of every feast; the festive humour is provoked by the liberty of being able to do what is otherwise prohibited" (Freud [1912–13] 1952, Italian trans.: 144). Certainly, Freud affirms that the festive sentiment coexists with its opposite; but there remains the fact that for him the feast is essentially a legitimate transgression of rules. This point of view is decidedly one-sided. In the first place, the freedom to violate the customary rules of behavior is not always associated with festive joy. To give but one example: both in Africa and Polynesia, the death of a king is followed by excesses, and by the legitimate violation of all the usual norms. However, these collective transgressions are not accompanied by joyfulness and are not in any way festive (cf., for the Hawaiian islands, Stewart [1828] 1830: 216; Ellis [1839] 1842 IV: 177). In the second place, feasts are not

necessarily transgressive. On the contrary, many festivities (corteges, processions, triumphal parades, etc.) consist in the representation of hierarchy and social values, and serve to reaffirm them solemnly (cf. Heers 1971: 13–43). Freud's theory thus takes account of only one category of feasts, or only one aspect of the feast.

The same objection applies to René Girard's theory. He, like Freud, William Robertson Smith (1972: 253–68), and Roger Caillois (1950), associates the feast with sacrifice. For Girard, the sacrifice of a scapegoat has a cathartic effect on the violence that accumulates in society and that risks destroying it: "The feast is based on an interpretation of the game of violence that presumes continuity between the sacrificial crisis and its resolution. By this time inseparable from its favourable resolution, the crisis itself becomes an object of jubilation" (Girard 1972: 172). But the nature of the violence that periodically re-forms within society only to dissolve itself once again into the act of sacrifice, remains totally mysterious.

Nor is the idea that the feast is a beneficial catharsis for society a new one. It is found in Confucius and in a letter of the Faculty of Theology in Paris (thirteenth century) that attempts to refute it: "But—they say—we behave this way for fun and not seriously, as is the ancient custom, in such a way that once a year the frivolity that is innate in us disperses outside and evaporates. Is it not perhaps true that wine-skins and barrels would often burst themselves were their orifices not opened every now and then? We are just such old wine-skins, such ruined barrels, through which the over-fermented wine of wisdom that we toil to compress for an entire year in the service of God would be dispersed in vain, were we not to abandon ourselves now and then to foolish jesting. Therefore every now and then it is necessary to joke in order then go back to maintaining wisdom more effectively" (in Migne, *Latin patrology*, CCVII, col. 1171; cf. Lucotte du Tilliot 1741: 30).

According to Georges Bataille ([1933] 1967), feasting is motivated by an immeasurable need for destruction and wastage that is satisfied in traditional society and suppressed in the bourgeois one. While the latter has made acquisition into an end in itself, in the traditional society wealth must be squandered if one wants to achieve honor and rank. The opposition between the two societies, one based on the principle of the feast, the other on its radical negation, is therefore irreducible. However, in declaring that feasting is revolutionary exactly because it is destructive, Bataille does nothing more than to take up again, in his own way, the image that the feast has assumed in the utilitarian ideology that he is combating.

The feast as spontaneous production of society

Resuscitating Rousseau and his revolutionary adherents, Michelet imagines a spontaneous feasting, in which the artificial barriers between humans and society fall, and society becomes a harmonious unity (cf. Ozouf 1976: 26–27). In the history of the revolution, "successful feasting" is for Michelet the sign of the "successful revolution." Since it establishes or restores harmony between men, the revolution cannot fail to culminate in a feast. Reciprocally, if there is no festivity, there is no revolution (Michelet [1870] 1895: 583–88).

But it is in Émile Durkheim and his pupils that Rousseau's idea of the feast as a periodic restoration of the origins of society finds its most coherent elaboration. In a famous essay, Marcel Mauss shows that two forms of association correspond to the two seasons that govern the rhythm of Eskimo life. During the summer groups are dispersed, the intensity of social links is reduced to the minimum, and rituals are few and private in nature. In winter, to the contrary, the population is concentrated together, relations and exchanges intensify, religious life is rich and collective in nature. "One can . . . represent all of winter life as a kind of long feast" (1904–05: 97). Thanks to the increased "social density" (ibid.: 128), "a chronic state of effervescence and hyperactivity" (ibid.: 125) is created in which representations and actions that justify society are spontaneously produced. Feasting is this state of effervescence in which the group becomes visible to itself as such. Durkheim ([1912] 1965) explains the feasts of Australian tribes in the same way.

But in order that the material reality, the "body" of the group, can become the symbol of its ideal identity, the latter must already exist. The material intensification of relations presupposes the social bond that it ought to explain and does not necessarily imply an increased solidarity. Mauss' and Durkheim's theory is based on a circular logic.

One of Mauss' students, Caillois, tries to take account of the festive phenomenon in terms of beliefs and representations rather than invoking "social density" or the psychological phenomenon of catharsis. In Caillois' interpretation, festive excesses recreate the originary phase of undifferentiation from which order was born. Exceptional powers are associated with the primordial age because everything then was possible. It was the age of metamorphosis: the golden age and at the same time the age of chaos, in which every form was unstable and crossed over into every other form. Periodically recreating a situation of undifferentiation, the feast reproduces the dawn of society and draws on its powers to repeat the process of forming order. But for Caillois (1950), as

for Durkheim, the festive commemoration is efficacious because it is a real, not solely symbolic, reproduction of the genesis of social order. Feasting must be defined as the "paroxysm of society" that purifies and at the same times renews.

But it is erroneous to maintain that the symbolic can be efficacious only if it is mingled with the reality that is assumed to correspond to it. Such an idea contradicts the very premises of Durkheim's theory of society.

The theories that we have briefly expounded highlight aspects of feasting that are sometimes important, but none offers a definition of it that includes all of its forms. Feasting is not necessarily transgressive, as Freud, Girard or Bataille, for different reasons, would want to have it. Nor does it necessarily recreate a state of undifferentiation and of *Gemeinschaft,* as Michelet, Durkheim, Caillois, and also Harvey Cox (1969) suppose. On the contrary, many feasts represent marked differentiations among social categories. Feasting can have a distributive function, rather than being motivated (as Bataille supposes) by a tendency toward wastage and destruction. Finally, anyone who has studied actual feasts knows that these require organization, work, and sometimes complex direction. Far from being the chaos supposed by some theorists, feasts in many societies are more often the culmination of organized activity, and justify the perpetuation of confraternities, guilds, neighborhood associations, and other forms of grouping that have a permanent endurance and a constant influence on the global society (cf., for example, Dundes and Falassi 1975 on the *palio* in Siena).

The theories that we have expounded reflect in each case the ambiguous status of feasting in modern ideology and society. Other than in sporadic cases, feasting is no longer part of our experience.

THE ESSENCE OF THE FEAST

What, then, are the differential features of feasting? There are two, it seems: first of all, feasting is *any* ritual activity related to the social organization of time; secondly, feasting is a pleasurable social activity. Obviously, the two characteristics are interdependent. Being pleasurable, a feast is recorded in memory and anticipated in the imagination: it therefore tends to repeat itself in time.

The idea that feasting is linked to the social organization of time is certainly not new. It was advanced, for example, by Henri Hubert, for whom, as for Durkheim, the sacred is simply that which is an object of prohibition ([1905] 1929: 222). The sacred is therefore necessarily indivisible and outside time: its

continuity presupposes the continuity of the prohibition. But on the other hand, the prohibition can not be continuous without preventing action: the sacred must therefore be able to be interrupted, to become divisible, without however being abolished. How then do we reconcile "divisible time and the undivided sacred that disintegrates in time" (ibid.: 196)? By means of a sacred time, rhythmic but indivisible (ibid.), that is realized in feasts. In fact, feasts continue to make their effects felt even when they are over. They therefore combine the indivisibility and the duration characteristic of the sacred with the divisibility of the profane (ibid: 225–26). The result is a rhythmic, pendular time.

But if this reasoning is valid, then rhythmic time presupposes divisible time. The feast determines a temporal form that coexists with another. Yet it is rather the case that, in the absence of measurement instruments, feasts create the very possibility of perception of a collective time, whether cyclical or irreversible, introducing collective discontinuities into individual perceptions of duration. This is recognised by Edmund Leach (1961: 134), for whom the "discontinuity of repeated contrasts" constitutes the most elementary notion of time. The sacred/profane contrast determines others of equal importance in the festive cycle. In fact, not only are feasts opposed to the intervals that separate them as the sacred is opposed to the profane, but the passage from the profane to the sacred, which opens the feast, and the passage from the sacred to the profane, which closes it, constitute another pair of contrasts. Each of these contrasts corresponds to different behaviors. The sacred is characterized by behavior that is the inverse of that of the profane to which it is opposed: the culmination of the feast is therefore associated with "role reversal"; men dress up like women, people walk backwards, etc. The same goes for the rites of entrance and exit into and out of the feast: one is characterized by "formal behavior," the other by a "masquerade." The temporal pendulum is realized therefore through behaviors that follow one another according to a prescribed order.

This outline is seductive, but difficult to accept, since its relationship to actual feasts does not seem evident. It is true that "formality," "inversion," and "masquerade" are often present together in feasts, but not necessarily in the order postulated by Leach; nor are these behaviors motivated only or even mainly by the pendular structure of time. Furthermore, Leach, like Hubert, maintains wrongly that feasts are linked only to a cyclical notion of time. On the contrary, a number of feasts constitute the reference points of an irreversible and linear time, whether in individual life (baptism, confirmation, marriage, initiation, funeral, etc.) or in collective life (victories, celebrations of peace, visits of famous

personages; marriage, coronation, death of a prince, etc.). The tendency to accentuate the importance of feasts of this type to the detriment of cyclical feasts obviously corresponds to a change in the perception of time, so it should not be surprising that this type of feast is particularly emphasized in the modern age—for example in Medicean Florence—which offered an example of this to the European courts (cf. Minor and Mitchell 1968; Jacquot 1957). But more than a radical change, we are talking about a change in the relative importance of two notions of time that we always find associated in every festive system. In fact, cyclical feasts never repeat themselves in a completely identical way: each one is individualized in collective memory. One might think in particular of Carnivals, of Mysteries, of civic festivals. Often each occurrence of these feasts is associated with an "invention," a central theme, which individualizes it, or with memorable events (for example, the visit of an important personage, the victory of a certain individual or party in a battle). The Antwerp *ommegang* and the Lord Mayor of London's parade constitute particularly eloquent examples of the association of the two temporal forms (cf. Bercé 1976: 93–111; Williams 1957).

Let us consider for example the *ommegang*. This is a procession whose circular itinerary begins and ends at the Antwerp cathedral. All the city's important organizations participate: religious confraternities, guilds, municipal builders. Spectacular floats with religious and profane subjects parade by. Alongside the fixed elements, which are repeated identically year after year (Williams 1957: 352), there are variable elements, intended to furnish interpretations of contemporary events. A theme, which subsumes even the fixed elements, gives the festival its unity every year. Contingent events are thus incorporated into the perennial framework of the festival, but the latter in turn acquires a new sense of its relation to history, the political context, and so forth.

As Williams and Jaquot have shown (1957: 362–63), the ideology of the *ommegang* (and of the 1561 one in particular) is expressed in the famous verses found in the work *Les proverbes anciens flamengs et françois correspondants de sentence les uns au autres* (1568):

> Peace engenders prosperity,
> from prosperity comes wealth,
> from wealth pride and pleasure,
> from pride ceaseless contention,
> contention entails war,
> war engenders poverty,

and poverty humility,
from humility peace returns;
thus return the deeds of man.

[Pais engendre prospérité
de prospérité vient richesse
de richesse orgueil, volupté,
d'orgueil contention sans cesse,
contention la guerre adresse,
la guerre engendre povreté,
et povreté humilité,
d'humilité revient la paix,
ainsi retournent humains faicts.]

But there is no doubt that alongside and in a dialectical relation with this cyclical notion of time, there exists another, of a time both linear and without order, that is expressed in an inscription on the first float of the procession: "That everyone should note here the course of the world. / with what inconstancy it turns at every moment: / it is the strangest of God's works, / without beginning, without end, and without foundation, / called a sea of movement by the wise" (quoted ibid.: 363).

Cyclical time and irreversible time, structure and history thus find their equilibrium in the feast, which reduces chaos, the contradictory and senseless world, to order. But in the seventeenth century, when royal power robbed the city and the countryside of festivals and concentrated them at court, this equilibrium (which the civic festival still preserves) was altered in favor of linear time, punctuated by unrepeatable events.

In France, above all, the process of expropriation of collective feasting on the part of monarchical absolutism coincided with the expropriation of all the correlatives of these festivals: the cities' financial and administrative autonomy (Bercé 1976: 113–18), freedom of association (the societies that organized festivals—for example the *Infanterie dijonnaise*, the *Cornards* of Rouen and of Evreux—were dissolved or phased out [cf. Welsford 1966: 205–12]), freedom of political critique. Royal power took over festivity, integrated it into the etiquette of court, and used it as an instrument of political propaganda.

In a society in which magnificence—always present in feasting—is still a necessary attribute of political power, this attribute must become a "virtue of

princes alone" when princes want to concentrate all power in themselves. This is underscored by Tesauro, a court writer and creator of ideas and librettos for the festivities of the Dukes of Savoy: "Among the most noble objects of Magnificence, virtue of princes alone, are numbered Popular Festivities, because Sumptuousness generates Majesty, Joviality the Love of the People" (quoted in Viale Ferrero 1965: 63). From being spectators of themselves in festivities, the people become spectators of their princes. The code of the cyclical feast disappears to leave room for new and always different inventions. The feast transforms into theatre, in which the lead actor is the prince. At the wedding festivities given by Mazzarino for the marriage of Louis XIV, for example, the king and queen danced in the opera *Ercole amante* (1660) and in the *Fêtes de Bacchus* (1651) (ibid.: 52). The young Louis had danced in Lully's *Amour malade* (1657). In the feast the king gave at Versaille in 1664, he played the part of Ruggiero (Voltaire 1751). Charles Emmanuel II was an even more versatile actor who, in the famous festivities of the court of Turin, disguised himself from time to time as a woman, a clown, Hercules, the King of the Alps, a Turk, Achilles, etc. (Viale Ferrero, 1965). At the end of the seventeenth century, court festivities, already eminently theatrical, ended by losing ground in relation to true theatre, particularly the theatre of opera (cf. ibid.: 63–65).

The entire process is clear. At first collective feasting is expropriated by the king and the court becomes a theatre in which actors and spectators are conflated. In the end, the court itself becomes spectator. The ceremonial is increasingly distinguished from the feast, the actors from the spectators, the real from the imaginary. Feasting is driven into the closed and increasingly shameful spaces of the theatre. Not much time was to pass, however, before the theatre was also to be entrusted with the function of being a "mirror of reality." From the seventeenth century onwards, then, there is a progressive reduction of the space and time left to the imaginary. Energy is increasingly concentrated on work and serious activities. The term for this process is "Realism," in which the spectacle, the last, pallid reflection of the feast, is charged with sanctifying day-to-day squalor on stage.

The transformation that we have outlined briefly coincides with a transformation of social time, which, from being predominantly cyclical and reversible, becomes predominantly irreversible and mathematicized. Wristwatches from Geneva have taken over our festivities. Between the mathematical time of the watch-maker god and the solitary, subjective perception of time, the mediation of the social time of feasting has become minimal.

There is no doubt that the feast, whatever form it may take, is associated with the fruition of a certain pleasure. But to claim that this pleasure derives from the transgression of normal rules of behavior is to isolate arbitrarily an aspect of the feast that can never be totally dominant.

A totally transgressive feast, in which the only rule was the suspension of every rule, would not in fact be associated with pleasure, but with anxiety. "None does offend, none, I say, none" (Shakespeare, *King Lear,* Act IV, scene vi): the absolute lack of differentiation between good and bad, king and fool, is tragic, not festive, because it entails the suspension of every social bond. The latter entails the absence of all predictability in the behavior of one's neighbor and thus a great deal of tension. At its extreme limits, the "transgressive" conception of the feast coincides with the absurd idea of a purely individual and private kind of feasting. To the contrary, feasting is characterized by the increased predictability of one's neighbor's behavior, and by a more intense social solidarity, which manifests itself in regulated activities that cannot be explained by a simple emotional state.

There is always a difference between the rules of feasting and the rules of daily life, but not necessarily a relationship of inversion. Feasting can oppose itself to "normal" society or, on the contrary, represent it in a synthetic and ideal form in which it becomes easily perceptible as a totality. In both cases, feasting is an experience of transparency, an increase in meaning whose effects extend into "normal" society. If in fact meaning consists in the perception of relations, a decrease in the obstacles that prevent us from perceiving these relations constitutes an increase of meaning.

Feasting is exactly such an increase in the perception of relations since it unites in experience that which is normally separated: spirit and material, superior and inferior parts of the body (cf. Bakhtin 1968), before and behind, right and left, high and low, king and fool, the fragmented parts of self and society.

It is not by chance that the central character of the feast should be a representation of totality, of the unity of categories that are normally separated. Carnival is at the same time king and fool, "madman" and wise man. Carnival is a scapegoat which represents the death and rebirth of the community (Welsford 1966: 69 ff.; Toschi [1955] 1976: ch. VII-IX; Frazer 1911–15]), uniting life and death and revealing their profound relationship. Carnival masks represent the dead reunited with the living (Toschi [1955] 1976: 166–72]).

Originally an infernal character (ibid.: 196–208), Harlequin is, more than any other masked character, a symbol of festive totalization, which is symbolized

by his costume itself, sewn with different-coloured pieces and scraps of material. Harlequin is the trickster who reintegrates the vestiges of order, who unites that which is separated. If he introduces disorder, it is to create a different order. A symbol of totality, Harlequin is often represented as a hermaphrodite (Willeford 1969: 181). The meaning of the fool or the madman, often at the centre of feasting, is the same (ibid.: 59).

Holbein, in his illustrations for Erasmus' *In praise of folly* (1509), represents the fool in the act of contemplating his own image in a mirror or in the doll attached to his scepter (Saxl 1943). These designs seem to stage the essence of feasting itself, which not only renders visible that which is invisible, but reconciles the self to the other. The latter is revealed to consciousness by the discrepancy between the internal and external images of the self. It is in recognizing one's self in others and others in one's self that one enters into the festive spirit; and it is for this reason that feasting consists of an increase in solidarity and renews the social bond.

The transgressive aspect of the feast should therefore be seen as a reflection of its fundamental characteristic, which is the creation of a transparent totality of relations. If in the feast separations fall away and chaos seems sometimes to infiltrate its way into the cosmos, it is not because the feast is the negation of order, but because it represents order as totality. It is therefore necessary that what is set apart as dangerous and rejected as disorder in daily life should be part of feasting.

If the essence of feasting consists in the immediate and unimpeded experience of relations that we are not permitted or not easily able to perceive in day-to-day reality, one must suppose that pleasure, with which it is always associated, is produced by this experience.

In many cases, this is analogous to the pleasure that a witty remark sets off. According to Freud (1905), the latter consists in the unification of representations that are normally kept separate. The pleasure that derives from it is produced by the "economy" of psychic energy necessary to keep these representations separated. The energy is freed, if it is already present, or is saved, if it is about to be used.

But it is not necessary to suppose that the unification (or association) of representations that are normally separated is transgressive, and that its only function consists in the liberation of unconscious contents. The cognitive dimension of feasting is more important than its transgressive element, even when this element exists.

More profoundly, festive pleasure can be compared to aesthetic pleasure, as Franciscus Hemsterhuis describes it. According to him, the soul judges most beautiful that from which it can form an idea in the shortest possible time. This actually derives from the dialectic between a "reduced model" (Lévi-Strauss [1962] 1966)—in which separate things are perceived as a whole—and daily experience, which determines separations and oppositions.

Feasting constitutes a "reduced model" of society, but never simply its "icon," even if inverted as is a mirror image. Like a work of art, festivity has a complex relationship with reality. It is not simply the reproduction or inversion of meaning, but—in totalizing experiences that are normally separated—it gives meaning to that which in daily life escapes it. Between the festive world and the day-to-day world there is a relationship of complementarity.

More than as an autonomous institution, feasting can be defined as a ritual activity in which traits (like aesthetic pleasure and the scansion of time) that are present in other ritual activities become predominant and thus distinctive. For this reason, it is in a global theory of ritual that the differential traits of feasting and the deep bond that links them can find their fullest explanation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The fetish

Translated from the Italian by Sarah Hill

WORD ASSOCIATION AND THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

The term "fetish" comes from the Portuguese *feitiço,* which was in turn derived from the Latin *factitius.* In the accepted usages of its original adjectival forms, *feitiço* means, like the Latin term, "artificial," and, beyond that, "false, feigned, unnatural" (cf. Vieira 1873). Turned into a noun, the term has taken on the sense of "witchcraft, sorcery, necromancy, philtre, enchantment, magic" (ibid.). In Castilian, the corresponding word—*hechizo*—underwent a parallel evolution (Corominas 1954–57, II: 862).

It was in its substantive sense (for example, with the meaning "enchanted object") that *feitiço* was adopted from the seventeenth century onwards in English and French, and was introduced into Charles de Brosses' intellectual lexicon (1760). Yet the connection with *facticius* seems never to have been lost and to have survived at the preconscious level. De Brosses himself often uses *fétiche* as an adjective (for example in the very title of his book: *Du culte des dieux fétiches*) in contexts in which it inevitably evokes the notion of "fictitious."

The history of the notion of the fetish perhaps illustrates a law of discourse: when a word assumes a meaning that is increasingly vague and extended, the concept with which it was intentionally associated disintegrates under the impact of the uncontrolled and subconscious associations that language imposes.

In this case, however, language seems to reflect a real property of fetishistic phenomena and to demand that we reflect on that property.

I will explain successively four theories (those of De Brosses, Comte, Marx, and Freud) that function as paradigms for the majority of the discussions on fetishism. I will then show that, notwithstanding their differences, these theories agree on a fundamental point. Finally, having explained the reasons for misunderstandings of the fetishistic phenomenon on the part of modern ethnology, I will attempt to show that objects that can be called fetishes exist and to indicate their meaning.

FOUR THEORIES OF FETISHISM

De Brosses

De Brosses' *Du culte des dieux fétiches* elaborates an "anthropological" theory of religion, in opposition to the "theological" theory of the "mythologists" (like Banier). The latter, supposing an original revelation, considered idolatry, sabeism (the cult of the stars), and so on, as perversions in which objects that functioned as symbols of the divinity lose their symbolic nature and accommodate a "direct" cult (cf. De Brosses 1760: 189–90 and 278 ff.). Even while admitting, hypocritically, to an original revelation, in which God had bridged "the immense gap between divine nature and human nature" (ibid.: 207), De Brosses asserts that with the Fall, man finds himself having to begin again from nothing, that is, from his own nature. It is therefore in human nature and its evolution that we must search for the roots of humanity's religious ideas. "It is necessary to study man not in possibilities but in man himself: it is not a question of imagining that which he could have or should have done, but of looking at what he has done" (ibid.: 285). Now, both the actual history of what man has done and the awareness of man's nature (ibid.: 202) lead him to conclude that the "mythological" theory inverts the effective order of intellectual evolution.

In effect, the progress of humanity and its ideas corresponds to the process of abstraction: "The human spirit elevates itself by degrees from the inferior to the superior: an idea of that which is perfect is formed by means of abstractions drawn from that which is imperfect: slowly the more noble part of a human being separates from the rougher part: increasing and reinforcing the idea that it forms of that which is perfect, the human spirit applies that idea to the

Divinity" (ibid.: 207). The most elevated idea of divinity can be found, therefore, not at the beginning but at the end of human history.

What, then, was the religion of primitive man? Anthropology (a term which, however, De Brosses does not use) indicates that the fundamental "affections" of humanity are fear, wonder, recognition, and reasoning. Among primitive peoples, the first two affections (or "feelings"), and in particular fear, with its correlate, hope, are dominant. We are speaking of affections related to that which is the object of human needs, or which is linked to the desire to prevail over other men.

Primitive man worries only about the "different and contrary eventualities of human life." His lack of power makes him anxious, and sets his imagination to work—an imagination that "employs itself in forming an idea of certain powers superior to his own, which do what he cannot do, from the moment that they know and uphold the causes of which he does not have the power to determine the effects" (ibid.: 215). So, on one side fear drives man to transcend the visible, supposing the existence of invisible powers; on the other, his senses drive him to fix his attention on visible objects. He therefore finds himself caught between two contradictory tendencies (two operations that are "opposed and simultaneous," as De Brosses calls them) which are reflected in his conception of objects that elicit his fear and hope. He associates invisible power with the visible object without distinguishing the material object from the intelligent power which he, in the rough structure of his reasoning, supposes to be contained within it. In situations in which "chance, or unforeseeable accidents" dominate, this way of thinking is accentuated: the more the object reveals the powerlessness of a man, the more he conceives of it as endowed with the power that he wants to obtain or by which he fears being oppressed. De Brosses notes that in uncontrollable situations (in games of chance, in war, at sea) man tends to become more superstitious. Not only this, but uncertainty also determines the extreme multiplication of the number of invisible powers: "Since in this way of thinking it is natural to attribute to them only a power that is limited to certain effects, albeit superhuman ones, it also becomes natural to multiply the number of them so that it corresponds to the extreme variability of events" (ibid.: 219).

Strange, abnormal, unforeseeable situations therefore tend to be the ones that are "divinized" rather than situations that are normal and therefore controllable (cf. ibid.: 20, 46–48, etc.). This anthropological deduction of the original religion is confirmed by facts furnished by history and by travellers' tales. De

Brosses takes as a paradigm of these facts the West African cult of objects which travellers called "fetishes."

Fetishes are "of animals or inanimate terrestrial beings" (ibid.: 61) and, more generally, any object endowed with divine qualities: oracles, amulets, talismans preservatives, and so on (ibid.: 10–11). De Brosses distinguishes between fetishism and idolatry: while the first deifies natural objects, the second yields a cult of "works of art that represent other objects, which are those to which the worshipper really devotes himself" (ibid.: 64).

Fetishism thus does not distinguish between signifier and signified, between the human world and the natural world, and, in the final analysis, between experience (defined sensualistically) and desire. Above all, fetishism is characterized by the absence of the signifying function: as soon as a natural object becomes a sign of something else, it is no longer a fetish (cf. ibid.: 147). Paradoxically, the absence of artificial or natural signs produces an artificialization of nature, which is perceived fictitiously as a humanized world. In other words, the artificial passes from the sphere of the sign, where it is absent or disregarded, to the sphere of nature.

Comte

According to Auguste Comte, the "fictitious" nature of fetishism is found in the entire "theological" phase of evolution, of which fetishism constitutes the first stage (1844, Italian trans.: 3). Comte thus clarifies one of the implications of De Brosses' theory: although fetishism may be only a particular form of religion, it is the form that best reveals its essence (cf. 1830–42, Italian trans. I: 461–62).

Fetishism corresponds to man's *spontaneous* cognitive activity and thus to that which is inscribed in his nature, independently of the reflection that is historically developed (cf. Lévy-Bruhl 1900: 48). Its spontaneity determines its three fundamental characteristics: it is a form of empirical and not generalizing knowledge; it tends to look for causes and not laws; it presupposes the only knowledge that does not derive from any other, that is, the knowledge of oneself, of one's own activity. As a consequence, fetishes have three characteristics: they are concrete objects and not classes; they are determined by an internal causality; and this causality is akin to the human causality and for this reason is conceived as essentially affective, given the preponderance of affective life over intellectual life in spontaneous activity (cf. Comte 1851–54; 1830–42).

The preponderance of affective life renders fetishistic representations fictitious, but it makes them the inevitable point of departure for every cognitive

activity (1851–54, III: 126, 89) whenever intellectual reflection cannot intervene or is incapable of furnishing a rational explanation of phenomena. Fetishism therefore offers a provisional synthesis, in expectation of a "positive synthesis" in which the relationship between intellect and affectivity—and, correlatively, the relationship between man and nature—are reversed (cf. Canguilhem 1968). This in fact allows the correspondence between man and nature to be realized, attributing to natural phenomena, and particularly to inorganic ones, characteristics that are immediately known to man. Consequently, it humanizes nature. Science, by contrast, explains the human phenomena starting from natural phenomena and, in the final analysis, inorganic ones. This reversal permits the actual realization of the practical synthesis between man and nature that fetishism (that is, human desire) fictitiously anticipated. It is in fact the intellect, not the affective faculty, that allows for the mastery of nature.

The positive synthesis can never reconstitute, however, that "particular feeling of complete satisfaction" that is the characteristic of the fictitious synthesis, in which "the external world is presented naturally to the spectator in perfect harmony that can never again be found to the same degree, and that must produce in him a particular feeling of complete satisfaction, which today we are not able to describe well. . . . It is easy to understand how this exact, intimate correspondence between the world and man must link us profoundly to fetishism" (Comte 1830–42, Italian trans. I: 463–64).

Fetishism therefore is not only an evolutionary phase; it is also a function that constitutes part of human nature, and that is present in everyone's experience. The same functions are found in every evolutionary phase, but in different proportions. What allows a phase to be characterized as "fetishistic" or "polytheistic" and so forth is the *dominance* of one function over the other. More precisely, one can say that when an "order of fundamental notions" is extended to moral and social ideas, which constitute the most specific and complicated field of intellectual life, there is a new "mental regime" (ibid.: 454).

This, very succinctly, is the Comtian paradigm. It should be noted that even here, fetishism is, in the final analysis, characterized by "fiction." Comte considers it a "fictitious synthesis" that does not correspond to the real laws of nature. But—unlike De Brosses—he transcends the level of representation in order to isolate that which motivates it, and which for him remains constant in human evolution. In effect, realized in different representations, the desire for a harmonious relationship with nature is part of the very essence of man and therefore is not fictitious.

Marx

As has been noted, Karl Marx maintains that the quantitative equivalence between commodities that have heterogeneous use values would not be possible if a *qualitative* equivalence did not exist between them, if they were not all forms of appearance of a single substance, labor, which renders them comparable and therefore exchangeable. Exchange does not thereby create value, but manifests it ([1867] 1990). Nevertheless, and paradoxically, the form in which value manifests itself is also the condition of concealment of its true nature.

While in fact, according to Marx, the use value of a commodity is immediately perceptible in the commodity itself, its exchange value is immaterial and is perceptible only in a relationship: when one commodity stands for the equivalent of another (ibid.: 148–49). But if the value of a commodity is independent of its use value, of its corporeity (if it is something immaterial) how can it be perceived without the aid of something material that acts as a signifier for it? It is from this need for the intervention of the material as a sign of the immaterial that the "metaphysical subtleties" of a commodity are derived: the possibility of perceiving its value, but also of distorting it fetishistically (ibid.: 143).

In effect, in the value relation, the material object—that is, the use value of a commodity that acts as an equivalent (commodity B)—becomes the sign, the "figure," of the value of the commodity that is equated with it (commodity A): "By means of the value relation . . . the natural form of commodity B becomes the value-form of commodity A, in other words the physical body of commodity B becomes a mirror for the value of commodity A" (ibid.: 144). A is the *Wertkörper* of B.

Supposing, for example, that commodity A is a certain quantity of fabric and that commodity B is a suit: "The value of the commodity linen is therefore expressed by the physical body of the commodity coat, the value of one by the use-value of the other. As a use-value, the linen is something palpably different from the coat; as a value, it is identical with the coat, and therefore looks like the coat" (ibid.: 143). "The use value becomes the form of appearance of its opposite, value" (ibid.: 148).

This also explains why exchange, which is the condition for perceiving value, should also be the cause for concealing its true nature: the form in which it manifests itself is confused with its essence (labor). Once the equivalent form of value has the corporeity of a signifier, value—which is a social relation—can be naturalized and one can believe that the materiality of the commodity that functions as an equivalent "possesses by nature a form of value." Even the coat,

for example, "seems to be endowed with its equivalent form, its property of direct exchangeability, by nature, just as much as its property of being heavy or its ability to keep us warm. Hence the mysteriousness of the equivalent form, which only impinges on the crude bourgeois vision of the political economist when it confronts him in its fully developed shape, that of money" (ibid.: 149).

If indeed the mysterious character of the form of value already exists in its simple form, it is in its generalized form that it imposes itself on consciousness. In their generalized form, all concrete labors are reduced to abstract labor, to commodity, and find a monetary expression (that is, they are all expressed by a commodity that functions as a general equivalent).

It is therefore in an economy based on the commodification of all human labor (every product of labor is exchangeable with every other), in turn based on the idea of equality (the labor of all humans has the same value [ibid.: 151]), that the common essence of the value of commodities becomes more easily perceptible, but at the same time more easily fetishizable. In fact, the universal equivalent (money) expresses the value of all other commodities, and therefore of all human labors; but this property, which is social, can be mistaken for a natural one, given the material character of the money-form. This leads to the fetishistic belief that the source of value lies in money and not work. This belief corresponds to the mode of perceiving value that is made possible by a society in which the exchange of work ("crystallized" into objects) between humans appears as an exchange between commodities:

> Objects of utility become commodities only because they are the products of the labour of private individuals who work independently of each other. The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labour of society. Since the producers do not come into social contact until they exchange the products of their labour, the specific social characteristics of their private labours appear only within this exchange. (ibid.: 165)

But,

> Men do not therefore bring the products of their labour into relations with each other as values because they see these objects merely as the material integuments of homogenous human labour. The reverse is true: by equating their different products to each other in exchange as values, they equate their different kinds of labour as human labour. They do this without being aware of it. (ibid.: 166–67)

If we follow Marx's argument rigorously, we must conclude that, just as a simple form and a generalized form of the value relation exist, so do a simple form and a generalized form of fetishism. Marx defines the nucleus of fetishism as something that is inherent to the very expression of value, to the necessary dialectic between the material and the immaterial. The illusion of fetishism would consist in mistaking the material inasmuch as it is a signifier of an immaterial value (the social relation) with the materiality of value (ibid.: 112–13). This idea of Marx's has its antecedent in Kant (fetishism as the confusion of the natural and the supernatural) and in Hegel (fetishism as a consequence of the necessity for thought to have "something objectual" with which to think), and seems to anticipate a semiotic analysis of the commodities (Marx speaks of a "language of commodities") (ibid.: 143).

With the generalization of the production of commodities, however, there is not a simple generalization of the confusion between signified and signifier (which can be called "fetishism of the signifier"). Between simple fetishism and generalized fetishism, in fact, an alienation of the worker from the products of his work and the means of production takes place.

The generalized fetishism of commodities is therefore something very different from its simple form: unlike the latter, not only is it part of the global ideological construction (political economy), but it corresponds to an historically determined form of production.

Nevertheless, in his argument Marx de facto reduces simple fetishism to its generalized form. It is indeed in the latter that the confusion of the signifier and the signified reveals itself for what it really is: a confusion of subject and predicate, a misrecognition of labor for its product.

In this way, however, Marx opens himself up to two criticisms. On the one hand, the argument that reduces the fetishistic ideology of bourgeois society to a generalization of simple fetishism—in turn a mechanical reflection of the generalization of the production of commodities—is not very convincing. On the other hand, a phenomenon of more general significance than a specific form of production (the "reification" of the signified similar to Mauthner's "fetishism of words" [1901–02, I: 150–59]), is reduced by contrast to a generically pre-capitalist form of production. Marx thus disregards the properly cognitive character—not immediately reducible to a social determination—of the "simple" fetishism of the commodity.

These (and other) ambiguities in Marx make us sense his lack of a theory that distinguishes and adequately articulates cognitive, ideological, and

economic levels. They force us to conclude that the Marxist notion of fetishism covers, in a rather confused way, different phenomena, on which Marx provides intuitions that are often brilliant and profound, but that cannot be considered a coherent "theory" of fetishism. In the same way as Comte, Marx dissolves the notion of the fetish, giving it such a vast range and such an imprecise meaning as to allow it no invariant connotation save that of "fictitious objectivization."

Finally, it should be noted that by reducing the fetishism of the commodity to the fetishism of value, to alienation, Marx ignores those aspects of the fetishism of commodities which his analysis in terms of the signifier seems to leave open: that is, a fetishism that one might call a fetishism of "use value," in which signifying relations based on objects present themselves as a propensity, inherent in their nature, to satisfy "needs" (cf. Baudrillard 1972).

Freud

Of the four paradigms of fetishism under consideration, that represented by Sigmund Freud refers to a phenomenon of an outwardly limited scope. The rigor with which it is explained, however, brings to light mechanisms of general importance that transcend the sphere of sexuality. Freud treated fetishistic perversion directly in two brief articles, one written in 1927, the other in 1938.

In the first article, he maintains that the formation of a fetish is linked to the castration anxiety that is manifested when the little boy, on first seeing the female sexual organ, discovers that "a woman has no penis" ([1927] 1959: 199). The "enormous majority" overcome this anxiety (which also needs to be associated with a real or phantasmatic threat of castration by the father in order to manifest itself ([1938] 1959: 373–74]), and accept the difference between the sexes. Those who do not overcome it remain in a neurotic condition in which belief in the phallic woman—who constitutes a guarantee against the terror of castration, but also blocks or disturbs the development of a normal sexuality—perpetuates itself.

In fetishistic perversion, the perception that belies the infantile belief in the woman's phallus is not negated; but the belief is displaced onto an object (the fetish) that renders it invulnerable (ibid.: 374). Fetishism does not therefore involve an hallucination (as Comte, for example, believed); it does not alter the representation, but repudiates its reality.

In fact, it is not correct to say that the little boy, after having observed a woman, has maintained his belief in the woman's phallus with no modification.

He has maintained it, but he has also abandoned it (*aufgegeben*); in the conflict between the weight of an undesired perception and the force of his counter-desire he has arrived at a compromise, something that is possible only under the dominion of unconscious thought, of primary processes. Certainly, in the psyche the woman nevertheless has the penis, but this penis is no longer the one it was before. Something else has taken its place, has been designated its substitute, so to speak, and has now become heir to the interest that was directed towards it previously. Furthermore this interest increases extraordinarily, because, in the creation of this substitute the terror of castration has erected a memorial of itself. The estrangement (*Entfremdung*) from the real genital organs of the woman, which is always found in the fetishist, remains as an indelible stigma of the removal that was produced.

It can now be seen that the fetish is "a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it; it also saves the fetishist from being a homosexual by endowing women with the attribute which makes them acceptable as sexual objects" ([1927] 1959: 200).

The fetish is therefore a substitute for the phallus, but it is not always its iconic reproduction. Often the object of the impression that precedes the traumatizing experience becomes a fetish. This explains why shoes, feet, underwear, and so on, which the gaze of the little boy encounters from below, before the traumatic discovery of the female sexual organ, function as fetishes. In all cases, the fetish—sometimes in its very making—reflects at one and the same time denial and affirmation of the woman's castration. This corresponds to the coexistence of two opposite attitudes (tenderness and hostility) as regards the fetish (cf. Smirnoff 1970: 44), in turn a manifestation of a splitting of the "ego" (*Ich-spaltung*) that Freud discusses in his incomplete article of 1938.

The nucleus of a splitting of the "ego" occurs when "a conflict between the demand of the instinct and the command of reality" is produced in the little boy ([1938] 1959: 372). The boy chooses neither the one nor the other, or rather chooses both. "On the one hand, with the help of certain mechanisms he rejects reality and refuses to accept any prohibition; on the other hand, in the same breath he recognizes the dangers of reality, takes over the fear of that danger as a symptom and tries subsequently to divest himself of the fear" ([1938] 1959: 373).

The formation of the synthetic function of the "ego" is therefore disturbed. Freud illustrates these mechanisms with a clinical case. A three or four-year old little boy becomes aware of the female genital organs by being seduced by an

older girl. After the end of their relations, he prolongs his sexual stimulation through masturbation. His governess catches him in the act and threatens him with castration by his father. The threat reactivates the unease provoked by the moment of discovering that the phallus is absent in the little girl. "The little boy now thinks he understands why the girl's genitals showed no sign of a penis and no longer ventures to doubt that his own genitals may meet with the same fate. Thenceforth he cannot help believing in the reality of the danger of castration" ([1938] 1959: 374).

The usual consequence (the one that is considered socially "normal") of castration anxiety is that the boy gives in to the threat and thus renounces either totally or partially the satisfaction of impulse; he no longer touches his genital organs. In the clinical case considered by Freud, however, the patient extricated himself from these difficulties differently. "He created a substitute for the penis which he missed in women, that is to say, a fetish. In so doing, it is true that he had given lie to reality, but he had saved his own penis. So long as he was not obliged to acknowledge that women have lost their penis, there was no need for him to believe the threat that had been made against him: he need have no fears for his own penis, so he could proceed with his masturbation undisturbed" ([1938] 1959: 374).

But this "sly" way of dealing with reality carries with it a contradictory tendency: on one side the boy continues his masturbation as if he were not putting his own penis in danger; on the other he displays a symptom that demonstrates that despite everything he does believe in this danger. Thus, simultaneous with the creation of the fetish, a strong castration anxiety appears, that the boy can only compensate for with a total mobilization of his masculinity.

The fundamental characteristic of fetishism is therefore that it permits the recognition and the disregarding of reality at one and the same time. For this reason it is differentiated from psychosis, which is a pure and simple repudiation of reality (Khan 1970: 99–103). The price that the fetishist pays, however, is a splitting of his ego. In fact, on the one hand the fetish serves to save his ego by creating a defence against the recognition of infantile traumas and the threats of disintegration of his personality that derive from this recognition. On the other hand, this threatens even the loss of the ego because it submits it totally to the object (the fetish). In effect, "thanks to a tour de force of psychic functioning, the fetishist creates in his infancy a unitary imago which dates from experiences and characters that belong to two different personalities: the 'self' and the object." (ibid.: 102; cf. Smirnoff 1970: 47).

COMPARISON OF THE PARADIGMS

The differences between De Brosses, Comte, Marx, and Freud are too evident for it to be necessary to underline them, but they share something less evident: all of them—in particular Freud and Marx—conceive of the fetish as an object made up of a contradictory relationship with reality, as a fictitious representation (of the neurotic or of society) that however also makes possible (or bearable) a *true* representation.

The contradictory character of the fetish is particularly underlined by Freud, but it can also be found in Marx's theory. For the latter, the fetishism of the commodity allows the reality of value to be simultaneously recognized and misapprehended. It recognizes in fact the existence of a single value-substance that renders commodities comparable, but it misapprehends the fact that this substance is human labor. It can therefore be at the same time socially efficacious and mystifying. The reality of value is not denied; that which is denied by means of the creation of a fetish (money etc.)—which protects it from any negation to which experience could lay it open—is the social relation that subtends that reality.

Even for Comte fetishism contains at one and the same time a false judgment (the world is guided by human motivations) and a true judgment (nature is characterized by activity). The "fetishistic synthesis," although false in itself, anticipates a true relation between man and nature, and above all, constitutes an initial conceptual frame that makes the gathering and classification of positive observations possible. Furthermore, fetishistic ideas allow for the functioning of a first embryo of society, because they constitute common notions that allow men to understand and associate with one another.

For De Brosses (as for Kant) fetishism is based on a confusion between natural and supernatural. Unlike the other authors discussed, he does not however recognize in fetishism the perception of any reality save that of uncontrollable situations.

All four of the authors considered have in common the relatively simple idea that fetishism brings with it the confusion of something human with something nonhuman, or even something animate with something inanimate. Freud's position, however, is more complex: there is fetishism when amorous over-valuation is concentrated on certain attributes of the person who is loved which are detached from that person to become the only objects of sexual desire (cf. Smirnoff 1970: 42–52). In this way a rupture in the love-object is produced which is correlated with the rupture of the subject.

For Freud, as for Marx, the genesis of fetishism resides definitively in the "fictitious" separation of the part from the whole. For Marx, the value of a commodity is nothing but an attribute of the human labor that produced it and that encompasses it. The attribute, separated from its human substance, becomes a fetish. For Freud, the fetishist fictitiously separates the attribute of the person loved from the totality of that person.

But there is also a fundamental difference between Marx and Freud: the totality to which Freud refers is always the *person,* while for Marx the totality is the *species* (*Gattungswesen*): the abstract labor that constitutes the essence—the species of man. If it can be said that the capitalist is socially "perverse" because he over-values in the other only the attribute that can be detached and appropriated, that is, his labor-power, can it not also be said that there is something perverse in the Marxist idea that abstract labor (perceptible only through that which is detachable from the worker, the commodity) is the essence of man? And, more generally, is there not always something fundamentally perverse when, in human relations, a "human essence" is separated from the concrete totality of the person? The normative model of "health," for an individual as for society, is constituted by the integrity of the other, the condition of the integrity of the self.

THE SYSTEM AND THE FETISH

In his *Gifford Lectures* (1889; 1892), Max Müller noted that the word fetishism—"whatever that may mean" (1876: ix)—had taken on such disparate and even contradictory meanings as to render its elimination from the science of religions necessary. A true "superstition" of fetishism had developed among travellers, missionaries, and anthropologists, who, ignorant of the languages and systems of ideas of the populations they were describing, or moved by apologetic motivations, "were fetishizing" any religious phenomenon that they did not approve or understand. For this reason Müller proposed to reject the notion of "fetishistic religion." With a certain delay, anthropologists have accepted his point of view and have put a professional taboo on the term "fetishism." Such radical conversions are suspect however: both the censure of fetishism and its immoderate use betray perhaps a denial of the same kind.

J. B. Pontalis (1970: 13) has in fact astutely noted that the attitude of ethnologists as regards fetishism is analogous to the mechanism of the *Verleugnung*

that lies at the basis of fetishism. That is, it takes the form of a judgement of this type: "it is not true, and yet. . . ." They thus begin by saying that fetishism is a pseudo-concept to leave to missionaries and colonial administrators ("it is not true"), but end by admitting, like Alfred Adler (1970) that nevertheless there do perhaps exist in a culture objects that function like fetishes (in the Freudian sense).

Let us leave to Pontalis the task of psychoanalyzing the ethnologists: what explains, on the purely conceptual level, their ambivalent, if not contradictory, attitude towards fetishism, which consists in negating its existence a priori, but, meanwhile, having to recognize it as a strongly rooted ethnographic residue?

In order to understand fetishism, it is necessary to take account of the dialectic between two points of view on religious phenomena that have been in a state of encounter and interpenetration since the eighteenth century. The first constitutes a tradition that—if we leave aside its antecedents—begins with Fontenelle and culminates in Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. According to this tradition, religion accounts for regularity. The second point of view—introduced by David Hume and Adam Smith—maintains instead that religion does not explain that which, being regular, seems to carry on by itself without needing to be justified, but rather explains irregular, singular, phenomena resulting from chance.

This viewpoint was taken up in De Brosses' and Comte's theories (cf. Canguilhem 1968: 89–94; Lévy-Bruhl 1900: 49), though they exhausted it by extending it too far. Above all, the Comtian theory of fetishistic religion postulates a phase of the history of consciousness in which all phenomena appear unique, in which regularity does not exist.

The reaction to Comte was relatively minor, and with the growing popularity of theories on religion that considered the latter as an explanation of the natural and social order, "irregular," "exceptional" phenomena, and along with them "fetishes," were relegated to a subordinate position. Thus Müller—who contributed more than anyone else to destroying the idea of a "fetishistic religion"—thinks that the notion of the fetish might be preserved to designate "objects of fortuitous origin that possess miraculous powers" (1889: 160). E. B. Tylor considers fetishism a subordinate stratum of animistic religion "or rather the doctrine of spirits incorporated in material objects, or attached to them, or acting through them" and he looks for their origin in a turn of mind similar to that which "makes Englishmen collect rare stamps or sticks from bizarre landscapes." (1871, Italian trans.: 144–45).

According to Herbert Spencer ([1873] 1877), it is the unusual and irregular nature of certain objects that makes them into fetishes: the notion that a ghost, which inhabits the object, corresponds to this strangeness is a derived, not a primary one.

The Durkheimian school deprives the notion of fetishism of the limited space that the English school had left it. To Müller, Tylor, and Spencer who associate fetishism with the chance object that is striking for its strangeness and its exceptional character, Mauss opposes another point of view: "The object that functions as a fetish is never, whatever may be said about it, just any object, chosen arbitrarily, but is always defined by the code of magic and religion" ([1908] 1969: 217).

But if the fetish-object is no longer paradoxical in any way, if it is a function of the code of magic and religion, then there is no reason to distinguish it from other signifying objects. "Fetishism" no longer designates either the totality of religion or a particular residual dimension of it. It is only "an immense misunderstanding" (ibid.: 245).

Mauss and his successors, influenced by Saussure, substitute the notion of the arbitrariness of the sign for the arbitrariness of the fetish-object ([1929] 1969: 470): the signifying relation is never motivated by events that transcend the code.

The problem of fetishism has therefore been excluded from ethnology on the one hand because fetishism was defined as a thought that gives meaning to that which is irregular, and on the other hand because a theory was imposed for which there is no meaning outside of a "code" and because therefore no objects exist whose meaning is "unique." Fetishism is thus dissolved by the semiological model.

In more recent years, however, and significantly in Great Britain where the tradition initiated by Hume continues underground, some anthropologists (for example Turner 1969; Douglas 1966, 1975) have attempted to confront the problem of paradoxical and marginal phenomena that seem to transcend the code. Since these phenomena elude a model (like that of the French sociological school) based on inclusion among classes, the British theorists explain them in terms of intersections among classes and maintain that they are associated with "diffuse powers" that would be reutilized by the system (for example, in the form of sanctions against violations of order). But such an approach, however interesting, does not explain the irreducible paradox that certain objects and events represent. It limits itself, in fact, to considering irregularities at the

level of the species. But a fetish object, even when its membership in a species is recognized, is always sacralized as individual, inasmuch as it is linked to an unrepeatable event. The stamps that are cancelled the day after their release are identical to those that are cancelled the day after that, but only the first are the objects of a fetishistic behavior. The copy of a painting by Titian can be perfect or even better than the original, but the value of the latter is not aesthetic, but rather consists in being unique, in the fact that it is the real residue, not the mere symbol, of the unrepeatable situation in which Titian produced it.

The fetishes of "primitive" society are characterized by the same integral individuality and irreducibility that ethnologists cannot fail to recognize. So, among the Nuer and the Dinka, fetishes are objects acquired individually and serve individual ends. They are amoral in their actions, because manipulable at will: they allow for revenge, for the acquisition of power and wealth independent of morality (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 101–4; Lienhardt 1961: 64–68).

Even in the Ashanti religion fetishes (*suman*) have an individual character and serve individual ends (Rattray 1927: 9–24). Their power derives from the fact that they are made up of the remains of impure things (cadavers, menstrual blood, etc.). They therefore concern everything that does not enter into the moral order of the world, everything that cannot be fit into the system, and that constitutes its residues. Far from being reintegrated into this order, these fetishes represent an irreducible conceptual and moral paradox that it would be mystified to want to ignore and reduce. They are considered paradoxes, or limits, blind spots in the order, by indigenous ideology.

It is therefore important to underline two properties that the objects called "fetishes" by ethnographers seem to possess (although not all of them enter into our definition [cf. Forde 1964: 254–83]; and, reciprocally, objects that are not called "fetishes" in ethnographic literature ought to be considered as such according to our definition). One concerns the material aspect of these objects and indicates their conceptual status; the other concerns their moral significance. As regards the latter, it must be noted that fetishes—residual and unique objects—are associated with that which in the system has a residual status on the moral level: the desire for power, the thirst for revenge, the success of one who violates the social order and should therefore have to encounter failure, and so on.

In their material aspect, fetishes seem by definition to elude every characterization and in fact to link themselves to the *objet trouvé*. But something relatively uniform is evident in the way they are preserved and treated: they are very often packaged up, wrapped up in material, hidden (cf. Pontalis 1970). Among the

Dinka, for example, fetishes are made up of bundles that contain pieces of wood, roots, and other residues (Leinhardt 1961: 65, 68, 222). An essential feature of every fetish is however that the gaze is in some way at least impeded, that they are surrounded by taboo, by complex rituals of manipulations, by openings and closings, and so forth. The modern incarnation of the fetishist, the collectionist, will indeed show his treasures, but only to a few: it is essential that they not be accessible to all, that they only be kept in a secure place, that they be taken out only with thousands of precautions, and so on.

The value of the fetish consists in this contradictory coexistence of its accessibility and its inaccessibility. Inasmuch as it is a material object, the fetish is accessible; it can be found by chance, acquired, it is not a prerogative, it is immediately at its possessor's disposal and for this reason gives him the impression of total dominion that is expressed by the *uniqueness* of the possession. But the fetish is also inaccessible (as the taboos, the material that envelopes it, the ritual precautions without which its power dissolves, all symbolize). This inaccessibility is paradoxically revealed by the need that the fetishist sometimes feels to show his fetish to someone else, to make him test his power, to discover in the other a sense of an exclusion, of an inaccessibility, that he finds in himself, but whose reality he wants to negate, projecting it onto another. The fetish is therefore the paradoxical object that manifests a lack, an irreducible limit—ideological and practical—of a collective or individual "system," rendering it as an absolute denseness of meaning, as a unique and unrepeatable power. Thus in capitalist society money is presented as absolute meaning, absolute power, but its fetishization, the mystic belief in its power, hides the limit that bourgeois ideology encounters in explaining and accepting the mystery of its value.

The accessibility, the sense of power that the fetish offers to the perverse, hide his incapacity to accept the reality of an essence and the trauma that fragments the ego.

More generally, and more simply, in many if not all societies, the objects "without meaning"—associated with that which is unique, fortuitous, unpredictable, bizarre—are sacralized as such. Their uniqueness, which challenges the laws of the system and reveals its limits, seems to offer the one who makes himself owner of it a guarantee of absolute power, a reserve of meaning that transcends the unacceptable limits of the universe of codified signs and classifications.

No one has defined the feeling of power felt by the fetishist better than an African of the seventeenth century: "We make and break our gods daily, and

consequentially are the masters and inventers of what we sacrifice to" (Bosman [1704] 1967: 368).

In conclusion, we can define fetishes as the disguises assumed by the residues of a system: they constitute at one and the same time the recognition of their existence and the refusal to recognize their nature.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Kingship

Translated from the Italian by Lynn Westwater
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"Roi, basileus, tyrannos, rex, dux, imperator, melch, baal, pharao, éli, shodai, adoni, shak, sophi, padisha, bogdan, chazan, kan, krall, king, kong, koenig, etc., etc., all expressions that seem to mean the same thing and that express completely different ideas" (Voltaire [1771] 1879: 375).

At first glance, it is tempting to think Voltaire is right: kingship assumes such different forms it seems impossible to reduce them all to a common denominator. Yet upon considering each form in its entirety, one is immediately struck by the recurrence of certain themes and structural relationships. Even the history of the principal forms of kingship, in Europe and Asia alike, reveals constants, as if only a limited number of possibilities were available.

Hence, the notion of kingship raises the problem that is central to every comparative attempt: how to identify not an abstract essence that sacrifices differences and history, but on the contrary certain structural principles that testify to both.

Let us begin with a minimal definition of "kingship." Kingship is a mode of political organization where one person—the king—is the center of, or the focal point for, the entire community. As such, the king represents the fundamental values of the society over which he reigns, and is therefore considered sacred or even divine. Even when the king is not sacred in *sensu stricto*, he stands in a privileged relationship to those who are: gods or their interpreters, their priests.

The mystic powers of kingship generally come in tandem with military power. In many theories of kingship, one power derives from the other: for some, sacred aspects are primary and military power is derived, whereas for others "it was a lucky warrior who was the first king" (Voltaire, *Mérope* I, III), or, to go along with Max Weber ([1922] 1968: 1141), "Everywhere the king is primarily a warlord. Kingship originates in charismatic heroism."

The theory that posits the first king as a "magician" is associated with the the name of Frazer, according to whom kingship is the result of "superstition." This superstition has positive effects, however, allowing the most capable men (magicians and thus inevitably intelligent impostors) to obtain power and authority over other men, to change ancestral customs, and thus to advance humanity (Frazer 1905: 82–88). Soon, however, the intellectual consequences of the political revolution introduced by the king-magicians affect their status: it becomes difficult to believe that they have the power to directly control nature. The king-magicians thus turn into king-priests: they now claim to reach their goals through transcendental powers, the "gods," with whom they are capable of communicating and whom they at times even claim to incarnate (ibid.: 127–28). In a subsequent phase, the religious aspect of kingship is separated from the "civil" one: temporal power is given to one person, spiritual power to another, and, meanwhile, the magicians become scientists (ibid.: 151).

A contemporary scholar, Luc de Heusch (1958, 1962a), still refers to Frazer when he distinguishes between "magic kingship" and "religious kingship."

A. M. Hocart's theory (1927, [1936] 1970), which has come back into fashion, is a modified form of Frazer's. Hocart abandons the categories of "magic" and "religion" and the idea that kings are useful impostors, but he still puts forward the hypothesis that kingship has ritual origins. For Hocart, the king is in all societies the "principal" actor in a mimetic rite whose function is to promote life: imitating, for example, natural phenomena, plant and animal species—or, rather, the spirits or gods who give them life—the "principal" believes he can identify with them and influence them for the community's benefit. Only when men have learned to obtain life by secular means does kingship correspondingly become secularized, leaving as its legacy to the bureaucratic State its centralized structure, which originally resulted from the division of ritual labor.

Among the many criticisms that can be made of the "ritualistic" theory, one should be emphasized: the major weakness of Hocart's hypothesis is that "ritual" and "political" are radically opposed, and that the "political" is posited as an

evolutionary phase that comes after the "ritual." However, even if we want to admit that kingship originally has purely ritual ends, these ends inevitably involve dimensions that are not ritualistic. Hocart ignores the material and social conditions of possibility of the rite. The complex ritual organization that he associates with kingship is *already* a political organization, because it requires that a certain number of people be hierarchically associated, that they become the focal point for the community, that resources for the rite be produced, and so on. The opposition between "ritual" and "political" is therefore artificial. If the idea that the ritual the king performs generates life can continue to be confirmed in collective experience, this is also because its performance actually produces life and prosperity as they are concretely possible in a certain social form: it stimulates cooperation, the formation of surpluses and their circulation, and so on. The rite is thus simultaneously the representation of the ends of kingship (which are identified with those of society as a whole) and of the means that actually lead to these ends. It provides, in short, a coordination and a totalization of all social activities.

It is not, therefore, a question of establishing a causal and evolutionary relationship between "ritual" and "political": these categories are of our creation. What matters, rather, is to understand that there are no social structures without symbolic structures, and vice versa.

Similarly one-sided is the theory that posits the king as a "lucky soldier." The theory disregards the fact that violence and military success are themselves objects of cultural interpretation: they are not seen as simply physical force. The isolation of physical force, the opposition between purely military and purely religious power, is a modern phenomenon. The king's military power gains legitimacy by acquiring meanings that transcend the power itself. Moreover, the conquering king is transformed when he establishes a permanent relationship with the population and the territory he controls: he moves from the periphery to the center of society. He thus associates himself with the values of this center, even if he maintains, as we will see, a relationship with the chaotic and violent world of the periphery.

The duality of the figure of the king is universally reflected in mythology and in the ritual of kingship: the king is a foreigner, a violent conqueror, but at the same time "the king belongs to the people," as the Yoruba say (see Lloyd 1954), he is the guardian of the established order.

As we will see, this duality has symbolic causes, but it is also rooted in a reality that symbolism must order and control.

THE KING AS CONQUERER AND PREDATOR: AFRICAN EXAMPLES

The formation of monarchic states is explained by some as an endogenous process and by others as the result of a conquest that permits a militarily strong group to impose itself on another and exploit it (Balandier 1967). In reality, the two processes can be, and in a certain sense always are, combined (Mair 1977: 21–22). It must be emphasized that even when kingship grows out of an endogenous process, disparities in power are created at the regional level: inevitably, the stronger group expands and becomes conqueror. The "conquering" and "foreign" aspects of kingship thus have quite real origins. Two African examples effectively illustrate this point.

The formation of Rwanda, a kingdom of the inter-lake region of eastern Africa, has been reconstructed in detail by Belgian scholars (Vansina 1962; Heusch 1966). I briefly summarize here the schema proposed by Jan Vansina.

The original population of the region between the great lakes was made up of Hutu farmers who were either politically acephalous (every lineage was autonomous), or organized in small groups guided by hereditary leaders, endowed with ritual privileges and in particular with the ability to control atmospheric phenomena (Vansina 1962: 77–78). Vansina thus supposes a situation quite similar to that of the "king-magicians" described by Frazer. His reconstruction is indirectly confirmed by the presence in the region of political organizations of the same type, for instance that of the Alurs, which Aiden Southall (1953) suggests developed through an endogenous process.

This region was then infiltrated by groups of pastoral people of Nilotic affiliation, later known as Tutsi, who occupied its pastures. These populations also had an acephalous organization, but group migration took place under the guidance of leaders who were able, with gifts or livestock loans, to attract a sufficient number of men for their incursions. Once settled in an area occupied by the Hutus, a band would offer them protection from other groups and their raids. Thanks to their military superiority and mobility, which allowed them to control relatively vast areas (pastoral peoples, because of the very nature of their activity and because of the need to open new pastures, are strongly expansionistic and have an effective military organization), the invaders secured control over the Hutus; they also obtained work and agricultural products from them, which were only partially compensated by counter-prestations of sheep-farming products.

Vansina claims that the leaders of the groups who were most successful in gaining control over of the Hutu people became the first kings, who then began to replace the leaders of confederated lineages with their own relatives, reinforcing in this way their control over the group they led. This also led to scissions amongst rivals. The formation of the kingdom of Rwanda was the final result of a series of similar scissions that began with the kingdom of Mubari, which, according to traditional accounts, was the first to be formed.

The two brothers who founded the kingdom of Rwanda conquered small neighboring kingdoms, two of which had adopted the ritual practices of Hutu leaders and had even taken on their title: *abiru*. These *abiru* lineages came to be associated with the Rwandan king's court; as a result, according to Vansina, the Tutsi kingship became sacred (more likely, in my opinion, this was a passage from a purely Tutsi sacredness to a sacredness that took on the values and symbols of the dominated people; cf. below). This sacredness favored the unification of the invading group around its leader.

But one must also note that the king's sacralization proceeded hand in hand with the reinforcement of his control over military power. From the sixteenth century, the king prohibits subordinate leaders from recruiting warriors without his permission; toward the end of the eighteenth century, he begins reserving the right to select the leaders of the various military units, despite not having an army of his own. In addition, he creates regional capitals, each occupied by a queen (i.e., one of his wives) and her court, which controls strategic areas and rounds up resources to sustain the main capital. Little by little, a "civil" administration takes shape alongside the military one, and, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the king Rwabugiri can afford to disregard hereditary rights to offices and appoint his own protégés instead. The extension of the king's power leads to the expansion of his territorial dominion, and, at the same time, is rendered possible by it (allowing the gathering of new resources).

Rwandan history shows how the kingdoms of East Africa were formed by groups of shepherds who exploited groups of farmers; in West Africa we find instead, at the origins of kingship, warrior groups that control international commerce and use weaker populations as hunting grounds for slaves.

In his interesting book on the relationship between State and technology in Africa, Jack Goody notes that in West Africa, the combined effect of poor soil, abundant availability of land and absence of the plow prevents the formation of a sedentary agriculture that is able to produce significant surpluses. Transportation and exchange difficulties, in combination with the above factors,

prevent the formation of a class of lords that can live off the control of agricultural resources. The economic support for a politically centralized organization thus cannot be income from the land (as, for example, in medieval Europe), but instead consists of the two complementary activities of war and commerce (Goody 1971: 42). Military expeditions indeed allow the collection of spoils, in particular of slaves, some of whom are sold to European traders in exchange for guns (which enable the capture of other slaves), while others, especially in Dahomey (Lombard 1967: 74), are put to work to produce the food that is necessary to sustain the king and his court. Military superiority also insures the control of markets (which are taxed) and of commercial routes (on which tolls are levied), the monopolization of trade in certain products, and the creation of stable sources of supply from vassal states, which provide slaves, cola, nuts, ivory, and gold as forms of tribute.

The military superiority of the mostly immigrant groups that formed the monarchies of West Africa was made possible by the combination of two exogenous factors: the introduction of iron weapons and of the horse (Goody 1971: 43–49). Indeed, the kingdoms of the Savannah were built "on horseback." There is therefore a certain parallelism with East Africa: in both areas, the founders of the monarchies are groups of conquerors characterized by mobility (shepherds in one area, horsemen in the other) and military superiority. In the West as in the East, the spread of iron technology set in motion processes that have led to the formation of complex political organizations (ibid.: 46–47). Both of these areas also illustrate another important fact: in the absence of ecological, technical, and organizational conditions stimulating the production of an agricultural surplus and its regular collection, plunder is the primary and fundamental form of wealth collection that enables the formation of an aristocracy and the kingship it expresses. War is therefore the principal "means of production" of these political organizations: often commerce complements it, prodding it on and providing the instruments (the arms, for example) of its perpetuation. Thus in West Africa, the kingdoms of the forest areas—whose formation lagged behind that of the other kingdoms founded by the horsemen of the Savannah (Smith 1969: 4–5)—became increasingly dependent on the foreign trade that occurred, especially in the fifteenth century and beyond, in the Gulf of Guinea. The control the king exercised over trade, and therefore also over firearms, and the absence in the forest area—difficult for horses to penetrate or survive in—of an equestrian aristocracy counterbalancing royal power, explain how the kings of Benin and of Dahomey, and also to a certain

extent those of the Ashanti (cf. Wilks 1967), were able to acquire a supremacy that was out of the reach of their colleagues who headed the "cavalry states" of the Savannah (Goody 1971: 51–55). With regard to Benin, R. E. Bradbury speaks of a "patrimonial regime" (1973: 133–46); the king of Dahomey is in any case able to develop a full-fledged bureaucratic organization and to increase slave production (Lombard 1967: 77). It should also be noted that the increasing importance of the slave trade, upon which the prosperity of these kingdoms is based until the nineteenth century, by intensifying raids, fosters the formation of kingdoms in the peripheral hinterlands, both because the kings of the coastal areas create vassal states of horsemen who are given the task of capturing slaves, and because the acephalous tribes that do not flee into the inaccessible inland areas enter into confederacies with one another and choose leaders or kings who defend them from the incursion of the raiders. In this way kingship spreads over vast areas through a process ultimately dominated by external factors. It is therefore quite appropriate that kingship appears to local consciousness as an institution that has an external reference point.

Both the Rwandan and the West African case confirm therefore that a politically centralized organization does not form because of an immanent tendency to extend and to reinforce the functions of "government." It is thus difficult to believe, following Goody, that "the nucleus of the state systems can be discerned even among lineages, age-sets, cult-associations, and other basic groupings of acephalous society" (1971: 18). Under normal conditions, acephalous societies tend in fact to recreate themselves as such, since the means of household production in force prevent the formation of a significant surplus and, most importantly, prevent its concentration in the hands of the few (cf. Sahlins 1972). In this system, a leader can increase production and accumulate a surplus only temporarily, if he is able to persuade friends and relatives to work for him in preparation, for example, for a feast. In this way, the leader becomes indebted, and the debts must be paid. In the end, what is accumulated needs to be redistributed, and often paid back with an interest, so that the "great man" is really only great when he has become poor (cf. Sahlins 1963).

It also should not be forgotten that in a society whose principal production is food, there is a quantitative and temporal limit to accumulation. The accumulation of food is not in and of itself an incentive. As Max Gluckman (1960) has noted with regard to the Zulu, a leader is not able to eat much more than a common man.

The egalitarian ideology of acephalous societies ensures in any case the elimination of disparities in power and wealth. Amongst the Kapauku of Irian Jaya (Western New Guinea), the relatives of a leader who is too rich, and thus too egotistical, kill him yelling "You should not be the only rich man, we should all be the same, therefore you only stay equal with us" (Pospisil 1958: 80).

So, if acephalous societies evolve toward unequal forms, it is because inequality is imposed by a dominant group. However this group is formed, it remains associated, even in its subsequent transformations, with the *externality* of constraint, with the alterity of authority. This externality and alterity is oftentimes spatialized: and in a world of scattered communities, authority is in fact extraneous, if not foreign.

FROM OUTSIDE TO INSIDE

The king is thus a warrior, a conqueror, inextricably linked to the use of force. But this force is not simply physical; his military superiority and his success seem exceptional and thus not human. It is a short step to the view that these are divine. Thus, for example, the success in war of Goth kings was attributed to their divine nature (see Jordanes' *De origine actibusque Getarum*, XIII). And when Chaka, after having moved from victory to victory, founded the Zulu kingship, he was considered a god (Mofolo 1931: 133, 139), and his exceptional military success was attributed to the aid of magic powers. But in the end, these powers consist in the accomplishment of actions that are in opposition to normal human behaviors and motivations: his boundless thirst for power brings him to kill in cold blood (or allow to die) his brothers, the chief who had protected him and even the woman who was most dear to him, and, more notably still, was pregnant with his child. Like other kings who surrounded themselves with animals or with monstrous men (dwarfs, albinos, the "insane" [cf. Anderson 1972: 12; Heusch 1966: 156]), Chaka surrounds himself with two monstrous characters, one of whom is half beast (Mofolo 1931).

Metahuman, the king is in fact always associated with untamed nature, inaccessible to man, and in particular with fierce animals like the leopard, the lion, the elephant, the python, and so forth. The kings of Dahomey claimed to have descended from a leopard that one of their ancestresses met in the forest (Argyle 1966: 4); in the European Middle Ages it was believed that a special relationship existed between kings and lions, so much so that "enfant de roy ne

doit lyons mengier" (cf. Bloch 1973: 148)—indeed, lion does not eat lion. As for Yoruba kings, they descended from the god of thunder, Shango (Morton-Williams 1967: 58). One could multiply ad infinitum examples of the association between kings and all that which in nature constitutes uncontrollable, and therefore divine, powers. Even in Saint Paul (Rom. 13: 1–7) we can find the echo of the idea that the power of kings is divine because it is power: if power comes from God, any king, good or bad, is a manifestation of God and should therefore not be opposed.

But if the king, precisely because he has strength, transcends humanity and is conflated with nature, then it is possible to control nature by controlling the king. The extraneous, invading character of the king thus takes on a meaning quite different from the one considered so far. With the king, nature penetrates into culture and can thus be domesticated, controlled. The scourge is now beneficent, and he who bears death becomes a bearer of life. But to make this possible, it is necessary to transform the king: the invader must become part of the people he rules, transcendent power must become immanent.

This transformation of the king is usually represented in the rite of coronation (Hocart 1927: 75–77). Through this rite, violent and non-human power is transformed into legitimate and productive power: the king is united with the people, both directly and through the gods who represent the moral principles of the community. Naturally, the king does not have to literally be a true invader: the rite of coronation takes on the task of representing the king's passage from human to divine, from immanent to transcendent, and his triumphal return (symbolic "invasion") into the human, to the inside of the community.

The passage to the wild, monstrous world is often represented spatially by a movement from the village to the forest or the bush. Also frequent is a ritual incest which the king is obliged to perpetrate, which represents his transcendence of the line of conduct of the community and thus too of kinship ties, which are based on the prohibition of incest (Heusch 1958, 1962b: 147). From this negative point of view, incest is divine like all that is monstrous insofar as it is not human. But incest can also be considered a positive manifestation of the king's divine character: by marrying his own mother, his own daughter, or his own sister, the king makes his self-reliance clear. Indeed he does not need to receive women from other men, he depends on no one, just like a god.

Other "monstrous" acts necessary to accede to the throne can include ritual parricide (there are examples of this in East Africa and from the Magadha kingship in India (cf. Basham [1967] 1971: 931), matricide (for the kingdom of

Oyo, see Morton-Williams 1967: 65), the murder of other blood relations, or, simply, human sacrifice (for Dahomey, see Argyle 1966: 117).

The combination of incest with parricide is by no means limited to the Oedipal myth: quite the contrary, it is found for example in East Africa (Heusch 1962b: 149) or in Hawaii (cf. Valeri 1972).

These and other practices allow the king to transcend the human world, to acquire a "wild" sacredness which is characterized as an uncontrollable force and identified with nature. Strengthened by this sacredness, the king can, like an irresistible conqueror, break into the world of culture. But by entering into contact with this culture, the king is transformed. It is significant that many African kings, Jukun kings for example, after having symbolically or actually engaged in ritual incest, renounce it definitively once they have re-entered the human world (cf. Meek 1931: 138–39). Their relationship with the queen mother will remain very close, but it will be desexualized (for Dahomey, see Lombard 1967: 83).

The identification of the king with nature undergoes a parallel transformation: after the leopard-king, the lion-king, or the cannibal-king, which correspond to the king's "conquering" and wild aspect, comes a king who is identified with beneficent nature or even with edible plants. For example, the Jukun king, who is called lion when he enters the capital ("The slouching gait, the lion approaches with slouching gait: take to your heels!" sing the drum players [Meek 1931: 152]), is then called "*Azaiwo* (our Guinea-Corn), *Afyewo* (our Groundnuts) or *Asoiwo* (our Beans)" (ibid.: 129), or "our crops," "our rain," "our health," "our wealth" (ibid.: 137).

An analogous transformation takes place in the relationship between the king and the law. The conquering king is a transgressive king: in order to gain power he has disobeyed the law, he has killed, he has committed incest, and so on; but once in power, he is the keeper of the law, he punishes murder, incest, and so forth. Thus Romulus—after having founded Rome committing, among other crimes, one or more *parricidia* (he kills his brother and, according to one version, his adoptive father)—passes a law that prohibits *parricidium* (see Plutarch, *Lives*, *Romulus*, 22, 4). Moreover, the king, mobile and active before he is brought to power, becomes immobile (the Yoruba king, for example, could not leave his palace [cf. Morton-Williams 1967: 61]) and even makes himself invisible, hiding behind a curtain when he speaks with other men (as in West Africa [Meek 1931: 123]; and East Africa [Heusch 1966: 73]), or closing himself up in a hut during the day (as in Hawaii, see Kamakau [1866–71] 1961: 10).

The idea that the coronation transforms the conqueror and the usurper into a king with a priestly, if not divine, nature, can also be found in the Christian West. It is expounded, for instance, by Jean Golein in his famous fourteenth-century *Traité du sacre*:

> and when the king disrobes, this is testimony that he is relinquishing his former worldly state to take up that of the royal religion; and if he holds it in such reverence as he should, I believe that he is as fully cleansed of his sins as one just professed in a religious vocation; concerning which St. Bernard says towards the end of his book *De precepto et dispensacione*: that just as sins are pardoned at baptism, so they are on reception into the religious life. (cited in Bloch [1924] 1973: 278)

Theodor Balsamon narrates that the emperor Johannes Zimisces, guilty of having obtained the throne by assassinating his predecessor Niceforo Foca, was nonetheless admitted into church by the patriarch because "the royal unction had obliterated the assassination of which Zimisces was guilty even before he received this unction" (see Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, CXXXVII, col. 1156).

It is well known that, according to Marc Bloch ([1924] 1973: 81), the rite for treating the scrofula of French and English kings originates in the attempt of two usurping dynasties (the Capetians and Plantagenets) to legitimate themselves. But this attempt was successful not only because it was in tune with the ideology of sacred kingship, as Bloch maintains, but also because it corresponded to an equally important schema: the individual and violent power of the usurper king had to transform into a power beneficent for the collectivity; the warrior-king had to sublimate into the priest-king and even the god-king. The same schema was applied moreover by Pipin of the Franks, a usurper who had to sublimate into a priest-king, receiving unction from the ecclesiastical authority (Kern [1914] 1939: 35–36).

DIALECTIC OF THE WARRIOR AND THE PRIEST IN EURASIA

It is clear that the passage of the king from the extreme of warrior to the opposite extreme of priest, from evil force to beneficent force, cannot be total or irreversible without taking away a necessary dimen-sion of kingship. Three solutions are possible: either the king, who has become priest and even god, is paired with a person who carries on the warlike and more strictly "political" functions

of kingship; or, vice versa, the king remains fundamentally a warrior, but has to be rounded out by a priest who insures his relationship with the divine in its beneficent aspect; or, finally, the king as an individual, or rather kingship as a function, oscillates over time between the two states.

Each one of these three solutions has been adopted in different societies, or, over time, by one and the same society. For example, it is well-known that the first solution was adopted in Japan up through 1868. However it should be emphasized that the dual sovereignty realized by the *mīkado* (or *tennō*, *tenshi*: "priest"-king) and by the *shōgun* ("soldier"-king) was itself the product of a complex evolution, whose point of departure was the failure of a unified kingship based on the Chinese model, with centralizing and bureaucratic tendencies. The collapse of this centralized system was facilitated by the progressive weakening of the emperor's military importance. This weakening was above all determined by two concomitant factors: the absence of an external military threat and the adoption of Buddhism, which teaches non-violence and the sacred nature of every form of life. The imperial army was practically abolished, while at the same time the Chinese bureaucratic ideal was never realized. This resulted in increasing chaos, the emergence of private armed bands, some of which were maintained by the Buddhist convents themselves, and so on. Already in the mid-ninth century, the role of the emperor was split into two by regents, the Fujiwara, who held administrative and military power but still resided at court. From the twelfth century onward, however, with the *shogunato* Kamakura, the separation between the emperor (whose functions are only religious) and the *shōgun* (whose powers are based on control of the warrior class) became also spatial. From that point on there were two capitals (Bendix 1978: 63–73); in one resided a divine and non-violent sovereign, and in the other a human and violent potentate. The conflict between the opposed exigencies of the two components of kingship was thus resolved by severing them.

The Indo-European area offers the most interesting and complex examples of oscillation over time from one solution to another, oscillations that are a function of history but that presuppose, more profoundly, the persistence of the idea that royal power (and in reality every form of political power) is inevitably ambiguous for the very reason that, as totalization of society, it must incorporate contradictory elements.

The oldest representations seem to reflect a precise awareness of this ambiguity. Two examples are particularly illuminating, one being the rituals that

in ancient India permit periodic renewal of royal power, the other the cycle of legends that narrate the events of Roman kingship.

We will first consider the evolution of the Indian ideology: this ideology illustrates the passage from a situation where the king oscillates over time from one pole to the other, to one—more stable but no less ambivalent—where to each extreme corresponds a single official.

J. C. Heesterman (1978: 9) summarizes the dilemma of Indian kingship with this formula: "The king has to belong to the community, but at the same time he must stand outside so as to guarantee his authority." In the oldest period of Indian kingship, the king belongs both to the "agricultural community," *grāma*, and to the "jungle," *araṇya*; it is in the latter that the king finds the divine source of his authority. The conflict between these two "belongings" is irremediable; the ritual of royal consecration enables not its solution but its control, by expressing it symbolically: for this reason, it cannot be performed once and for all, but has to be repeated periodically (cf. Heesterman 1957). Community and jungle are thus reduced through ritual to two phases in a temporal cycle.

In a successive phase, the cyclical nature that the ritual originally possessed was intentionally destroyed in favor of a linear order, so as to "break out of the endless cycle by establishing a new conception of the transcendent, and thereby of authority" (Heesterman 1978: 15). This transformation is correlated with the expansion of sedentary agriculture and with the elimination, or rather devaluation, of the warlike and violent aspect of kingship. Agonistic aspects of royal investiture (for example, chariot races) are eliminated or ritualized: the authority figure thus flees every challenge and aleatory aspect of the game and becomes "incontestably transcendent." But as such, this authority is "irretrievably cut off from the social world" (ibid.: 16). Absolute authority no longer belongs to the king, but to the sacred texts, to the *Veda*.

How is it then possible to relate authority and kingship? By establishing a relationship between the *brāhman* ("priest"), who embodies transcendent authority, and the *rājā* ("king") who possesses immanent power. Heesterman suggests that in the beginning, *rājā* and *brāhman* did not belong to mutually exclusive groups. When the king went into the forest he became a *brāhman*, a fact which is probably reflected in the rite of royal unction where the king is proclaimed "brāhman" (ibid.). The reformers radically separated king and *brāhman*, and the authority of the king from ultimate authority. The king, by now permanently *inside* the community, needs the authority of the *brāhman* who is left *outside*. These two moments, which originally alternated in the figure of the king, have

been definitively separated into two functions, into two classes. But in this way an irresoluble conflict is created between the need to keep the two principles separate, and the need to make them cooperate (ibid.: 18).

Heesterman's characterizations of both the older phase of Indian kingship and the "reformed" phase are in some ways debatable.

As far as the older phase is concerned, it seems that the opposition between the sacred external and the profane internal, between the external source of the authority and its internal application, is poorly formulated. The analysis of the ritual shows that the king's passage to the outside symbolizes a military expedition. But it is in the *inside* that the king is anointed and enthroned. In other words, the opposition between internal and external does not correspond, for the king, to the opposition between profane and sacred, but rather to two forms of sacredness precisely analogous to those described above: the conquering, "untamed" aspect of the king's sacredness, and the "domesticated" aspect—productive for the community—of the king's sacredness. The king's oscillation between the two spheres thus has a different meaning from the one attributed to it by Heesterman, who too rigidly identifies "outside," "authority," and "sacred," and who must therefore allow for the paradoxical figure of the warrior who is at the same time a *brāhman* (ibid.: 16).

Equally debatable is the characterization of the "reform." Here, too the rigid equation between an outside, in which all authority is concentrated, and an inside, in which there exists only force, leads Heesterman to distort in part both the figure of the king and the figure of the *brāhman*. His hypothesis forces him to identify the *brāhman* with the renouncer, who is effectively *outside* of society. But how do we then explain the fact that the *brāhman* stands within society, that he is part of the caste system?

As for the king, it is true that he gains his authority from his relationship with the *brāhman*, but it is also true that he adds something of his own, which should not be ignored. In fact, the king finds his own legitimacy in his capacity to transform the abstract, transcendent order (*dharma*, divine law) into a concrete, immanent order; he must, for instance, protect the caste system, which allows persons to realize their own *dharma*. In this way, the merits acquired by the subjects affect the king's status; in fact, such merits will be considered his merits as well, since it is his government that made them possible (cf. Lingat 1973: 211).

Certainly, the divide between transcendence and immanence cannot be overcome, and thus kingship can never resolve the ambivalence, indeed the

contradiction, of its positioning between two opposing worlds. The scission of sovereignty in *brāḥman* and *rājā* is the sign of this; but their cooperation makes it possible to attenuate that scission and to justify the recurrent idea that the king embodies the *dharma* (Spellman 1964: 99). Furthermore, the transcendence of the *brāḥman*, which impedes his direct exercise of power, allows him to maintain the continuity of divine law, and therefore enables him to transform the various "conquerors" by subjecting them to the supreme values of the community. From this perspective, the mechanical association of the *brāḥman* with the "outside" and the king with the "inside" appears unacceptable. The *brāḥman* is outside of society only insofar as he must preserve intact the values which regulate it: therefore, with regard to the still "untamed," "conquering" king, he is "inside," whereas with regard to the already transformed king, he is "outside." As one can see, the relative position of the three terms— *brāḥman*, king, community—changes in the different phases of ritual transformation, just as the meaning of the opposition inside/outside changes.

In my view, the *brāḥman* is not simply added as an antithetical principle to the king; the king is, or should be, *transformed* by his relationship with him. The sign of this transformation is not only the fact that the king is considered an incarnation of *dharma*, but also that he institutes a complementary relationship with society, through which the merits of his subjects become his own merits, since it is he who made them possible. Between the warlike and the dharmic aspects of sovereignty there is therefore no radical opposition or separation. Rather there is a tension, which is expressed and controlled by its symbolic representation in ritual, and by the ideology that necessarily connects priest and king.

As one can gather, then, the mechanism by which the forceful king is transformed into a king who is beneficient for the community exists even in India, in forms which are typically its own.

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The originary oscillation of kingship between two poles and their transformation into two permanent statuses can be found also in Rome, another society of Indo-European origin.

The legends about Latin and Roman kingship are long and complex, and it is clear that they have to be analyzed taking into consideration all of the "codes" that they presuppose. Nevertheless, it is possible to list a certain number of characteristics that define, together or separately, the various kings:

1) The king is a foreigner. At the very least, Saturn, Aeneas, Romulus, Numa, Tarquinius Priscus and Servius Tullius fit into this category. Even Brutus, whom one can associate with the kings because he is considered a second Romulus (so much so that his statue was erected amongst those of the kings [see Plutarch, *Lives, Brutus*, I]), is the son of a foreigner, Marcus Junius, whom Tarquinius Superbus suspected of aspiring to royal dignity and whom he therefore had killed;

2) The king is "untamed." He is often turbulent (Romulus is an example of this) and gains power by killing his predecessor or a rival (Amulius kills the son of Numitor, heir to the throne of Alba Longa; Romulus, in one version, kills Titus Tatius; Ancus Marcius kills Tullus Hostilius [see Dionysius, *Antiquitates Romanae*, III, 35, 2–4]; the sons of Ancus kill Tarquinius Priscus; Tarquinius Superbus kills Servius Tullius and Marcus Junius); the king is a rebel (like Romulus and the regicides listed above; one can also think of Saturn, conquering king and god linked to the Saturnalia, which are a symbolic rebellion against the established authority—according to Macrobius [*Saturnalia*, I, 8] the celebration was introduced by Tullus Hostilius, warrior king *par excellence*); he is associated with the forest and with the animal world (for example, Picus, Faunus, and Romulus, who is nourished by birds of prey and by wild animals [see Plutarch, *Lives, Romulus*, 7, 6]), as well as with rearing livestock, a mobile activity which from the point of view of sedentary farmers is also turbulent and destructive (as in the case of Romulus); and with war, and particularly with the furor that characterizes it (e.g., Tullus Hostilius and his champion, Horace [cf. Dumezil 1942]). Finally Brutus, the uterine grandson of Tarquinius Superbus who nevertheless transcends kingship and creates the Republic, puts the final touch on this catalogue of traits universally associated with the disordered aspect of kingship. As his own name indicates, he pretends to be an imbecile, and is used as an actual fool at the court of the Tarquini (Livy, I, 56);

3) The king is originally a slave. Servius Tullius is an example of this, but so is the *rex nemorensis* of Aricia, who was a fugitive slave (Frazer 1911–15, I: 11). The role of slaves in the Saturnalia is well-known; one can deduce that the slaves are connected with Saturn and, indirectly, with Tullus Hostilius, who instituted this festival;

4) The king is associated with a prostitute. So it is with Romulus, raised by one Acca Larentia (Plutarch, *Lives*, *Romulus*, 4, 3) who, like the Acca

Larentia associated with the rule of Ancus (Dumezil 1968: 280–81), is a prostitute;

5) The sexual behavior of the king is transgressive. Some kings rape or abduct women (Faunus, Romulus, Tarquinius), or are incestuous: Faunus marries his sister (or his daughter) Fauna, and the usurper Amulius rapes his niece Rhea Silvia (Dionysius, *Antiquitates Romanae*, I, 76; Plutarch, *Lives, Romulus* 4, 2). So too, in conformity with the widespread theme of royal incest, we note that at least two kings are born out of incest: Latinus and Romulus himself, if one accepts the version according to which his father is Amulius, and not Mars. But it is well-known that divine birth and incestuous birth are considered one and the same in many cultures.

The theme of royal incest also appears at a metaphoric level at the end of the monarchy. It is in fact well-known that two sons of Tarquinius (Titus and Arruns) were sent to Delphi to learn the oracle's interpretation of a prediction. After having heard the interpretation, they also asked which of the two would become king. The answer was: the first of you who, upon returning to Rome, kisses your mother. The two interpreted the oracle's statement literally. But Brutus, who was accompanying the two to entertain them with his foolery, interpreted it differently and, by means of a trick, positioned himself as predestined successor of his uncle Tarquinius: he intentionally tripped over in order to fall with his mouth on the earth, "mother of all living beings" (Livy, I, 57).

The incestuous implication of kissing one's mother is clarified by a similar episode related to Caesar, another future ruler. Caesar dreams of raping his mother: according to the soothsayer who interprets this dream, the mother is none other than the earth (Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum*, VII, 2; cf. Artemidorus of Daldis, *Oneirocritica*, I, 79).

So, the kiss given to one's mother, incest, and the conquest of land all belong to the same symbolic paradigm. These legends condense two aspects of kingship: a) the king is incestuous, that is, outside of society and its rules, and; b) the king becomes united with the land that he conquers, and fertilizes it;

6) The king kills a relative. Romulus kills Amulius (this, if we follow the version of the hero's birth given by Dionysius and Plutarch, is also parricide) and kills his adoptive father Faustulus and his brother Remus; Tarquinius Superbus has his father-in-law Servius Tullius killed; Brutus kills his cousin and is at the same time killed by him; before this he had his two children put to death; and so on and so forth.

Such violent and "monstrous" traits allow kings to seize power, and define kings above all in the initial phase of their careers. The untamed aspects of the king's transcendence must be overcome at least in part, however: if the king is not "domesticated," he cannot reign for long over the community. The opposition between two formally homologous episodes demonstrates this, one associated with the founding of the monarchy, the other with its abolition.

The first episode is the rape of the Sabines. It involves a violent act which allows Romulus and his followers to establish a relationship with the land, whose true proprietors are the Sabine families (cf. Preaux 1962: 117). The second is the rape of Lucretia by a son of Tarquinius Superbus. Lucretia lives in Collatia, the Sabine city. Her husband, Tarquinius Collatinus, is the son of the son of a brother of Tarquinius Priscus, who had received from this king the task of governing Collatia (Livy, I, 38, 1). Lucretia thus is a Sabine woman and lives in Sabine territory [ibid.: 57]. Tarquinius's action thus repeats formally the "rape of the Sabines," which stands at the origins of the monarchy; but the formal identity highlights the substantive opposition. Romulus abducts virgins (with the exception, however, of Ersilia, a matron who becomes his wife or the wife of his champion, Hostus Hostilius, grandfather of the king Tullus Hostilius [Dionysius, *Antiquitates Romanae*, II, 36; Plutarch, *Lives, Romulus*, 18, 29; Livy, I, 11, 22; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIV, vv. 830 ff.]), who are then married properly in accordance with the most prestigious rite—*confarreatio* (cf. Dumezil 1979: 75; Dionysius, *Antiquitates Romanae*, I, 52, 25). By marrying the Sabines and having children with them, the violent invaders become "domesticated" and are able to establish definitively a positive relationship with the "people" (the autochthonous Sabines). The action of Tarquinius, to the contrary, is only brutal and untamed. He rapes a married woman and the relationship ends there, it cannot be transformed. Rather than life (children), the rape of Lucretia produces only death (the unfortunate woman kills herself).

The repetition of the founding event of the monarchy, inverted in its outcome, thus justifies the end of the monarchy, making evident a fundamental idea: if the untamed king is not domesticated, and cannot be, if his founding violence is not transformed positively, he cannot create a positive relationship with the people. Tarquinius, in contrast with Romulus, is a king who remains wholly "untamed" and violent: because of this he is rejected by the people.

This transformation is represented in various legendary episodes. But more than by the lives of individual kings, it is illustrated by the regular alternation, within kingship, between kings who realize above all their violent side and kings whose peaceful side is most evident.

Violent, warrior kings	Peaceful kings of prosperity
1. Romulus	
	2. Numa Pompilius
3. Tullus Hostilius	
	4. Ancus Marcius
5. Tarquinius Priscus	
	6. Servius Tullius
7. Tarquinius Superbus	

Every king clearly has disordered and ordered traits: what allows us to group them in two opposing series is the relative proportion of the two kinds of characters. Only Numa seems completely lacking in "untamed" traits, but this is probably because tradition has exaggerated his peaceful and religious aspect to make him represent paradigmatically the series to which he belongs. The traces of a similar, but opposite, operation can be found in the characterization of Romulus, who is also the paradigm of his series.

Numa's relationship with the nymph Egeria betrays in any case an original connection with the *rex nemorensis*, the prototype of the untamed and violent king, at least if we consider it to be significant that Egeria is present both in a grove close to Porta Capena (Juvenal, *Satirae*, I, III, vv. 10 ff.; Livy, I, 21, 33) and in Aricia (Frazer 1911–15).

As for the traits that support the opposition of the two series of kings, the warlike and violent aspect of Romulus and Tullus Hostilius is so well-known that we do not need to examine it further. No less apparent is the association of the two Tarquini with military activity and with a politics of conquest; this is in fact the only positive aspect that Livy recognizes in them. Similarly well-known is the "legislative" character of Numa and Servius Tullius. Ancus Marcius is remembered for an important contribution: the creation of meticulous rules for declaring war, the following of which ensures the fighting of a "just and holy" war (Livy, I, 32, 12). In opposition to this "just" war is the *furor* that characterizes the war of Tullus Hostilius and the brutality with which he treats Metius Fufetius (cf. Dumézil 1942).

In contrast, the other series of kings is associated with prosperity. Numa develops agriculture and keeps the Romans out of war, while Ancus' name is associated with demographic expansion and wealth (cf. Dumézil 1968: 280–81); as for Servius Tullius, his reform classifies citizens according to their income. These kings are in short linked to the "popular" element—generally taken to include the lower and most numerous stratum of the citizen classes. Both Numa

and Ancus are Sabines and thus "popular" *par excellence*; Servius was born of a slave woman and is represented as favorable to the people (he is also popular through distributing lands (Livy, I 46, 21).

The organizing principle briefly traced here highlights the ambivalence of kingship by polarizing the two necessary but contradictory components of kingship, and reflects in a mythical structure a transition that occurs in reality, and whose crucial moment is constituted by the rite of *inauguration* that every king must undergo.

Simplifying to the utmost, we can claim that the king passes through three phases:

1) First he asserts himself militarily or politically with force. Even popular support is, in this phase, a simple component of force. As the legends indicate, the king's power at this stage is regarded as disordered and as acquired through actions that violate normally accepted rules of behavior;

2) The man who has imposed himself is put forward (*creatus*) by the *interrex*. Thus begins the process of legitimization, which can include or not an election (this point is controversial [cf. Palmer 1970: 211; Coli 1951: 92]), but which, in all cases, must include the rite of the *inauguratio* which allows establishment of whether there is present in the king a quality, *auges* (a noun that designates an abstraction: "increase," "fullness" [cf. De Francisci 1959: 433; Dumézil 1974: 586]). In the oldest phase of the rite, this quality was probably transmitted to the king, through the medium of the *augur* (the priest who officiated at this rite), by Jupiter himself. This fact is suggested by Livy's description (I, 18, 6–10)—based on the *inauguratio* of the successor of the rex, the *rex sacrificulus* of the Republican era in which the augur, while praying to Jupiter (whom he seems to "hook" with a lituus, a stick curved at one end), places his right hand on the king's head. Pierangelo Catalano (1960: 28) maintains that the *augurium* has no more than "permissible juridical value, revealing the *fas*: therefore the divine power that it contains is not the sole cause of success, but the support, the help, of human and natural power." Whatever the chosen interpretation, one fact remains certain: divine intervention completes and "perfects" human action, either by transmitting a substance to it or, at the least, by approving it and recognizing its adequacy. Indeed this recognition has the effect of completely changing the way in which people evaluate the power of the elected person; in other words, divine recognition legitimates that power;

3) Thus rendered *augustus* by Jupiter's approval (Coli 1951: 90–91), the king comes to be recognized by the people, who confer upon him the *imperium*, that is, the legal use of power. According to some, who follow Cicero on this (*De re publica*, I, 25), a true *lex* (*lex curiata de imperio*) is voted in (cf. Palmer 1970: 212); in the opinion of others, who point out that a vote appears absurd after Jupiter's will has been unequivocally manifested, it is a simple matter of acclamation (cf. Coli 1951: 66, 93).

Whichever hypothesis one adopts, the meaning of the rite is clear: one becomes king by force (it matters little whether military or political); but this force, which is in and of itself disordered and violent, must be transcended through contact with (or the approval of) a god who represents for the community the ideal of kingship. Through Jupiter, who transforms him, the king can be united with the collectivity, which in turn confers upon him the *imperium*, thus legalizing his power. Although the king remains a man, he thereafter represents Jupiter, whose symbols he indeed bears: a) the red toga, sometimes embroidered with gold (*toga picta*), which represents the radiance of the god whose statue on the Capitoline temple was painted red; b) the scepter (*hasta*) (cf. Benveniste 1969: 30; Alföldi 1959); c) the ivory throne; and d) the chariot (*currus*) (Coli 1951: 57–59).

Just as Jupiter, "keeper of the law" (Dumezil 1977: 155), "rules over the whole world" (Cicero, *De re publica*, VI, 13), the *rex* rules over Rome.

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We again find a schema similar in many ways to the Indian one: kingship implies the use of force, of military power, and is a thing of warriors; nonetheless this force is transcended by establishing a connection with divine law, which in turn creates a productive relationship between king and community. In India, the king incarnates *dharma* in political society; Rome, more sensitive to the distinction between human and divine, makes the king simply a representative of Jupiter.

With the passage to the republic, the two roles of the king are separated: there is then a *rex sacrorum* (or *sacrificulus*), who is first in the hierarchy but, like the *brāhman*, without *imperium*; and in an initial time period a *praetor maximus*, then two consuls who do have the imperium (Momigliano 1963; cf. Mazzarino 1944).

Presenting the relationship between the two aspects of kingship as a conflict between two types of kingship that never succeed in merging, the legends of the royal epoch legitimate the passage to the republican situation which excludes oscillations of sovereignty from one pole to the other by radically separating the priest from the holder of the *imperium*. From this point of view, the Roman evolution is parallel to the Indian one, where sovereignty is divided into *brāhma* (which "conceives") and *kṣatrá* (which "does"), the latter being the province of the warrior (*kṣatriya*) (Lingat 1973: 216–17, 221). Rome went beyond this distinction, however, grounding political offices in purely human law founded in the sovereignty of the *populus Romanus* and not in that of the gods. In India, on the other hand, the king has remained in an ambiguous situation, suspended between divine and human, because his task was to translate an entirely divine law (Spellman 1974: 103) into the sphere of competence of the *imperium*. This demonstrates that a true secularization of political authority is not possible without a corresponding secularization of the law. The presence of pragmatic precepts, like those of the *Arthaśāstra*, does not suffice to secularize the king: these are in fact expedients, not laws able to create a political arena endowed with its own legitimacy. It is this that certain observers, as for instance Louis Dumont (1966b), forget. This explains why the Indian king continues to be considered divine—albeit of an inferior divinity to that of the brāhman (cf. Spellman 1964: 26–42)—but also why the doctrine according to which the king has to obey the *dharma* (ibid.: 105) coexists in contradiction with the Arthaśāstric one, according to which the *artha* is more important than the *dharma*. The latter doctrine is in effect the paradoxical result of the former. In truth, the king's *dharma* consists in protecting the hierarchy of the castes, so as to allow each person to accomplish his or her own duty (*svadharma*) according to the dictates of divine law (Lingat 1973: 208). From this point of view, the *dharma* of the king encompasses all others, since it makes them possible (see *The shanti parva*[1] [*Śāntiparvan*], 63, 25). But in order to ensure the realization of the *dharma*, the king has to defend the body politic, and thus follow the laws of the *artha*, that is, of instrumental reason, the raison d'état, which can be in conflict with the *dharma*'s laws. Kautilya, to whom the *Arthaśāstra* is traditionally attributed, is therefore able to affirm that force is more important than the *dharma*, given that force makes possible its effective realization: "When Kautalya [Kautilya] remarks that might and self-aggrandizement are more important than religion and morality, he means that moral principle must be subordinated to the interests of the state

1. The twelfth book of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. —Ed.

inasmuch as the moral order depends upon the continued existence of the state" (Drekmeier 1962: 201).

Between *dharma* and *artha* there thus exists a contradictory relationship, not—as Dumont holds (1966: 366)—a simple hierarchical relation between two perfectly distinct activities. As we have seen, the hierarchy shifts, but does not eliminate, the contradiction.

There has been an attempt in India, linked to Buddhism, to humanize kingship in its entirety. Its paradoxical result is, however, a sacralization and even divinization of kingship.

In the Buddhist "Genesis," the *Aggañña-Suttanta*, the king derives his legitimacy from a social contract that aims to remedy the Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes* or, to use the Indian metaphor, the "logic of the fish" (*matsya nyāya* [cf. Lingat 1973: 207]). The king has the right to collect taxes only in exchange for actual protection (Spellman 1964: 22). But this contractualist theory is inscribed within a cosmogonic myth that provides the theory with a meaning quite different from the Hobbesian one. As Stanley Tambiah has noted (1976: 22), this myth constitutes the intentional inversion of the brahmanic myth of Manu. In the brahmanic myth, the order of the universe is generated by divine energy, while in the Buddhist myth the process of differentiation is the result of a degeneration due to purely human acts. It follows that from the brahmanic point of view, the social order, which is part of the order of the universe, has divine origin, whereas from the Buddhist point of view it is of human origin. Additionally, while in Brahmanism the priest is generated before the king and is thus superior to him, in Buddhism, to the contrary, the formation of kingship precedes that of society and its hierarchy: the king, put in place by the social contract so as to end chaos, is responsible for social organization. The brahman is thus subordinate to him.

In essence, the humanization of kingship finds its pride of place in the work of resisting the chaos of degeneration and of reproducing the originary state. The king is therefore identified with the utmost expression of the corrective process which allows the realization of freedom, the state of happiness (*nirvāṇa*) experienced by Buddha (ibid.: 39–40).

This doctrine was drawn from the Theravada variety of Buddhism, which asserted itself in Ceylon and in Southeast Asia, where the king is not only the emperor of the world (*cakravartin*), but is also a Buddha incarnate or a being destined to become Buddha (*Bodhisattva*). As a famous inscription of Sukhodaya says, the king "has the desire to become a Buddha and the desire to lead all creatures beyond the ocean of sorrows of transmigration" (Coedès 1948: 369).

Fundamentally, Buddhist theory reunites the sovereignty that Hinduism has divided, and ensures it a privileged relationship with *dharma*, eliminating the mediation of the brāhman. It also stands in opposition to caste, and subordinates all subjects in equal measure to the king. The reunification of sovereignty has as its goal the transcendence of the *dharma–artha* opposition: Buddhism nonetheless inevitably returns to this opposition in the concrete exercise of kingship (Tambiah 1976: 522). The solution adopted to resolve this contrast is an "oscillation" between two incompatible principles: the warlike and violent king, conqueror of the world, will have to transform himself, periodically or definitively, into a monk (*bhikku*, "beggar"), that is, into a member of the Buddhist "order" (*Saṅgha*); or rather, like Aśoka, he will have to transform himself from conqueror into peace-maker, thus justifying, especially in Southeast Asia, an imperialist and expansionist ideology of kingship (ibid.: 46–57).

Usually, though, kingship is legitimated by an interchange (goods for merits) with the *Saṅgha*. The latter recognizes the king as a "just ruler"; for his part, the king protects the *Saṅgha* and as such has the right to "purify him" of the undesirable elements around him, among them the king's adversaries (ibid.: 517–24).

It is interesting to compare the evolution that took place in South and Southeast Asia with the evolution that occurred in the medieval West. Schematizing to the utmost, one could claim that, after the fall of the Roman Empire, Western kingship passed through the following phases:

1) The monarchies of the conquering Germans were based on the idea of the sacredness of a lineage from which the king must be chosen (Kern [1914] 1938: 13; Benveniste 1969, II: 85);

2) After the conversion to Christianity, kings are officially desacralized. In effect, the Christian conception (like that of other monotheistic religions and particularly of Islam) makes all men equal before a god who concentrates all powers within himself. Nonetheless, kings keep their ancient sacredness in the popular consciousness (cf. Bloch [1924] 1973);

3) From the beginning of the eighth century, the unction of the kings by the Church sacralizes kingship in Christian terms. But the rite of unction generates an ambiguity: who is superior, the priest who gives the unction, or the king who receives it? Between the eighth and tenth centuries, the priest is subordinate to the king, whose unction has a sacramental valence that places him in direct relation to God: he is a *christus*;

4) With Gregory VII the Church attempts to establish its own superiority over royal authority. Removing the sacramental valence from the kings' unction, the ecclesiastical institution tries to monopolize the relationship with divine law and attempts to secularize kingship (Kern [1914] 1939: 55–56), or in any case to subordinate it to its own authority. This theocratic tendency is implicit in the Christian ideology of the State, according to which the State's task is to translate divine or natural laws into positive law, contributing to the improvement of humanity and thereby procuring its salvation. As Kern writes, "the mediaeval Christian State is not merely a juristic institution, but expresses the ideal of active social betterment and civilization" (ibid.: 71).

This ideology inevitably leads to the priests, as keepers and interpreters of divine law, becoming actively involved in its positive translation, rather than being satisfied with a mere spiritual or ritual supremacy (as in India). At the same time however it gives kingship a religious dignity and function, and thus motivated it to resist the Church's initiatives. The latter, if it actually hopes to control the State, has to be able to condition it in its material powers, and thus has to take on some of its prerogatives and organizing characteristics (centralization, bureaucratization, dominion over a territory). On the other hand, the State, in order to preserve its own autonomy and dignity with respect to the Church, has to preserve and increase the sacred characteristics that the ecclesiastical power is trying to monopolize (cf. Bloch [1924] 1973; Kantorowicz 1957).

So, the rivalry between the two organisms brings them not to differentiate themselves from one another, but rather to assume one the characteristics of the other: the Church becomes "state-like", the State becomes "church-like." Ernst Kantorowicz (1957: 193) effectively summarized the resulting symbolic interchange:

> The pope adorned his tiara with a golden crown, donned the imperial purple and was preceded by the imperial banners when riding in solemn procession through the streets of Rome. The emperor wore under his crown a miter, donned pontifical shoes and other clerical raiments and received, like a bishop, the ring at his coronation. These borrowings affected, in the earlier Middle Ages, chiefly the ruling individuals, both spiritual and secular, until finally the *sacerdotium* had an imperial appearance and the regnum a clerical touch.

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In conclusion, Hinduism, Buddhism and medieval Christianity illustrate different modalities of the priest-king relationship and, more profoundly, the relationship between two aspects of sovereignty:

1) Hinduism subordinates the king to the priest by differentiating their spheres of activity. But as we have seen, this differentiation and its correlate hierarchy stand in opposition to phenomena that contradict them;

2) Both Buddhism and Christianity assign to the king a religious function. Clergy and kingship are therefore partially undifferentiated: the possibility of conflict is even stronger than in the Hindu formula. However, conflict occurs only sporadically in Buddhist society, above all because the *Saṅgha* is composed of individuals who abandon the world (with which they maintain only a relationship of exchange) and who, moreover, constitute a free association of free men (they remain so because they do not take a vow of obedience), lacking the cohesion of a bureaucratic or, at any rate, state organism;

3) Quite different, on the other hand, is the case of the medieval Church, a bureaucratic organization where the principle of obedience prevails, and which attempts to control the State directly, making it a worldly instrument for otherworldly ends. As we have seen, the struggle against the Church pushes the State to assume sacred and religious characteristics. The resulting lack of differentiation between State and Church is resolved therefore at the level of force. The Western development is thus quite a special case. Among other things, it leads to the formation of a "kingly religion" to which the "State religion" is still heir.

THE SYMBOLIC STRUCTURES OF KINGSHIP

In his March 21st speech to Parliament, James I declared: "Kings are justly called gods for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth. For if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king" ([1609] 1965: 307). These bold words reveal the extent to which the king was implicitly deified by theorists of divine-right monarchies. The visible god, chosen by the invisible god, seems to fuse with the latter.

Whether through images of a transcendent god or of immanent gods, why do kings tend to be deified?

The explanations proposed are for the most part psychological: thus, recently, Paul Veyne (1976b: 587) once again took off the shelf the phenomenological theory of religion, maintaining that "the shiver that one feels when standing before a divine statue or a sacred mountain, one also feels when introduced to the presence of the king".[2]But is it experience that produces representation, or representation that generates experience? It is not fair to invoke the existence of a specific experience of the "numinous" which would make one perceive gods and emperors with similar feelings (ibid.: 585–86): the divinity attributed to kings is not reducible to an emotional reflex of a "heteronomic dependence," but is conceptualized in a precise way, and augmented and renewed with appropriate rituals (cf. Meek 1931: 138, 42, 148–49; Heesterman 1957; Inden 1978); the king himself must behave like a divinity and hide when he needs to behave like a man (cf. Meek 1931: 10, 121; Heusch 1972: 23). We can at least say that the emotions that surround the figure of the king are perpetuated and reproduced through a corpus of practices and representations: they have thus nothing spontaneous about them. Indeed, the king's same authority can have radically different representations in different societies; this demonstrates that the theory of "sentimental deification," of the political emotion of heteronomic dependence, propounded by Veyne (1976b: 567), is inadequate.

It is therefore representations, and not emotions, that we should study. Furthermore, we must also refrain from confounding the ideas we ourselves associate with certain words with the ideas other cultures associate with them. The word "god" has totally different meanings in different cultures: for us, the word evokes a being who is omnipotent, immortal, invisible, and so forth. It therefore seems inconceivable that a king, whose mortality and lack of omnipotence, for instance, anybody can recognize, might be considered a god. But in innumerable theologies, gods are considered neither immortal nor omnipotent, and the opposition between the human and the divine is not as distinct as it appears to us.

Scholars often emphasize the marked differences existing between ideologies of kingship where the king is truly considered like a god (Pharaonic Egypt, for instance), and ideologies where he is considered only the privileged interlocutor of a god, his helper or representative in exceptional cases (as in Mesopotamia and China) (Frankfort 1948). Less often do these scholars note that these claims should be qualified by taking into consideration the entire pantheon and the entire ideology of the divine. The Indian king is often considered a god and

2. Editor's translation. This passage is not in the English translation of Veyne (1990), which is abridged. —Ed.

treated as such; but in Hindu theology, where gods are innumerable, have human passions and where their very existence depends on rites performed by men, "divinity is cheap" (Basham [1967] 1971: 88). Moreover, brahmans are "more divine" than kings. The Pharaoh himself is certainly a god, but a god amongst other gods, who participates with them in a cosmic drama, from which he sometimes emerges the victim of his opponent, Seth (Frankfort 1948: 123–39).

These observations help explain why it is so difficult to compare ideologies of kingship in terms of degrees of "divinity" or "sacredness" attributed to the king function.

What is more important is to specify the structural characteristics that, in the right context, lead to a sacralization of kingship.

Whatever forms the sacredness of the king takes, this sacredness is perpetually motivated by its capacity to represent society to itself as a totality and, better still, to realize it as such. Moreover, since social reproduction depends on the reproduction of nature, the king is frequently thought to guarantee the latter (cf. ibid.: 3).

Insofar as he actually achieves social totalization as part of the totalization of the cosmos, the king is attributed with exceptional powers; moreover, he possesses the characteristics of the totality that he creates and represents, extending himself, like that totality, in time and in space. Totality and divinity are in the end equivalent notions (cf. Durkheim [1912] 1960: 630, n. 2): the king is therefore deified insofar as he is fully identified with totality (Kantorowicz 1957: 271–72). But even in the absence of this complete identification, it is still true that the king is closer to totality (represented here by a transcendent god) than his subordinates—subordinate to him precisely because of his privileged relationship with totality.

The king is the abstract idea of totality which aspires to be concretely realized. Such concrete realization is rendered in part possible thanks to a process of doubling of the king in: 1) "doubles" of his ordered dimension in a) space and b) time, and; 2) "doubles" of his disordered dimension:

1a) It is not difficult to understand why the king, as a totality, must split himself in space. By definition he has the gift of ubiquity: he is present everywhere—for instance in every court in which his law is administered (ibid.: 5). This ubiquity is often represented by sanctuaries or statues of the king spread across the land. A person is deified though her or his multiplication in the form of statues: this was understood perfectly in Republican Rome, where erecting statues to living people was prohibited, save those for victors in war, which in

any case represented Jupiter (cf. Versnel 1970: 84–93). When, after the victory of Thapsus, a statue was decreed for Caesar, he was automatically declared a demigod (ἡμίθεος) (Weinstock 1971: 41, 53). The same idea can be found in Babylon: whereas the king's person was not considered divine, the statues that represent his person were! (Frankfort 1948: 303).

Elsewhere, the king's person is doubled through his living alter egos. For example, a double of the king existed in both sectors of the capital of the kingdom of Yoruba of Oyo: as doubles of the king, they were killed at his death. With the aid of these and other "doubles" (Morton-Williams 1967: 61–63), the king concretely represents the unification of differences, both at a political-territorial level and at other levels.

Another and more important realization of the same principle is constituted by the way the structure of the court, or the capital, is generalized in all of the subordinate parts of the kingdom (cf. Lombard 1967: 83; Wilks 1967: 210). The reproduction of this structure throughout the territory allows the extension of the king's power to be measured, and allows the sphere of influence of one king to be distinguished from the sphere of influence of another; it also facilitates administrative coordination.

At the very least, the penetration of the king's person into society is realized by his subjects' imitation of his behavior. The king and his court tend thus to become the model of behavior (etiquette, and so forth); especially in modern Europe (cf. Elias 1969), the king has extended his control over society in this way. Giacomo Casanova keenly observed: "In those days the French imagined that they loved their king; in good faith and by habit, they repeated all his affectations" ([1791–98] 1959, II: 16). But if all people behave like the king, then the collectivity *is* the king: this unlimited generalization of kingship leads paradoxically to its dissolution into a new sovereign: the people. For this reason, kingship must periodically recreate the distinction between the whole (king) and the part (court) that symbolizes the whole; from this comes the phenomenon of fashion, which intensifies precisely in the capitals of modern European monarchies, where the diffusion of information is most rapid.

1b) Kingly totalization happens not only in space, but also in time. Kingship endures, though kings die. The successor is therefore the "double" of his predecessor. This reproduction in time takes different forms and, moreover, does not pertain only to succession. Thus, for example, the king of Oyo had a spiritual double (Orun) who remained with God in heaven: every year it was necessary to divine whether the king was on good terms with this double; if he was not, he

was forced to commit suicide (Morton-Williams 1967: 54). There is therefore a continuous kingship at a transcendent level, which must be realized in time though immanent kingship.

So too among the Minangkabau (Sumatra), the immanent king corresponds to his transcendent double, who is in the Seventh Heaven (Abdullah 1972: 192–93). The dichotomy between the permanent divine aspect and the transient human aspect is immanent in the very person of the Jukun king. The king's immortal and inviolable part is called *juwe* and is concentrated in his heart and right arm. Therefore his successor, in whom the divine king must reincarnate himself (cf. also Lombard 1967: 84), eats the heart of his predecessor (Meek 1931: 131) (this custom exists also among the Yoruba [cf. Morton-Williams 1967: 53]), and the successor keeps the deceased king's right arm as a relic (Young 1966: 148–49). Reliquaries or regalia, insofar as they last longer than people, often incorporate the permanent aspect of kingship. Regalia moreover can appear as epiphanies of the transcendence that legitimates kingship. Thus, according to the *Malay annals* (*Sejarah Melayu* 1952: 42–43), the regalia of the first sultan were brought from overseas by the fakir who converted the sultan to Islam and who gave him his title. The true sultan is at base the totality of regalia, the possession of which legitimates those who are successively in charge of it.

The need to create doubles of the king who survive his death is particularly motivated by the difficulties caused by the interregnum. In many societies, in effect, the period of the interregnum coincides with an actual suspension of kingship, which translates into a temporary disaggregation of society. From this comes the tendency to abolish the interregnum and to introduce the principle of dynastic continuity, independent of the rite of coronation. Thus in India, the most ancient royal ritual presumes a period of interregnum in which the kingship dies with the king; but the rites of coronation (*abhiṣeka*) of the high Middle Ages (700–1200 CE) reflects the elimination, or at least the reduction to the minimum necessary, of interregnum. The continuity of kingship is never interrupted (Inden 1978: 42–43).

The kingdoms of Dahomey and Hawaii offer two striking examples of the interregnum's consequences for societies where kingship centers on the king's physical person: anarchy and violence reign supreme until the new king accedes to the throne (Lombard 1967: 79; Kamakau [1866-71] 1961: 22, 266; Steward 1828: 216). Similar phenomena still occurred in Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, justified by the old medieval idea that the new king is not the king until he has been crowned (Kantorowicz 1957: 317–18, 324). The

interregnum can be avoided by doubling the king. One common method consists in associating the ruling king with his successor: this method can be seen, for example, in medieval India (Inden 1978: 38), in Tahiti (Henry 1928: 188), in medieval Europe (Kern [1914] 1939: 24 n. 13), in Egypt (Frankfort 1948: 101), and so on.

But the most notable method was adopted by English and French monarchies at the beginning of the fifteenth century (Giesey 1960: 26–27, 81) and reached its greatest development in the Renaissance. This method consisted in the fabrication of an effigy of the defunct king, which was treated as if it were alive (people pretended to feed it and so forth). In this way, the king was fictitiously kept alive until his successor took his place.

The ideological underpinnings of this ritual practice have been admirably reconstructed by Kantorowicz (1957). It is a practice that illustrates the idea—especially developed in English law—according to which the king has two bodies: the natural body, which is mortal, and the "body politic", which is immortal. The latter is a corporation of one, or rather a *corporation sole*, that is a *corporatio* made up of one individual who is considered eternal. Like the Phoenix, the king is the individual who represents the species and who each time is reborn in identical form, the perfect representation of kingship as totality in time and space.

The funerary effigy represents the king's eternal body, which continues to live until it is incarnated in his successor. The contrast between the king's eternal body and the cadaver—whose human misery is obsessively underscored, even in statuary—illustrates "the triumph of Death and the triumph over Death" (ibid.: 425).

The assertion of the idea that the king has an "immortal body," and thus that he is, at least in this attribute, divine (ibid.: 272), is concurrent with the monarchy's assertion of divine right. Divine right is correspondingly linked to the need to maintain the continuity of the crown over time, and thus to eliminate the interregnum. The successor takes the place of his predecessor "by divine choice"—it is God who makes the successor *be born*. The divine approval, and thus the divine substance of kingship, is in the very blood of the king, and is not given to him at the moment of the unction (ibid.: 331 ff.). The use of kingly effigies is situated in the position of a compromise between this new theory of succession—which implies that succession happens automatically upon the death of the reigning king—and the old medieval theory according to which succession happened at the moment of coronation: in this compromise, succession takes

place at the moment of the funeral and of the burial of the deceased king. During the period of the interregnum that precedes this rite, images manifest the continual presence of the king in his immortal body (cf. Giesey 1960: 1);

2) We have already illustrated the essentially ambivalent nature of the king: violent and peaceful, disordered and ordering, and so forth. This ambivalence is manifested in the concrete history of kingship, with its conquerors, with its periods of war and of peace. But if kingship can encompass this concrete history, it is because it already contains its paradigm at a symbolic level. In effect, kingship is attributed with the property of creating order by encompassing disorder into itself, transforming and neutralizing it. Without this process, which makes kingship oscillate, more or less often, between order and disorder, kingship would dissolve. Paradoxically, then, kingship neutralizes the disorder that it itself helps to create.

The king thus holds in himself the negative principle he fights: and it is *with* this principle that he fights it. But victory is possible only when the internal negative aspect is completely expelled in the course of its struggle against the external negative aspect: putting to death his enemy and every other bearer of disorder, the king puts to death that which is disordered and violent within himself, and can therefore transform into the principle of order incarnate. The danger that threatens kingship is therefore the blocking of this mechanism—the danger not only that the enemy might win, but also that the expulsion of the king's negative aspect may not be successful. In the case of such failure, the king becomes an element of disorder, an enemy to sacrifice and to drive out.

All kingships thus have developed cathartic mechanisms in which the catharsis of society coincides with the catharsis of the king's negative aspect. The king is represented in these cases by his "monstrous double" (as René Girard defines him), who can be represented by a prisoner of war, by a criminal, or by actual monsters, animal and natural (cf., for example, Anderson 1972: 12). The catharsis of the negative aspect can be tragic or comic, tragic if these "monsters" are put to death in a sacrificial rite, comic when they are "killed" by the laughter that they cause (the court's monsters are also the court's fools, found in most kingships). The two transformations of the negative aspect can be realized in more or less direct forms; they can, for example, be manifested in theatrical forms: instead of a *true* evil king being put to death, a fictitious representation of such a king, provided by an actor, is killed; instead of laughing at a true imbecile, people laugh at an actor who pretends to be such on the stage, and so on.

Between king and fool, king and sacrificial victim, there is always a very close relationship. Together, they represent the two complementary aspects of kingly totalization: they are the agents of incessant transformations of negative into positive, transformations that are represented in a controlled symbolic space (Willeford 1969: 151–73).

But the symbol refers to a reality whose control is always precarious: the king's disordered double, terrifying or ridiculous, reminds him of the risk that he always runs—the risk of turning into a fool. The threat of this transformation looms as an already tragic premonition of the king's final transformation into a victim, of the inevitable triumph of death.

Once upon a time kings represented to all this drama of all. Today, the drama is immortalized in theaters, erected by kings. Hamlet, deprived of Yorick, continues to madly combine within himself the king and the fool, Lear to discover that "when we are born we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools" (*King Lear*, IV, 6).

The King is dead; long live the King!

CHAPTER NINE

Mourning

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF MOURNING

The term "mourning" designates the totality of social practices and psychological processes elicited by a person's death. These practices and processes last a certain amount of time. According to traditional interpretation, this is attributable to a gradual attenuation of grief and of the initial impression produced by the loss of a beloved object.

However, a number of sociologists (following Hertz [1907] 1928) and psychologists (following Freud [1915] 1959) have demonstrated that separation from a beloved person does not happen in a single stroke and requires time, because it is the result—and in no sense a guaranteed one—of a specific "labor" on the part of the subject and the collectivity which demands the expenditure of a certain amount of energy (cf. Lagache 1938).

Freud has explained the psychological mechanism of this labor: the beloved object is connected to the libido through countless images. In order to accept the loss of the object, the subject has to relive each of the ties that united him or her to the deceased. When this process concludes, death comes to be accepted: the libido has been separated from the deceased "piece by piece," and can be now reinvested in other objects. The sign of the end of psychological mourning is therefore the transition from indifference to external reality to a renewed interest in it. Freud's theory was later enriched and complicated, especially with respect to survivors' ambivalent feelings toward the dead (cf. Abraham [1924]

1927; Klein 1950; Bowlby 1960, 1961). Nevertheless, it remains the basis for an explanation of the individual psychology of mourning.

When we turn our attention to the collective dimensions of mourning, however, a rather different picture from the one constructed by Freud emerges: manifestations of grief depend on the respective social positions of the deceased and the bereaved, on the degree of their relationship, and so on. Not only is mourning regulated, but even emotions themselves seem to have been learned and have social, not libidinal, motives.

The manifestations of mourning in ancient Chinese society are particularly telling in this respect. Marcel Granet ([1922] 1953: 233) has defined them as "a ritual syntax": "a true language whose rules and correctness are established by the grammarians, i.e., the ritualists, a language moreover in which philosophical analysis is able to rediscover a logic that accords with the intelligible order of the universe" (ibid.: 223–24).

The mourner's clothing, for example, signals the "class" of his or her mourning and the nature of his or her obligations. From the number of threads in the warp of the fabric one can learn whether the mourner is only allowed to answer yes or no through gestures, or if he or she can answer orally but not speak first, or can speak but must avoid taking part in a discussion, or, lastly, can take part in it, but not to the point of taking pleasure in it (ibid.: 227).

It is forbidden to a Chinese person to express grief without the aid of a symbolic apparatus that is codified, prescribed, and consecrated. Mourning gestures constitute a "system of signs" (ibid.: 242) that is superimposed on natural feelings. Spontaneous expression of such feelings is considered "barbarous"; the civilized person follows the dictates of a rite that prescribes, moderates, and regulates emotions.

Conventional and mandatory displays of mourning have as their goal a "therapeutics of social invention" (ibid: 238); they generate a catharsis of grief and are opposed to the passive behavior that is characteristic of a state of mournful torpor.

Confronted with this, as with countless other examples of the codification of feelings and their expression, one is tempted to harden an opposition between the "sincerity" of feelings spontaneously expressed, and the "hypocrisy" of exterior manifestations of mourning. Thus formulated, the opposition is a false one. Sincerity is compatible with both convention and obligation (cf. Mauss [1921] 1969: 275); in order to be expressed, a feeling must be communicated, and must

therefore be transformed into a message, an impossible task without a system of conventions. The more developed the code, the more numerous the shades of feelings it allows one to express.

The opposition between individual spontaneity and collective convention does not exist by default: it is indeed meaningless in most societies.

In fact, the social aspect of mourning is not simple support for the individual work of grief (as, for example, Ernesto de Martino claims [1958] 1975). Death is the occasion for a reunion of a vast number of people: relatives, neighbors, friends, and clients gather around the deceased. No group can form and endure on a given occasion without the observance of certain rules and conventions: in a gathering of people that is often quite vast, particular forms of behavior, language, ornamentation, dress, and nourishment must signify different categories of mourners, in such a way as to dictate appropriate behaviors. The conventions of mourning also play this communicative function and cannot be simplistically reduced to a cathartic function, to dramatizations, or to spontaneous projections of the "labor of mourning" as described by Freud. One need only think of the often notable duration of funerary rites (thirty-three days and thirty-two nights among the Ngaju Dayak of Kalimantan [cf. Scharer 1966: 15–25]), the enormous amount of labor and riches they require, the wide-spread custom of performing two funerals for the dead—some-times several years apart from each other (Hertz [1907] 1928)—or the fact that death raises problems concerning succession to titles and to political and religious offices, and makes necessary the transmission and the division of the deceased's property, to realize that the psychological process of mourning is encompassed by other processes that cannot be merely reduced to it.

A study of mourning, therefore, requires that, together with the psychological one, at least the sociological dimension be taken into account. Neither should one neglect a specifically cognitive dimension, for death also poses conceptual problems.

It is erroneous to aspire to give mourning a fictitious unity, reducing all of its dimensions to a single one. Each dimension has its own rules, which may be in contrast with the rules of others.

This article, however, will address only the homologies between the various dimensions or "levels" of mourning. Indeed, the main task of a theory of mourning is to explain how these dimensions can coexist and reinforce one another, articulating ideas, emotions, and social roles.

THE COORDINATION OF DIMENSIONS

In all three dimensions considered here (psychological, sociological, and cognitive) there appears the same basic procedure. In its first stage, the experience of loss is accompanied by denial. Death is, in the end, accepted, however this requires a symbolic substitution: something takes the place of that which was lost and reconstitutes it at another level.

In its psychological dimension, this process corresponds to the "labor of mourning," grounded in the paradox that acceptance of loss is possible through a process that requires its initial denial. In order to convince him or herself of the loss of the object, the subject must relive all the object's aspects that connected it to his or her own libido. Thus, the beloved object becomes present as never before: one could even say that, for the subject, the object has never been so alive. However, the mental reproduction of every aspect of the deceased cannot but reveal its concrete absence to the libidinal call: whence come, presumably, the frustration (that is, grief) and then separation, which finally gets the upper hand, albeit with limits. In fact, a certain continuity of the object is probably a condition for the subject's very continuity: the object lost must persist in some way, by means of an image, a relic, etc., or must be recuperated into a new object that can function as a metaphor for the old one.

An analogous mechanism is found in the sociological dimension of mourning: the loss is, at first, negated. For example, it is quite common to prohibit the use of the deceased's property for long periods of time (six to twelve months in the Micronesian island of Yap [Labby 1976: 67–68]) as the dead may still be using it. Yet, the state of abandonment of the dead's orchards and fields only makes more evident the ultimate necessity of inheritance—of the creation, that is, of a substitute for the deceased in the system of social relations. The ultimate acceptance, on the part of society, of the loss of one of its members coincides therefore with the creation of a substitute, which allows the resumption of the relationships interrupted by death. Even in this case the substitution carries a certain degree of symbolism, at once metaphoric and metonymic. The living become in fact the image of the dead whom they substitute for and, reciprocally, the dead become the model for the living (metaphoric relations). Heirs can enjoy their rights thanks to their possession of the dead's relics (which function as regalia), or because—as in Fiji and Yap—their homes are built on the same stone platforms where their ancestors reside (metonymic relations).

Finally, the same paradoxical process of affirmation and negation is in force in the more properly conceptual dimension of mourning. The non-sense of death, at first denied, is consequently accepted, but as non-sense only with respect to the referential system of existence in which the survivors continue to live. The transcendence, void of sense, into which the deceased was thrown by death, becomes a superior sense, precisely because it transcends and therefore encompasses the "sense" perceived in existence. An example of this overturning is provided by the funerary rite of the Sa'dan Toraja of Sulawesi (Indonesia), its different phases corresponding to movements of the deceased along the horizon (i.e., the threshold between visible and invisible).

The first phase of the funerary rite is connected with the south-west (*aluk rampe matampu*, "rituals of the direction where the sun sets"), which is associated with death and all that which is negative: the color black, darkness, impurity, and so on. In the final phase the position of the dead undergoes a complete reversal, and moves from south-west to north-east. This latter direction is associated with light, the color white, life, and, above all, with ritual practices linked to the cultivation of rice, the main source of subsistence for the Toraja.

A crucial stage in the transformation is the rite of *mangrara pare*—"covering rice with blood"—which involves the sacrifice in the rice field of numerous pigs that belonged to the deceased: the shedding of their blood signifies a definitive change in property (Koubi 1975: 119). The dead person is transformed into an entity called *deata*, who guarantees the productivity of the rice for his or her successors (Veen 1965; 1966).

The rite is particularly interesting as the three dimensions of mourning are here perfectly integrated: the end of mourning coincides with the transferal of the dead's property, with the definitive acceptance of his death, and with his assumption of a transcendent existence.

In sum, the three dimensions considered here have in common a final compromise that combines the acceptance of death with its negation: the loss is recognized, but its reality is transformed. The lost object is resuscitated at another level of existence and meaning, which encompasses and transcends others.

Together with the fundamental correspondence between the processes that take place at the three levels of mourning, it is possible to find other, more specific correspondences at the level of "funerary technique," so to speak. A striking parallelism exists between a specifically psychological aspect of the work of mourning (the reliving of everything that motivated an attachment to the deceased) and an important component of funerary rites: the laments. The

latter consist, in fact, of lists, of enumerations of the qualities of the dead and of what death has taken away. An even more significant fact is that this enumeration is based on the presupposition that death did not occur. In other words, just as Freud claims, the representation of the dead during the work of mourning entails as a condition the provisional negation of death.

It is necessary, at this point, to introduce two examples to illustrate these correspondences.

The first example is offered by a funeral lament for a Hawaiian chief, collected by the missionary William Ellis in his *Polynesian researches* ([1839] 1842: 178–179):

> Alas, alas dead is my chief,
> Dead is my lord and my friend;
> My friend in the season of famine,
> My friend in the time of drought,
> My friend in my poverty,
> My friend in the rain and the wind,
> My friend in the heat and the sun,
> My friend in the cold from the mountain,
> My friend in the storm,
> My friend in the calm,
> My friend in the eight seas;[1]
> Alas, alas, gone is my friend,
> And no more will return.

Here, the act of listing extinguishes, one by one, the ties with the deceased: the final stage is necessarily a point of no return. The efficacy of the lament lies in its suggesting and constantly repeating the process of separation, until this actually takes place. One finds here an example of the dialectic between the psychological and the sociological. At first glance, the fact that the lamentations consist of enumerations suggests that the psychological level functions as the cause of the sociological one. In reality, the motivation is transcended and modified by what it motivates: the linguistic structure of the lament, by articulating the work of

1. A figurative term for the channels between the different islands of the group. [Footnote from Ellis, interpolated in brackets into the lament by Valeri in his quotation of the text. —Ed.]

mourning, also makes it possible. The efficacy of the formula derives therefore from its ability to organize and socialize that which pre-exists it and motivates it. The relation between the two levels is obviously dialectical, not causal.

A second example allows us to deepen the theme of efficacy in the social articulation of the work of mourning. Among the LoDagaa of Ghana there is, in lament as in other aspects of funerary rites, a split or even an opposition in behaviors vis-à-vis the dead. Whereas members of the deceased's lineage sing his praises by enumerating his virtues, members of other lineages sing songs in which they insult him and list his defects. In both cases, the singers pretend that the deceased is not dead (Goody 1962: 100-1).

The scission between the singers and between the content of their songs is a form—more complex than the Hawaiian one—of the social organization of the work of mourning: not only are lamenters multiplied and represent to each other the loss of the object (enabling in this way its apprehension and consequent catharsis), but they also have their counterweight in another group of singers who express the mourners' aggressive feelings toward the dead (the relationship with the dead is ambivalent [cf. Freud [1912–13] 1952: 51]), which they themselves cannot show.

In this way, the individual work of mourning is extended and transcended in a kind of theater where the subject's ambivalent feelings are represented and objectified. There is thus a true and proper social division of mourning labor, a division that makes all the more efficacious. Indeed, the efficacy of the rite consists in its ability to coordinate the various systems and levels where the subjects' experience develops. The more levels coordinated, the easier it becomes for the subjects to recover their unity. Enhancing the coordination of levels and persons in the funerary rite is indeed the answer to a crisis that makes the subject more vulnerable to the contradictions between the different dimensions in which his or her existence unfolds.

MIMETIC AND SACRIFICIAL RITES

The critical moment in the process of mourning takes place when the attempt to restore the object is overturned, producing an emotional withdrawal that is the prelude to a new investment in an object (Bowlby 1961). It is as if, after having denied the actuality of death, after having pretended that the deceased "was sleeping" (as the Toraja say, often for several months following the death), the

survivors suddenly inflict on the dead person the only death that is acceptable in their eyes: death in their affections, in their thoughts. Thus we are faced with a new paradox: natural death is negated, but only in order to inflict a psychological and cultural death (cf. de Martino 1975: 213).

A culturally inflicted death is often represented in a sacrifice where the victim is identified with the dead person. We can indeed say that the entire funerary rite oscillates between two poles. During moments where denial prevails, mimetic rites of lamentation are predominant; when the reality of death strikes, sacrificial rites become prevalent. In the first case there is an attempt to reconstitute the deceased in the visible world, an attempt that, through its failure, opens the way for the recognition of the inevitability of death; in the second case, acknowledgement of the killing of the deceased in the visible world has the inverse meaning: it makes possible the belief in his or her invisible life.

A few examples illustrate the two poles of funerary rites. The first phase of mourning and, in general, the entire first exequies of death (where double exequies are performed), are characterized by the paradox that Neckel has called *lebende Leiche*, "living corpse" (cf. ibid.: 211). A man's death is not *seen* immediately. Our experience of the deceased does not change enough from our experience of him or her as a living person, and the familiar features of his or her appearance automatically trigger the usual reactions. In this instance we realize how a body is a system of signs or even, following Charles S. Peirce's definition, that "man is an external sign." Still physically intact, this sign begins to lie: it continues to proclaim life when the decay of death has already imposed its worms. We need, therefore, to be persuaded of this death, which is still invisible, or just barely perceptible through the absence of habitual signs. In the end, this persuasion will be made possible by the physical modifications of the corpse. The decomposing matter and the skeleton are the great persuaders of death. For this reason, they are also the aspects of death most carefully suppressed or neutralized by means of taboos and ritual practices. But other means contribute to quicken the awareness of death. Principal among these is language. The deceased has the bearing of a living person, but *he does not answer*; his sleep is very deep. The lament, when directed to the dead, betrays the impossibility of communicating with them. It is impossible to communicate with the deceased: the limitation of the word that receives no answer is the reality of death. We do not see death, we only see the deceptive signs of life. The word is

an interrogation reduced to a soliloquy; death, the void emptiness that comes to surround discourse.

A homologous mechanism is found in mimetic rites, particularly elaborate among the LoDagaa. In certain sequences of the funeral, the community mimes the activities the deceased has engaged in: hunting, war, agriculture, and so on. These are celebrations of the qualities of the deceased (as are, after all, the enumerations contained in the laments), but at the same time they are also symbolic devices that highlight the absence of the dead person within the group in which he used to perform the activities mimed. Death appears literally as a void that is produced in the midst of the group; the invisible that makes itself visible by contrast. The deceased disappears in this way from the horizon of the living: indeed, LoDagaa state that the purpose of mimetic rites is to "prevent themselves from dreaming about the deceased" (Goody 1962: 107–8, 129–30).

These and other figurative rites are performed by a "funerary group" that consists of distant agnates and/or affines of the bereaved. These are positioned between "proximity" and "distance," between "us" and "the others." As such, they are able to represent the transition of the dead from the inside to the outside of his or her group, from identity to alterity.

A similar function pertains to the buffooneries and jokes performed during the funeral by relatives with whom the dead had a *joking relationship* (ibid.: 69).

In the joke, in the witticism, and in the buffoonery the oscillations of meaning between opposites, or simply between manifest and latent content, correspond to the oscillations of the dead between visible and invisible, between life and death, between integrity and destruction, between identity with the living and alterity.

When the "oscillatory" phase of the lament, the mimetic rite, the masquerade, and the joke is over, when the violent contrasts between acceptance and negation of loss, between laughter and tears come to an end, the deceased has become definitively an *other*, and may therefore be conceived of either as animal or stranger (among the LoDagaa the corpse is dressed as a stranger [cf. ibid.: 69–70]; in Melanesia, the dead are believed to transform into animals such as the shark or the frigate bird, hostile animals from whom it is necessary to maintain a distance [cf. Codrington 1891: 179–80]).

The identification of the dead with a domestic animal such as the buffalo, which is simultaneously "other" (as it is an animal) and "proximate" (as it is

domesticated), explains why sacrifice may be an efficacious symbol of separation. Immolation puts an end to the ambiguity of the beast, iconic of the ambiguity of the deceased: it will become either consumable meat, or a corpse to be thrown away, far from society. In both cases, it will definitely be "other."

The comment of a LoDagaa informant at the moment of the mortuary sacrifice of a cow is revealing regarding this point: "Now they [the bereaved] really know he [the deceased] is dead. He's no longer a human being, but has changed to meat" (Goody 1962: 175; cf. 200–1). Of the first buffalo whose sacrifice enables conceiving the deceased no longer as "sick" but truly dead, the Toraja say it is "fatally wounded at the same time as the man [the deceased]." This equation of the deceased with the buffalo makes comprehensible the prohibition imposed on the dead man's family against eating the meat of the sacrificial animal, which is instead consumed by all others present at the rite (Koubi 1975: 109). The same prohibition exists among the LoDagaa, who explain that the afflicted should not eat "their own dirt" (Goody 1962: 179). The deceased is in fact identified with that which must be separated from the living but is however theirs: dirt.

In the same way, Merina (of Madagascar) call the meat of the victim of the sacrificial rite *hena ratsy*, "bad meat," and prohibit the deceased's family from eating it (Molet 1956: 95).

These prohibitions signify both the kinship between the dead and the bereaved (who cannot "eat themselves") and their separation, achieved through sacrifice.

Among the Ngaju Dayak, the victim of the separatory sacrifice is a man, a stranger. This man is in fact a slave, generally a prisoner of war or a man whose head is "hunted" and is thereafter brought into the village, where it is symbolically "sacrificed" (Hertz [1907] 1928: 61, n. 2).

Sometimes the slave is sent out of the village on a pretext. There, a warrior who has followed him cuts off his head and carries it back, victorious, to the village. When the Dutch colonial government prohibited human sacrifice, the Dayak began to sacrifice buffaloes, which they believe to be men's affines, because both descend from the same ancestor. The identification of the deceased with a "foreign" victim, whose putting to death will "take him away," is very clear. For example, before being sacrificed, the man is dressed in the ordinary clothes of the dead (Grabowsky 1892: 109), the victim's head can be laid over the bones of the deceased (ibid.: 194), and so on.

But the funerary sacrifice of the Ngaju Dayak also involves identification of the victim with the bereaved. This double identification is the condition for complete separation between living and dead, a separation that is represented by the cutting of the victim's head. The head's blood is the sign of the achieved separation, and it is spread on the living to liberate them from mourning. Indeed, Tiwah, the rite's name, means precisely this: "liberation" or "purification" (Hardeland 1859: 608).

The only reason why both the bereaved and the deceased can identify with the victim is because they are already identified with one another in the first place. Indeed, the bereaved are not only identified with the dead by being made impure through their contact with the corpse (which needs to be washed, anointed, dressed, and so on; sometimes, as among the Dayak of the Kapuas River [cf. Hertz (1907) 1928: 9], the relatives must also eat, during the whole period of mourning, its decomposing matter, mixed with rice). Additionally, the very fact that they do not want to detach themselves from the deceased and accept his or her death assimilates them to this death. Both psychologically and socially, they identify with the dead and run the risk of following him to his grave. Their situation is ultimately an intermediary, ambiguous, and still undecided one, like that of the slowly putrefying corpse, like that of the sacrificial victim who, a stranger brought into the village, a domesticated animal, is at the boundary between outside and inside, between strangers and relatives.

However, putting the deceased to death does not result in a total loss: through the sacrifice he or she assumes a new form of existence. While the corpse is destroyed by the process of decomposition, its image survives in memory. One could argue that the corpse is quickly concealed from view so that its image may not be contaminated by the experience of the loss of form. Conversely, concealment of the corpse contrasts with later unearthing of the bones, which becomes the occasion for the second exequies and which makes possible the transformation and definitive establishment of the image of the dead. Indeed, as Trobrianders say, "the relic (*kayvaluba*) brings the departed back to our mind and makes our inside tender" (Malinowski 1962: 133).

Bones are thus of crucial importance in funerary representations: on the one hand, they are the symbol of the definitive character of death—their contrast with the complete remembered image of the deceased has a persuasive force lacking in any other experience. Yet, on the other hand, because bones are

the permanent and stable remains of the dead, they also make him perpetually accessible. Thus, bones and other relics lend their empirical stability to the fleeting memory of the integral image of the dead. This image is reconstituted with the colors of life around the white bones, and the deceased continues to live.

In the *famadihana* funerary rites of Merina of Madagascar, this dialectic assumes an incomparable strength and vividness. The bones of the deceased are exhumed, covered with precious and colorful silk (*lamba mena*, literally "red fabric"), and laid down in a large family grave (Bloch 1971: 145). These are the second exequies of the dead, celebrated no earlier than two years after death. What distinguishes the *famadihana* from other classic examples of second exequies, however, is the habit of using this event as an occasion to unearth and cover with new clothes the bones of those dead who, also buried in the tomb, have not yet been forgotten.

These rites are characterized by well-defined transformations of the emotions of the bereaved, especially in those who see the bones of their dear ones for the first time. The contrast between the remembered image and the skeleton triggers a violent emotion, to the point that relatives have to be forced to approach the tomb, to view and touch the remains of the dead. In this moment, the emotions of mourning are repeated with great intensity: the reality of death is recognized as never before. This phase is followed, however, by one where the skeletons are wrapped in a great quantity of *lamba mena*, whose bright colors undoubtedly represent life and whose name (red) probably alludes to blood. "A body" is thus reconstituted on the existing skeleton. The body, produced by the affection of the living, hides bones from sight and serves as a scaffolding for the intact image of the deceased.

The efficacy of the idea of the dead's reconstitution is demonstrated by the drastic emotional change of the bereaved once the remains are wrapped in fabrics. The women who had held the remains of the deceased in their laps in a state of depression now take them in their arms and begin to dance almost like Bacchae; relatives who had a "joking relationship" with the deceased pretend to prevent them from going back to their graves (Bloch 1971: 159).

In the form of relics or images—purely mental or material—such as statues, shadows, or ancestors, the dead continue to live in the memory of the living; and as long as this memory endures, the dead will continue to be an integral part of society, to receive offerings and sacrifices, to inflict punishments and to grant rewards. Positioned at the boundary between visible and invisible, they

mediate between society and the forces that transcend it. However, the dead can continue to exist socially only because, as happens for example in the Trobriands (cf. Weiner 1976: 84), survivors perpetuate around their remains the exchanges and relations that made them exist socially when they were alive. Consciousness realizes in this way that the condition for social existence is no different for living and dead, that one lives and continues to live at the intersection of relations and exchanges that are more lasting than the individuals and the objects that actualize them.

It is also as permanent lessons of this social law that the dead emerge as the incarnation and custodians of society.

CHAPTER TEN

Play

Translated by Nicholas DeMaria Harney

"THIS IS PLAY"

You simply have to open the entry "Play" in any good European-language dictionary to realize the extraordinary semantic range of this word.[1] This expansiveness paradoxically contrasts with the restricted space that is officially granted to play in social life.

Scientists are understandably distrustful of this proliferation of meanings: "The fact that there is a common term for various activities does not mean that these can be explained with the same mechanism or that they are all determined by the same set of conditions; it merely demonstrates that people did not deem it necessary to distinguish these in common use. For a long time the word 'play' was a second order linguistic term to describe an apparently voluntary action, that however does not seem to have any biological or social use" (Millar 1968: 11).

But a premature desire for the rigor of definitions can be worse than the use of a common concept: so, the view of psychologist Harold Schlosberg (1947)—who considered the concept of "play" as irredeemably vague and useless scientifically—had the effect of discouraging scientific interest in playful activities for some time.

1. Thanks to Mario Motti for his assistance with some terms in translation. —Trans.

According to Schlosberg the label "play" indicates heterogeneous phenomena that should be studied separately. Some of those activities so-called play would be nothing other than the expression of childish aptitude: the poor ability to discriminate between phenomena and to generalize. One says that a dog that chases a ball "plays": in fact, according Schlosberg, it does nothing but respond in a "generalized" (nonspecific) way to a small object that moves. So-called play, in other cases, is nothing more than a learned behavior that is switched on with the occurrence of any of the circumstances that are present in the original learning situation, or when the threshold that primarily stimulates the production of a behavior is lowered.

In the last twenty years, however, there has been a strong increase in experimental studies of play and a point of view has been adopted according to which play is not a behavior in itself but an aspect of a set of human and animal behaviors: "Thus, play is a borderline phenomena to a number of human activities and, in its own playful way, it tries to elude definition." (Erikson 1963: 212).

The criteria to distinguish playful behaviors from the not-playful ones are not evidently absolute and in particular they will vary depending on the species considered. In subhuman primates and humans, the criterion is provided by a signal (for example, laughter or fake bites; cf. van Hooff 1972) that the animal performs to communicate the playful character of its behavior. The signal "this is a game" has a metacommunicative value: in this way it defines the relationship between two animals and makes it possible to distinguish it from other forms of relationships with which it could be confused.

It is known that in certain species playful behaviors resemble those of combat. It is the metacommunicative signal "this is a game" that avoids confusing them. When baboons, for example, do not see this signal, they react to a "play-like attack" as if it were a genuine attack (Miller 1973). The same phenomenon is well known in human play: the laugh or the smile indicates that a behavior that might normally be aggressive is free of aggressive intention; it is a game, a fiction.

The signal "this is play" is of fundamental importance, not only because it allows the existence of the set of behaviors—mimicking, fictitious, ghost-like, etc.—whose importance grows the higher we climb on the evolution scale, and which make it possible for relative "freedom" with respect to the reality that is the basis of the adaptation of the human species, but also because it represents the first manifestation of a metacommunicative function that is essential for the development of communication and, ultimately, of language.

The discrimination between "play" and "nonplay," between "fantasy" and "nonfantasy" implies at least the genesis of "ego," i.e., a distinction between primary processes (unconscious) and secondary-processes (consciousness). According to Gregory Bateson (1972: 185), play is in fact a phenomenon intermediate between phenomena purely primary as dreaming (when we dream we are not aware of the fact that we dream, there is no signal that distinguishes the dreamlike activity from that which is not dreaming) and phenomena purely secondary (in which, instead of emotions-signs or signs explained, there are signs not explained, whose properties are not confused with those that they indicate: the word "cat" does not mean scratching).

Play and fiction generally imply that two behaviors are at the same time identified and distinguished. The mimesis of an actual behavior (for example, a combat [fight]) seems, in fact, to be confused with what it designates, but at the same time it is distinguished from the latter, due to the signal "this is a game" that puts it, so to speak, "in frame," that is, it indicates that the rules that apply to the playful behavior are different from those applicable to that which is not playful.

But, unlike a purely logical "frame"—which distinguishes between entities of the same logical type—the psychological "frame" that makes play possible allows one to discriminate between entities that belong to different types of logic: i.e., between messages consisting of emotions-signs and messages constituted from simulations of emotions-signs (play, threat, histrionics, etc.). This explains why play and artistic fiction in general have always been associated with logical paradoxes, but it also makes one aware of their creative character: without the paradoxes of abstraction, communication would never transcend the stage of emotions–signs: "Life would then be an endless interchange of stylized messages, a game with rigid rules and unrelieved by change or of humor" (Bateson 1972: 193).

PLAY AND IMMATURITY

The metacommunicative capacity to express and to recognize the signal that "this is a play" offers, therefore, a criterion to distinguish, in primates, playful behavior from those behaviors that are not playful.

This ability correlates to an increased importance (in evolutionary terms) of play, which in turn is a function of a longer period of immaturity. In fact, there

is a direct relationship (already recognized by Karl Groos) between the position of an animal species on the evolutionary scale, the length of its period of immaturity, and the importance that play assumes for that species.

In humans, the prolonged immaturity is, according to Irven De Vore (see Eimerl and De Vore 1965; see also Leroi-Gourhan 1964), the evolutionary result of two contradictory selective pressures, which formed early Proto-hominids. The first pressure pushed toward bipedal locomotion and therefore, toward the liberation of the hand for tasks not locomotive. The second pressure tended to increase the volume of the brain so as to be able to receive the more complex program required by the new features of the hands. However, the erect position and the bipedal locomotion produced structural changes of the skeleton and in particular of the pelvis: the birth canal is narrowed to give the pelvis greater resistance.

From here there is a contradiction: a being with a larger brain would have to pass through a smaller opening during childbirth. The contradiction is resolved by an increase in the initial immaturity and by the extrauterine development of the brain (which at the time of birth has a volume of about 335cm but then increases until it reaches 1300cm). The immaturity implies that at least part of adult behaviors are not immediately available to the child but must be assimilated through a learning process, or mastered, at each stage of the biological development, by means of practices not linked to external stimuli.

Not being autonomous, the baby is in a state of dependence on adults. The latter, on the one hand, become the object of observation and "imitation" by the child; on the other hand, adults offer security and freedom from environmental pressure, which are necessary conditions for the child to experiment with behaviors that he analyzed so far, until he will be able to fully master them.

According to J. S. Bruner (1976), human play (and partially, that of the more advanced monkeys) presupposes learning from observation (or "imitation"), which depends on two prerequisites that can be studied experimentally: 1) The ability to perceive the difference between their own or others' embodiment of a certain behavior. This implies the recognition of themselves, which is the condition to assume the other, or certain aspects of the other's behavior, as models. Bruner argues that this mechanism is identical to that of the deixis in linguistics: for example, the use of the personal pronoun "I" presupposes learning the difference between when I say "I" and when you say "I"; 2) The ability to build sequences of actions that correspond to external models, coordinating elements learned and mastered one by one.

Children's ability to manipulate develops from actions that must be improved and mastered individually and then combined in sequences. Adult behavior is therefore not simply imitated but is analyzed through the combination of constituent parts in various combinations during play. In the end, a child will eventually reproduce the adult combination that served as a model. Play is not simply *mimicry*.

At this point, one understands the importance of the signal "this is a game": it allows the child to carry out an exploration and combination of activities without running the risk of being punished because of an incorrect reproduction of the behavior that "imitates" or because it has violated the rules.

At the same time, the mechanism for the reproduction of adult behavior through play and the analytical and artificial freedom that is granted to immature members of the species is of fundamental importance from an evolutionary point of view: "The activity of playing offers an excellent opportunity to try combinations of behavior that would never be tested under the pressure of functional activity" (Bruner 1976: 3).

It is, therefore, through playing during this period of immaturity that new combinations arise or are experienced, which later on can be revealed as useful to the entire species. For example, the experiments of Junichiro Itani (1958) prove that when one eliminates a single pressure (for example, hunger) in a group of Japanese macaques in a state of freedom, the increase of playful activity that follows leads to the introduction of innovations. Even if they are not always the instigators, the young are always the experimenters, and their experiments have a crucial role in the adoption of innovations by the entire group.

This "thrust to the variation" associated with play also helps to explain the variations in the behavior of chimpanzees as it relates to the variation of the environment in which they live.

Playful activities have a crucial role in the evolution of the use of the tools: "Play, given its concomitant freedom from reinforcement and its setting in a relatively pressureless environment, can produce the flexibility that makes tool using possible" (Bruner 1976: 42).

Play is also important for the development of language. In this regard, Bruner sets out the hypothesis that the fundamental structures that characterize play (one consists of a function and its arguments; the other, on the contrary, consists of an argument and all its functions) are identical to the predicative structure, which is one of the universals of language. In other words, a toy coexists with a number of acts, and an act with a certain number of toys. Similarly,

in language one has a series of expressions like, John has a hat, John is a man, John jumps the fence, etc., and another set of the expressions like, he brushes the hat, he carries the hat, he throws away the hat, etc. (Bruner 1976: 43, 49). Commutations of the same type are present in the language games of three-year-old children, as described by R. H. Weir (1962).

PLAY, "EGO," AND CULTURAL CREATION

Both Jean Piaget and Sigmund Freud and his followers have pointed out, although in different ways, the "egocentric" character of human childhood play.

It is well known that Piaget assumes the existence of two fundamental poles of behavior: assimilation and accommodation. For the child, the adjustment of his movements and his perception of objects constitutes the pole of accommodation; the opposite pole consists in assimilating reality into sensory-motor schemes and into his own activity. This assimilation has two complementary aspects. The first one is active repetition and consolidation: it is functional and reproductive assimilation. The child grows "functioning." The second aspect is that of "mental digestion," i.e., the perception or conception of the object as it is incorporated into real or feasible action. Of course, the two aspects of assimilation are closely related: the child assimilates objects to actions that then become schema. These schemas are the functional equivalents of the concepts and the logical relationships that appear in the subsequent stages of development.

Assimilation and accommodation are found in all the stages of the development of intelligence and scientific thinking. However, while rational, or scientific, assimilation is not centered on the self, the initial assimilation of the child is centered in the individual, or egocentric. Play corresponds precisely to the egocentric stage of the development of intelligence: it is "the outer pole of the assimilation of the reality to ego while at the same time have something of the creative imagination which will be the motor of all future thought and even reason" (Piaget [1945] 1962: 159).

Piaget distinguishes between practice play and symbolic play. Practice play reveals the first dissociation between assimilation and accommodation, and when the child has learned to perform a certain act, he repeats his actions not to continue to learn them or to investigate them, "but only for the joy to master them, to treat himself to the spectacle of his own power, and [the joy to] subdue the universe to it" (Piaget [1945] 1962: 159).

Symbolic play (the "pretend to") is the next step in the process of dissociation between assimilation and accommodation. This stage of play requires the ability to form images, or internalize imitations, intermediate between the indices (not yet separated from the perceived object) and the purely "arbitrary" signs, between sensory-motor schema and logical concepts. In addition, while the images are individual signifiers, the signs are always social.

In symbolic play, "meaning is simply assimilated to the self, that is to say evoked for momentary interest or immediate satisfaction, and the signifier consists then, rather than a precise mental imitation, in an imitation by means of material frames in which the objects are themselves treated as alternatives. . . . In other words, while in cognitive representation there is a permanent equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation, in ludic symbolism there is a predominance of assimilation in the relationship between the child and the signified, and even in the construction of the signifier" (Piaget [1945] 1962: 165). In short, "symbolic play is nothing other than egocentric thought in its pure state" (166), and provides an "individual language indispensable for the expression of his subjective feelings, for which collective language alone is inadequate" (167), etc. Its function is to protect the self against forced accommodation to "ordinary reality" (168).

In a later stage of the child's development emerges a third type of play, in which the satisfaction of the ego is legitimated by "the rules of the game, through which competition is controlled by a collective discipline, with a code of honor and *fair-play*. This third and last type of play is not inconsistent with the idea of assimilation of reality to the ego, while at the same time it reconciles this ludic assimilation with the demands of social reciprocity" (Piaget [1945] 1962: 168).

For Freud play is—as the dream—the expression or the "dramatization" of desires but also and especially the manifestation of a compulsion to repeat, in words and deeds, painful experiences. This repetition gives the self the impression to overcome them since it can mention them all at will.

Developing these ideas, Erik Erikson suggests, "the theory that the child's play is the infantile form of the human ability to deal with experience by creating model-situations and to master reality by experiment and planning" (1963: 222). Play is a function of the ego, an attempt to synchronize to the self the bodily and social processes. Play is, therefore, a form of self-therapy: thus the scope of child psychiatry is to make possible child's play, even creating a playful relationship between patient and psychiatrist. In a similar manner, animal psychiatry uses playful activity (Lecomte 1967: 45).

Bateson (1972) and D. W. Winnicott (1971), for their part, consider that, even with regard to adult patients, there is a homology between deep therapeutic process and playful process. In a sense, patient and psychiatrist "play together"; they dedicated themselves to a combinatory activity (of words, images, etc.) that has the purpose of breaking obsessive formations and to rebuild the unity of the self.

But psychoanalysts, focusing their entire attention "on psychic reality, which is personal and inner and its relation to external or shared reality," (Winnicott 1971: xv) may not take adequate account of playful phenomenon and the related phenomena of art, religion, etc.

These phenomena in fact take place in an intermediate area between internal reality and external reality. How is this intermediate zone formed and what is its role?

According to Winnicott, the initial phase of the child's psychological development is that of the "subjective object." In this very early phase in its development, every child, in a certain environment provided by the mother, "is capable of conceiving the idea of something that would meet the growing need that arises out of instinctual tension. The infant cannot be said to know at first what is to be created. At this point in time the mother presents herself. In the ordinary way she gives her breast and her potential feeding urge, the mother's adaptation to the infant's needs, when good enough, gives the infant the *illusion* that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's own capacity to create" (Winnicott 1971: 8).

At the beginning of the development process, there is therefore a perfect agreement between inner reality and external reality: the nonself is indistinct from self. The child becomes the mother's breast.

But this "subjective object" illusory experience "paves the way for the objective subject—that is, the idea of a self and the feeling of real that springs from the sense of having an identity" (Winnicott 1971: 107). In fact, no feeling of the self can be formed without resting on the "sense of being" that is provided by the initial experience of unity between subject and object (107–8).

Paradoxically, the sense of being is thus based on an illusion but this illusion is a necessary condition: the mother may, immediately after having frustrated her baby, disappoint him without trauma and give him the experience of the object as not-self, avoiding any block in the development of the synthesis of self.

Inner reality and external reality are distinguished and they connect this initial play back and forth between the mother and child. This play is the first

nucleus of an area of intermediate (or transitional) experience between the two realities, an area that is not subject to the criterion of truth, and that is accepted as such.

The first transitional object may be the angle of a blanket, a wad of wool, a word, a melody, a gesture, etc. (See the famous cover immortalized by Schulz in his *Peanuts*.) In any case, it has to do with object with which the child has his first symbolic experience. The object is and is not the mother, her breast: it is the symbolic substitute of her, magically accessible as her breast but at the same time different from the breast, not only physically but also and above all, because it is experienced as not-self. The transitional object is the point of passage, the "switch," between identity (to be) and relationship (to do), between unity and diversity, between self and nonself, between symbol and the thing symbolized (Winnicott 1971: 10). It therefore allows for the creation of the symbolic area that—subtracted from reality—conjugates internal and external reality.

The transitional area constitutes the greater part of the child's experience, "and throughout his life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts, to religion, to imaginative living and to creative scientific work" (Winnicott 1971: 19).

Removed from the certainty of truth, the illusory representations of play, art, and religion can also constitute a meeting point in the transitional areas of different individuals and thus make it possible for the existence of forms of association and relationship based on common experiences, not threatened and challenged by the reality but necessary for its acceptance. Winnicott's theory therefore takes into account in psychological terms the paradox that makes playful make-believe a condition of human adaptation to reality.

The root of this paradox lies in the fact that the self exists thanks to play, for which it finds itself reflected in the nonself, in the other. The correlation of self and of the other, of the internal object and of the external object, of creative fantasy and of reality, brought to light by Winnicott, leads us to reject the point of view that only focuses on the dichotomy between personal psychic reality and external reality, and the adaptation of the first to the second. For this point of view, particularly well-represented by Piaget, play could not be anything other than "egocentric thought in its pure state," pure "individual truth," etc. But, if play was actually like this, it's not clear how play is a function fundamental to adaptation to reality, and in particular, in the formation and perpetuation of the ego as synthesis of the experience.

Among other things, Piaget's theory seems to be in contradiction with the well-known fact that children between the ages of three and five are perfectly aware of the fictitious nature of their games (see Bruner 1976: 18). The "animism" that Piaget associates with play seems more like a deformation by adults of the child behavior than an innate or universal characteristic (see Mead 1932).

In reality, as has been noted by L. S. Vygočkij, Piaget's theory is based on the assumption of a "natural" individual that preexists society and that is progressively "socialized," "adapted" to the "ordinary reality." Against this Swiss psychologist's utopian precapitalist individual, Vygočkij says that, on the contrary, "the true direction of the development of thought is not from the individual to the socialized one, but from the social to the individual," which is itself a social construction (1933: 38). Thus, for example, "ego-centric" language is not—as assumed by Piaget—a presocial stage in which the child would be impervious to experience but a transitional stage that makes possible the passage from vocal language (communicative—and therefore social—from the beginning) to interiorized language, to the individual "conscience" (32–37).

FROM CHILDISH PLAY TO ADULT PLAY

The theories of Bruner, Bateson, and Winnicott, starting from different premises and phenomena, all converge in considering play a phenomenon that characterizes a specifically human way to exist and that constitutes the permanent core, an almost "scaled-down model" of culture.

It should be emphasized in particular the close bond between evolutionary play, the use of tools, and language development (Bruner 1976).

The discoveries of modern science thus confirm the intuition of Johan Huizinga (1938) according to which play is the creative force of culture. In the human species, in fact, not only does creative play extend for a longer period than in any other species but continues during almost all or for the most part of existence. In a sense, artists, scientists, and inventors are adults who are socially allowed to continue to play: that is, to continue to analyze and experiment with the possible combinations of ideas, objects, units of behavior, etc. This combinatorial practice produces cultural innovations that are socially selected and adopted.

However the creative play of the artist and the scientist has two possible social destinies (at the end, not incompatible with each other): either it changes

into nonplay, in socially accepted and "useful" forms, or remains play and also benefits society, but then it is play as representation, since it allows spectators what Roger Caillois calls "play through a third person" (1958: 43).

In the "normal" adult, in fact, play only has a limited space and it is often enjoyed only indirectly. Its function is to mobilize and to reproduce the capital of "being" once created in child's play. Therefore, between child's play and adult play there is continuity, even if on the surface they differ. The essential character of adult play is the preponderance of rules. But the rule is the equivalent of the infant's sign for "this is a game": it separates play from reality; it forms the frame that surrounds the world of fictitious play and therefore maintains its relationship with reality. What are the rules, if not the "pure" essence of social reality? Therefore, if play is separated from this reality it is because it represents the utopia of reality.

As order reproduces separation between reality and play for infants and at the same time articulates this separation, so, too, do rules leave room to maneuver—choices, strategies, and the coalitions that rules makes possible are the equivalent combinatorial and experimental activity of child's play.

Play therefore offers to the adult the mirror in which he must necessarily look to find his illusory self, on which is founded the real self. It is the projection of an order of movements, actions, and laws that can be "comprehended"—in the double sense of incorporating and understanding—and therefore mastered.

The apparent absurdity in which the player, in order to "distract himself" from real obstacles, voluntarily creates artificial hurdles, is a therapeutic experience that gives back to the self the feeling of existence, without which no contact with reality is possible.

Play reproduces the feeling of existence thanks to an object-relation that is profoundly satisfying, because the self experiments in play with an external object, which corresponds miraculously, thanks to the playful order, to the internal object.

In play, not even chance is left to chance. Superstitions that surround playful activities, that rationalize what escapes the likely, are the index of the fact that play is the experience of absolute mastery, if not absolute order.

Even games of chance or games in which we abandon ourselves to a physically and psychically uncontrolled state (games that Caillois calls *ilinx*) constitute an extreme exorcism of chaos: the "voluntary" resignation of control from the ego is evidence of the power of the ego on the events. The voluntary loss of reality is the supreme confirmation of the accessibility of the reality.

What in certain occasions is experienced as play or an occasion to laugh is identical to what in other occasions is experienced as terror. It has been observed that a mother is capable of making her child laugh by involving him in a game that, coming from a stranger, would be of unbearable stimulation. This explains why play can suddenly transforms itself into its opposite: "The instincts are the main threat to play as to the ego" (Winnicott 1971: 69).

For the mediated person, play—the spectacle (theater, film, sports, etc.)—creates a further protective shield against the instincts and emotions that, directly experienced, run the risk of being destructive. Spectacle is therefore an enlargement of the limits within which one can play, in addition to being the main social extension of the effects of play.

Fiction, as a prerequisite for any play, becomes twofold in a spectacle: spectators are identified with the players (in many languages the activities of the actors and musicians are designated by the word identical to the one that designates the activities of the players) and the players in the audience. The players mimic a society, which is mirrored in their play. Without this double reflection, it would not be possible to close, put in a frame the space of the dramatic play, to create the illusion (*in-lusio*, "entry into the game") that makes it exist.

In this regard, the "transformative" role of applause should be noted: it is a sign of the narcissistic identity between actor and spectator, but also of its illusory character, and therefore of their difference. Applause acts as a "psychological frame" (see Bateson 1972) and as a modern equivalent of catharsis: when the identification between spectator and player has become unbearably strong, applause is the signal that reestablishes the difference and "releases" the tension of the relationship, restoring its playful and fictitious character.

Thus, in all its forms, play is a back-and-forth between the object and the subject, between the self and the other, between the scene and the audience, which circumscribes the restricted world of fiction only because there you find the image of reality, without which it is folly.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Rite

Translated from the Italian by Stefano Mengozzi
and revised by Alice Elliot

DIALOGUE BETWEEN AN ANTHROPOLOGIST AND A HORTICULTURALIST

We see a man working in his garden; with a pointed stick he digs the dirt around a tuber. The meaning of his action seems clear: the man wants to dig out the tuber, no doubt in order to eat it. We convince ourselves that such an action fits the purpose, that it is "rational," and that it corresponds to what we would do it we found ourselves in the same situation. But in a flash, the man kneels, murmurs a few words on a leaf of the plant, and then spits on it.

Our reaction is now totally different. The action seems bizarre and incomprehensible, it no longer corresponds to our expectations, nor with what we would do in the same circumstances. Speaking to a plant as if it could hear? Spitting on it? We are tempted to label such actions "irrational." If the man belonged to our own culture, we would not hesitate: we would think the sun has gone to his head. But sophisticated anthropologists that we are, we have a ready answer to the doubts we have fleetingly entertained: the man has just performed a ritual act.

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The opposition to which we refer is a canonic one in "current anthropology." Thus, for example, Edmund Leach distinguishes between "rational-technical" and "magical (or ritual)" behaviors, describing the first one as a behavior "which is directed towards specific ends and which, *judged by our standards of verification*, produces observable results in a strictly mechanical way," and the second one as a "behavior which is potent in itself in terms of the cultural conventions of the actors but *not* potent . . . in itself" (Leach 1966: 403, emphasis in original).

Yet, in purely "objectivist" terms, this opposition between "ritual action" and "rational-instrumental action" is by no means such a secure criterion of distinction as it might first appear. Indeed, a seemingly "ritual" action may also produce "observable results" according to "our standards of verification." Must we conclude that if a shaman effectively cures a sick person his action is no longer ritual, while it is if he fails? To this criticism one could object that if the shaman is successful, then his action must include some component that is capable of acting "in a strictly mechanical way." However, even admitting that this efficacious component (for example, medications) is identifiable and that the entire efficacy of the shamanic treatment depends on it, an irreducible fact still remains: such a component does not exist concretely as an autonomous entity, but only as part of the entire process of the shamanic cure. Moreover, it is the entire process that makes the treatment socially acceptable and therefore enables it to function. The efficacy of the ritual cannot, therefore, be reduced to a chemical mechanism because the therapy presupposes social and ideological relations, as much in a modern hospital as in a sorcerer's hut.

To ferret out in the shamanic cure a "non-ritual" component only means revealing that the category of "ritual" is a creation of the observer, the reification of a term in the "rational/irrational" opposition. Such a reification is based on a value judgment that fails to consider the concrete social context in which the action takes place. Therefore, even a definition of "ritual" as a mere *aspect* of more complex actions—a definition later proposed by Leach (1968)—does not fundamentally resolve all the problems raised by an "objectivist" definition of ritual. Particularly questionable is the assimilation of certain processes that can be analyzed in the rite according to our criteria of causal effectiveness (for example, a chemical process, and so on) to an alleged "rational/operative" dimension. In fact, the correlation between end and means here is not intentional, but purely casual. In reality, a more correct way to account for the relation between "causally efficacious" phenomena and the totality of the ritual action is perhaps the following: symbolism casts over the world such a vast network of relations

that some real causal connections remain trapped in its net. These contribute, no doubt, to perpetuating the existence of the ritual, but they can be defined neither as "real infrastructure" masked by an "ideological superstructure" (the "ritual superstition"), nor as the technical-rational "dimension." Rather, such phenomena confirm a more general law: each discovery of real connections takes place thanks to schemes and procedures that are complex, redundant, and even incoherent. The scientific attitude (one that develops only under certain social and cultural conditions) consists of weeding out—once the awareness of the discovery has matured—all those representations that are useless to the discovery's canonic conceptualization, which allows its most effective learning, transmission, and utilization. As Ernst Gombrich writes: "Most technical inventions carry with them a number of superstitions, unnecessary detours which are gradually eliminated through short cuts and a refinement of means" (1959: 331). Unlike scientific thought, "savage thought" is not grounded in a criterion of effectiveness. Therefore, it does not eliminate the "complications" and "superstitions" that are considered such only when the complexity of mental processes, and of processes of discovery, is retrospectively negated.

Some of the difficulties raised by an "external" definition of rite can be avoided by resorting to indigenous definitions. Not all cultures, however, draw an ideological distinction between "ritual" and "non-ritual" actions. In general, where such a distinction seems to be in place, the category that the anthropologist is tempted to translate with the term "ritual" is more comprehensive than what he or she means by the term and, in fact, includes all strictly codified behavior. In Hawaii, for example, the term *kapu* refers not only to prohibitions, but to every positive regulation as well, be it ritual or non-ritual.

At any rate, the agnostic recourse to indigenous categorization is not sufficient: it does not explain why such-and-such a categorization, and not another one, is in place, nor why certain actions are performed in one way but not another.

What has been said briefly above should be sufficient to suggest that elaborating a theory of ritual cannot depart from a typology of forms of actions defined a priori and ethnocentrically. In fact, such a strategy predetermines the results, since definitions already contain implicit theories. It is therefore necessary to consider first the theories of ritual behavior from which definitions like Leach's derive, and then to proceed to a reformulation of the entire problem.

Before beginning this unavoidable discussion, however, I would like to invite my readers to reflect on their reactions to this introduction and on the apologue

that opened it. If they are still perplexed and wondering "What is he getting at?" it will mean that their attention has already been awakened. Furthermore, since this discussion will lead to the conclusion that rites (as well as myths) must, in order to function, begin by increasing the level of attention beforehand, it is hoped that readers will recognize, in the experience of reading the present article, an analogue to the article's subject, and will smile in retrospect at having been subjected to a rite of passage: namely, the narration of a short myth about what constitutes a "rite."

THEORETICAL REASON OR PRACTICAL REASON?

The first anthropologists who attempted in the nineteenth century to provide a scientific explanation of ritual action adopted two contrasting approaches that have been perpetuated up until this day.

According to some, ritual acts are the translation, at the level of action, of beliefs that depend on intellectual processes and preoccupations. Whereas magical and religious beliefs aim to explain natural phenomena, rites aim to control them. In other words, whereas belief is an erroneous science, rite is an illusory technical action. Such an approach, which has been labeled "intellectualist" (Evans-Pritchard 1933), is associated with the names of Tylor and Frazer, but it is also found, modified, in theorists such as Lévi-Strauss (1962) and Horton (1967, 1973)—even if, unlike their predecessors, they attribute a certain theoretical validity to belief and ritual by demonstrating important analogies between "scientific" and "savage" thought.

A second approach, associated with the name of William Robertson Smith (1889) and definable as "functionalist," ultimately takes for granted the *cognitively* illusory character of beliefs while maintaining that they are born and perpetuated in order to fulfill not a theoretical or technical need, but rather a "practical" one (either moral or social). Thus, for example, animal totemism (that is, the idea that some degree of kinship-type relationship exists between a certain animal species and a social group) is not the result, according to Robertson Smith, of an erroneous zoology, but rather of social practices. Members of a clan gather periodically to reaffirm their solidarity. On these occasions they have a feast and sacrifice certain animals in order to eat them. In the long run, the collective consumption of these animals becomes associated with the group's status of maximum solidarity. The commensals believe that, by eating the flesh of the

animal, they absorb a substance identical to that of their group. From here, it is a short step to believing that the substance of the group is constituted by that of the animal that nourishes it. But whoever speaks of "common substance" speaks of "kinship" inasmuch as the animal comes to be conceived as a "relative" or an "ancestor" of the group that it "regenerates" socially when it is eaten during a feast.

The belief in some degree of kinship between certain species and certain groups is due, therefore, to social and not theoretical reasons, and the rites associated with this belief (for example, the totemic meal) do not constitute a way to control nature, but rather serve to reproduce within the group the belief that allows it to constitute an organic entity.

Religious representations are, therefore, motivated by their social functions, namely, by what contributes to make them exist in the world of "practice." Such a result is the "true" referent of a representation. Its validity is practical, not theoretical.

It is possible that Robertson Smith's conception was influenced by the Kantian idea according to which the validity of moral judgments does not depend on their "truth" or "falsity," like that of theoretical judgments. Practical reason and intellect have different criteria of validity.

At any rate, the Kantian influence is clear in Émile Durkheim, who—in his polemic against the intellectualist school—insists on the fact that the persistence of religion could not be explained if its representations were totally illusory. Both for Durkheim and for Robertson Smith, the reality to which the religious belief refers and that ritual aims to reconstitute in each individual's conscience is the moral and social world: "Religious interests are only the symbolic form of social and moral interests" (Durkheim [1912] 1947: 316). The religious representation is not to be taken literally: it is explained by what it makes people do, rather than what it says. Thus if the apparent function of rituals is to reinforce the "bonds attaching the believer to his god," their real function is to reinforce the "bonds attaching the individual to the society of which he is a member, since the god is only a figurative expression of the society" (ibid.: 226).

Durkheim maintains that religious representations are caused by a state of collective effervescence (corresponding to ritual action); that they represent this state in a more or less reified form (totems, ancestors, and gods are in fact "personified rites" [ibid.: 279; cf. 295]); and that, by representing this state of effervescence to their consciousness, they prompt its reproduction.

Because ritual effervescence coincides with a state of maximum cohesion in society, religious representations—by reproducing the ritual actions that generated them—reproduce, in fact, society itself: this would be their true function.

It is clear that Durkheim tends to identify arbitrarily three types of relations between religious representations and society: causal, functional, and symbolic. His theory is based, however, on a *petitio principii*: indeed it presupposes the society whose existence it ought to explain (Lukes 1972: 480–81; cf. Valeri 2001 [see Appendix II, this volume]). The theory contains, moreover, another problem: on the one hand, in order to explain the discrepancy between the literal referent of representations (which concerns natural and transcendent objects, and so on) and their supposed referent (the group that produces them), Durkheim has to admit that the consciousness of this second referent was already in place at the beginning, and that it was subsequently lost. On the other hand, his theory obliges him to maintain that this symbolic referent continues to exist because it is the precondition for the social function of representation.

Part of the difficulty derives from Durkheim's extremely vague and confusing use of the term "symbol." He does not distinguish, for example, between the semantic and pragmatic aspects of symbols. It is possible to claim that a religious representation is an index of a certain group, to the extent that that group makes use of it; but this does not mean that a representation in a more or less reified form *represents* the group, as Durkheim would have us believe.

* * *

We have briefly discussed Durkheim's account of religion in terms of "practical reason." It should now be added that he also attempts to transcend the Kantian dualism between the gnosiological and the practical through recourse to two hypotheses. On the one hand, he claims that the categories of the intellect, as well as the religious representations from which they derive, are produced by society and are even representations of it. On the other hand, in order to explain how these categories allow one to know nature, he claims that the structure of society is homologous to that of nature as, ultimately, society is part of nature and indeed produced by it. If the perception that society has of itself (some kind of collective self-reflection) precedes the perception of nature, it is because the structures that society and nature hold in common would be more easily discernable in society (Durkheim 1912, conclusion; cf. Durkheim and Mauss 1903).

In the "strong" form it has taken in Durkheim's writings, the attempt to elaborate a sociology of knowledge appears to have failed. However, in its "weak" form—one which is based on a "charitable" interpretation of Durkheim's thought (as Gellner 1962 has defined it)—the idea that the *necessary* character of intellectual categories is due to the intervention of society, rather than to some mysterious force hidden within the intellect, ultimately proved to be a fruitful one, as both Gellner (ibid.) and Horton (1973) have shown and as Thomas Kuhn's (1970) theory indirectly demonstrates.

In spite of all its flaws and contradictions, or perhaps because of them, Durkheim's work still remains the point of encounter and conflict between functionalist and intellectualist interpretations of beliefs and rituals. But the failure of this attempted reconciliation explains why, in the long run, only the strictly functionalist aspect of his theory had a lasting influence.

At this point, it is necessary to discuss the later functionalist developments of Durkheim's theory, both because they have contributed to highlighting important aspects of ritual behavior, and because they have created some not inconsiderable conceptual problems which we should now clear away.

THE FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

Radcliffe-Brown: Ritual and social order

The elaboration of the functionalist aspect of Durkheim's theory is indebted most of all to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. His explanation of Andaman ritual (Radcliffe-Brown 1922) is ultimately grounded in the observation that rational activity, either instrumental or moral, only constitutes one part of social behavior (ibid.: 88). Man also has emotional behavior (he loves, hates, suffers, rejoices, fears, and so on) which is socially regulated and utilized. The relations among the various social roles are therefore associated with specific emotional attitudes, or, at the very least, with the external signs of such behaviors—so that, for example, a son is expected to carry a feeling of respect toward his father, or at least display such feeling.

Every aspect of the social system and every natural phenomenon that somehow influences the existence and structure of society becomes an object of socially regulated feelings. Rituals are the means that permit collective expression of these feelings: in so doing, they reproduce them in individuals and, facilitating their apprehension through imitation, permit their transmission from one

generation to the next (ibid.: 233–34). In brief, the function of rituals is "to maintain and to transmit from one generation to another the emotional dispositions on which the society (as it is constituted) depends for its existence" (ibid.: 234).

This theory obviously presupposes that emotions and their meaning preexist their regulation (cf. ibid.: 246; an analogous thesis is found in Wittgenstein 1953; cf. Skorupski 1976: 78). The ritual regulates them in the sense that it leads to the association of certain natural feelings with certain "artificial" (i.e., social) situations. The imitation of prescribed feelings can effectively produce them (Radcliffe-Brown 1922: 241, 239); but man has this truly human characteristic: he can dissimulate, he can intentionally reproduce the external signs of certain internal feelings even in absence of these internal states. As moralists and religious reformers have never grown tired of repeating, ritual is concerned with the "exterior," not the "interior"; it is a matter of form, not substance. It could be argued, however, that these forms in fact constitute the substance of social life, that the enthusiasm, the sincerity of feelings are uncertain, not reproducible at will, and cannot therefore constitute the permanent basis of social relations. Such relations can be developed precisely because signs exist independently from internal states, and because the performance of the signs is a stronger concern than the real presence of the states that are allegedly signified.

There are two classes of ritual behaviors: those regulating interpersonal relations and those regulating relations between society and nature (in particular, certain animal and plant species). If a behavior whose validity is associated with social relations is extended to relations with certain natural species, this is because such species partake of the moral universe. Indeed, society attributes a certain value to them. It is this value to society—and hence, indirectly, society itself—that constitutes the true object of ritual behavior, both when this behavior concerns a natural object and when it concerns a person.

This theory is a reformulation of Durkheim's claim that society, by adoring that which it holds sacred, adores itself. However, whereas for Durkheim the natural objects that "symbolize" society are arbitrarily (or randomly) chosen and have value only *qua* signs, for Radcliffe-Brown this choice is not arbitrary, and their value is not simply emblematic.

Ultimately, this value is determined by a combination of utilitarian motives (the importance of certain animal species for the diet of a given society, the difficulty of capturing them, and so on) and intellectual ones (associations among species due to associations among their properties—although the ultimate

referent of these associations tends to be a certain "utility"). As the famous fifth chapter of *The Andaman Islanders* testifies, Radcliffe-Brown takes into account both motives without, however, managing to reconcile them in a satisfactory way. Sometimes Radcliffe-Brown's analyses anticipate with great finesse those of the structuralist method; at other time they are either grossly utilitarian or tautological (cf. Leach 1971: 41; Lévi-Strauss 1985).

At any rate, the theory of the value of ritual behavior as expression of the social value of certain objects and interpersonal relations is defective, as it forces the theorist to reify society. Indeed in order to explain the fact that two qualitatively heterogeneous objects (for example, a certain animal and a certain social role) still give rise to a ritual behavior, Radcliffe-Brown assumes that they are quantitatively identical, that is, that they have the same quantitative value for society. But in order for society to become the yardstick for measuring the relative value of each and any object, it must be substantialized (i.e., become the substance of value).

Furthermore, it is necessary to assume that this substantialized society is always present in the consciousness of those individuals who enunciate value judgments, or else that such judgments (whose function is to guarantee the survival of society) impose themselves through a process of natural selection.

In reality, a good number of the concrete analyses of Andaman rituals offered by Radcliffe-Brown (cf., for example, 1922: 261) show that both the utilization of certain phenomena during rites or the formation of ritual behaviors around them depend more on the qualitative than on the quantitative or utilitarian aspects of these objects. For example, certain natural species attract attention because their position within an ensemble of natural relations seems to correspond to the position of a certain role in social relations. Thus the former may become the metaphor for the latter.

Reading *The Andaman Islanders,* one has the impression of a conflict between Radcliffe-Brown's sensitivity to the more properly cognitive and semantic aspect of ritual and the theoretical framework that he adopts, which is dogmatically functionalist and evolutionist. Ultimately, analysis in terms of meaning always turns into analysis in terms of function: an acknowledgement of the action of intellectual processes is obliterated by the implicit recourse to the evolutionist model of natural selection. Even worse, at times a ghost seems to wander through the pages of the book—that of a personalized society which calculates utility in a way worthy of a stockbroker in order to generate and manipulate behaviors necessary to its survival.

The reduction of interpretation in terms of meaning to an interpretation in terms of function is mirrored by the tendency to treat "function" and "meaning" as if they were interchangeable terms. Such a procedure can appear legitimate only for the analysis of certain rituals. For example, in the Andaman wedding ritual the spouses' embrace signals their transformation into husband and wife: "The ceremony brings vividly to the minds of the young couple and also to those of the spectators the consciousness that the two are entering upon a new social relation of which the essential feature is the affection in which they must hold one another" (ibid.: 236).

In other words, by displaying in public for the first time the reciprocal emotional behavior that is prescribed between husband and wife, the couple is socially recognized as such. From then on all the community members will follow—in their behaviour toward the two persons—the prescribed rules for dealing with a married couple; it is indeed this collective recognition that effectively makes them spouses. In this case, then, the ritual obtains its social effect by representing it: function and signification coincide.

But in many other rituals, the postulated social referent is absent from indigenous consciousness. Radcliffe-Brown would therefore have to admit that in these cases meaning does not reflect function, but is a rationalization, a secondary formation whose value is not cognitive, but "practical." It reproduces behaviors necessary to society, without, however, representing its true object.

This notwithstanding, Radcliffe-Brown still maintains that the ritual "signifies" the social relation that it has the function of perpetuating. As we will see, he bequeaths to his successors this confusion between signification and function, between the indigenous point of view and the point of view of the observer.

The Manchester school: Ritual and conflict

Radcliffe-Brown's theory of ritual disregards the tensions and conflicts that exist in social life and that are a product of its functioning. In fact, according to this theory, rituals mechanically reproduce the social structure by organizing individuals' emotions according to the "needs" of society (ibid.: 234).

While accepting the postulates of functionalist theory, Max Gluckman complicates it by ascribing to ritual the function of reproducing social equilibrium in situations of potential conflict. Indeed he claims that ritual expresses not only those feelings that correspond to the established social order, but also those that are in conflict with it. By "symbolically" unleashing these feelings,

however, ritual allows their elimination or neutralization and thus, ultimately, the unchanged reproduction of social order. This theory would also explain why certain social situations generate ritual behaviors while others lack them.

Ritual behavior would develop both in those societies where social order is accepted by all but conflicts with individual aspirations (Gluckman 1963) and in those societies where the same people perform different social roles. Indeed, in order to distinguish one role from another, it is necessary to resort to special behaviors (that is, rituals) that signal which role is performed by which individual in a given situation. These behaviors generally represent the role in question in an exaggerated form (Gluckman 1962).

In the first case, then, ritual behavior would constitute the formation of a compromise. The formalized (and therefore controlled) expression of a morally forbidden but socially recognized behavior would allow its neutralization (Gluckman 1963: 127). Thus, for example, in a famous, though much debated (cf. Beidelman 1966; Smith 1979) essay, Gluckman (1963) attempts to demonstrate the existence of "rites of rebellion." In some monarchies of southern Africa the king is, once a year, ritually insulted and rejected. In this way, the hostility that has accumulated against him is released. The ritual revolt would prevent real revolt and be the index of a consensus over the acceptability of the monarchical institution, but of a dissensus over the individuals who fulfil the duties of the king.

On the other hand, in those societies in which dissensus pertains to the institution of monarchy and in which it is admissible to change the social structure, one finds not only "rites of rebellion," but actual rebellions (ibid.: 129).

More interesting and complex are the developments that a disciple of Gluckman, Victor Turner, has given to these rather rough ideas. It should be noted above all that Turner was the first scholar to provide truly satisfactory descriptions of ritual actions. In fact, he did not limit himself to taking accurate records of the most important rituals of the Ndembu (a people of Zambia) but also studied them in their social context and, most importantly, questioned his informants systematically about the meaning they attributed to each of the ritual actions and symbols. The information that he collected, together with his own interpretations, led him to distinguish three components of meaning in these symbols: the "exegetic" or "interpretive" meaning, the "operational" meaning, and the "positional" meaning (Turner 1968: 17).

The first of these meanings is the one drawn from his informants' words; the second one is implicit and is revealed by the use made of the symbol; and

the third, finally, depends on symbols that are adjacent to it in a given spatio-temporal context. The following example will clarify the relations among these three components of meaning.

The dominant symbol of the initiation rites for young women (*nkang'a*) is a young tree of the species called *mudyi*. The female initiate must lie down at a *mudyi* tree's feet during the first day of the rite. This act symbolizes that she "dies" as a girl and is born as an adult. The exegetic meaning of the tree is the following: it represents the maternal milk and, therefore, the matrilineage that "nurtured" the girl. This symbol thus has two poles of reference: it refers, on the one hand, to organic and physiological phenomena (milk, breastfeeding, and so on), and, on the other hand, to social norms and values (matrilineage, customs, and so on). According to Turner, this polarity is found in the main symbols used during Ndembu rituals. The organic pole evokes illegitimate "feelings and impulses" (ibid.: 18), such as infantile, regressive associations with maternal milk, whereas the social pole evokes their opposite, that is, moral imperatives. Turner assumes that the emotions aroused by the organic referents of these symbols are "borrowed," so to speak, from their ethical referents, although he does not explain how such a transfer takes place and how it is possible. Turner seems to associate it with the mechanism of "sublimation": "The emotions, which, as psycho-analysts have shown, may often be connected with illicit and socially reprobated impulses, . . . are purified by their association with morality and law. It is as though the 'energy' of virtue flowed from organic and primitive sources, though the original goals of the drives were altered. It is as though the infantile pleasures of breast-feeding were associated with the correct performance of one's duties as an Ndembu tribesman or member of a matrilineage" (ibid.: 18–19). This thesis is summarized in a single sentence: "The obligatory is made desirable, and the desirable allowed a legitimate outlet" (ibid.: 19).

The various ways in which the *mudyi* is used in different contexts constitute its "operational" meaning. For example, in another phase of the *nkang'a* ritual the *mudyi* tree is used operationally as a symbol of femininity in opposition to masculinity (ibid.), or as a symbol of the daughter's separation from her mother, and so on. Through an analysis of these operational symbols Turner deduces that the *mudyi* tree symbolizes not only certain principles of Ndembu social organization but also the conflicts that are aroused by enacting such principles.

As for the positional meaning, it seems to consist of a particularly concealed component of the symbol, which is revealed by a symptom: its regular

association with another symbol. So, for example, "the regular association of the forked *chishing'a* pole, representing huntmanship and virility, with a ring of twisted grass which encircles it below the fork, may well represent a Ndembu belief, repressed in the unconscious, in basic human bisexuality" (ibid.: 81–82).

These examples show that if the "exegetic" meaning of the symbol is obviously a conscious one, both the operational and, especially, the positional ones can be unconscious.

More precisely, Turner distinguishes among three levels of signification: 1) the manifest meaning, which is fully conscious and illustrated by indigenous exegesis; 2) the latent meaning, of which "the subject is only marginally aware but could become fully aware" (81), and; 3) the "hidden" meaning, which is completely unconscious and which Turner connects to infantile or even prenatal experiences (81).

This treatment of ritual symbolism explains how it is possible for individuals to assimilate social rules. Indeed, it is not by chance that most rituals considered by Turner serve the function of curing afflictions that are the symptom of a conflict between individual and society, between instinct and law, and so on (cf. Smith 1979: 109–10).

Yet, by acting on individuals in a collective context, rites also act on society as a whole, bringing it back to a state of equilibrium (Turner 1968: 267–68). From this perspective, ritual is for Turner (cf. 1957: 122–25) what it had been for Gluckman, namely a device aimed at re-establishing order in a situation where normal "juridical" devices are insufficient. Using a typically functionalist argument, Turner therefore assumes that ritual is generated by its function, that is by a "need" of society. Ritual furnishes Ndembu society with a service equivalent to what a more complex political system could provide: therefore, it "may be regarded as a magnificent instrument for expressing, maintaining, and periodically cleansing a secular order of society without strong political centralization and all too full of social conflict" (1968: 21).

In this sense, the presence of rituals within a society is interpreted by Turner as the index of a structural contradiction that the social organization cannot resolve with "rules" and procedures that are properly political—that is, ultimately, "rational." He claims, for example, that Ndembu rituals are all dominated by a "basic contradiction," which is the conflict between the principle of virilocal residence and the principle of matrilineal filiation (ibid.: 279–83, 201; 1967: 4–6; 1969: 81–84).

It is not possible to discuss here whether such a contradiction really exists and whether it has the effects attributed to it by Turner. However, it should be noted that: 1) the approach adopted by both Gluckman and Turner leads them to search for contradictions where they do not necessarily exist. This tendency results from the thesis that ritual is necessarily the expression of a contradiction; 2) The thesis that ritual is the *Ersatz* of a real resolution of these contradictions requires additional explanation: if there is a real "contradiction" (it would be better to say conflict [cf. Colletti 1975]) between matrilineage and patrilocality, how can the two institutions continue to coexist? What forces prevent harmonization between rules of filiation and rules of residence? 3) Numerous ritual events described by Turner do not seem to confirm the thesis that ritual realizes a kind of organic unity allowing the transcendence of social conflicts (cf. Turner 1968: 197). In fact, a rite, like any other social occasion, may also generate or precipitate conflict (for an example cf. ibid.: 231); 4) The "purgative" model of ritual necessarily implies the idea that this event is accompanied by definite feelings and their transformation (ibid.: 235).

However, aside from the fact that it is difficult to evaluate the emotions actually felt by participants in a rite, it is well known that ritual often consists of a series of purely "formal" acts separated from emotions even as they represent them. Indeed, as has been already highlighted, the presence of internal states' external signs does not guarantee the real presence of these internal states.

More plausible is Turner's idea that the efficacy of ritual depends on its "dramatization" or "representation" of an empirical conflict. In fact, the representation is efficacious in and of itself inasmuch as it allows conflict to be brought to light (and thus collectively recognized) and clarifies its nature, while also relying on rational methods in order to establish responsibilities, sanctions, reparations, and so on. The importance of the "cognitive" aspect of ritual is attested by the Ndembu idea that ritual "unmasks," "reveals," "makes public what is private and hidden," and so on (ibid.: 190–91; 1975: 110–11).

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In *The ritual process* Turner develops further the idea that a functional relationship exists between ritual and social structure, and tries to interpret it as a relationship between two different states of society and even as the organization of society according to two opposing but complementary principles (Turner [1969] 1977: 126–27).

Society normally possesses a structure, which is to say—according to Turner—a system of roles that are often organized hierarchically. At times, however, society takes the form of a relatively undifferentiated and egalitarian community. These moments of undifferentiation reproduce "an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be *no* society (Turner [1969] 1977: 97). In other words, *societas* presupposes *communitas*: the former differentiates and articulates the social bond that the latter creates. Because excessive differentiation runs the risk of eroding the very base of the social bond, it is necessary to reproduce periodically the *communitas* through ritual acts. The dependency of *societas* on *communitas* is demonstrated, for example, by the fact that the assumption of any role, and political roles in particular, requires rituals characterized by the passage through an undifferentiated stage associated with the values of the *communitas*. It is from the *communitas* that the role attains its ultimate sacredness and legitimacy (ibid.: 96–111).

The notion of *communitas* derives directly from Robertson Smith's and Durkheim's idea that ritual renews the social bond by establishing a "communion" whose effects also reverberate in the "secular" world (i.e., Turner's "structure"). In this sense, it represents nothing new. Another aspect of Turner's theory brings him, however, closer to Arnold Van Gennep (1909) rather than to Robertson Smith or Durkheim. This is the idea that the state of undifferentiation and *communitas* is connected to liminal situations, that is, to the passage from one state to another. This liminal phase has a transformative function, not merely a reproductive one (cf. Turner 1969: 128).

Turner's theory, thus formulated, is often perplexing. When he opposes *societas* to *communitas* as "structure" to "antistructure," as "cognition" to "affectivity" (ibid.: 128–29), as a device for satisfying "organizational and material" needs (ibid.: 129, 132) to a kind of *élan vital* (the reference to Bergson [1932] is obvious here), or as "constriction" to "freedom" (1969: 133), he distorts the kernel of truth that his theory contains.

The phenomena classified under the label *communitas* appear to Turner as characterized by "lack of structure" because he does not transcend the juridical notion of structure elaborated by Radcliffe-Brown, Meyer Fortes, and Gluckman. In reality, ritual sets in motion structures that can be defined at a more abstract level than normative and empirical structures, the only ones that Turner takes into account; and it is only in contrast with the latter that the former appear to be "non-structural" (cf. T. Turner 1975: 654, 657).

CONSCIOUS OR UNCONSCIOUS MEANING?

We have seen that one of the presuppositions of the functionalist approach is that the efficacy of ritual depends on its "symbolic" nature—so much so that a recent interpreter (Skorupski 1976) has called this approach "symbolist."

However, we have also seen that the notion of "symbolism" is used in a rather vague way. In particular, we have come face to face with a problem to which we must now turn. Durkheim and his functionalist successors claim that ritual symbolizes social structure; but this symbolic relation does not correspond to the letter of a rite, nor, therefore, to the meaning attributed to it by those who perform it. Durkheim bypasses the problem or "resolves" it in evolutionary terms: the relationship, originally symbolic, has been reified. Nevertheless, he continues to define the relationship between religious representation and society as "symbolic." As we have seen, this implies an unwarranted identification between the products through which society "reifies" and "estranges" itself on the one hand and the "symbols" on the other.

Such confusion is also found in Durkheim's successors. Radcliffe-Brown is aware of the difficulties raised by relating indigenous interpretation to that of the observer, but he ends up claiming that the latter simply clarifies what is only implicitly present in the former. In other words: if the observer's interpretation were explained to a native, the latter could not but admit that it reveals the implications of what he does and says. As we have seen, however, not all of Radcliffe-Brown's interpretations can be conceived as simple "explications" of the presuppositions and implications of meaning that the Andamans attribute to rituals.

By introducing the notion of "unconscious meaning" next to those of "manifest meaning" and "latent meaning," Turner seems to be able to resolve the problem of the relationship between indigenous interpretation and the interpretation of the observer.

In reality, though, the notion of "unconscious meaning" raises considerable problems. Turner and his followers place among the unconscious meanings of ritual both sociological and psychological elements of a Freudian type. However, whereas Freudian theory justifies the unconscious character of psychological elements through a theory of psychic apparatus that explains why they are *removed* from consciousness, an equivalent theory does not exist for the alleged unconscious elements of a sociological nature. The Durkheimian-functionalist theory, therefore, does not provide a criterion for distinguishing between those

elements that effectively bear unconscious "meanings" and those that are arbitrarily postulated as such by the interpreter.

The absence of such a criterion, and of a theory that would allow it to be established, is particularly evident in some "semiological" analyses of ritual, of which a recent book by Alfred Gell (1975) constitutes an extreme and eloquent example. It is convenient here to consider this study briefly and compare it with an interpretative position opposed to it, in the hope that the proverbial clash of opinions will let us glimpse at the truth.

Gell has observed a ritual of great complexity, called the *Ida*, among the Umeda of New Guinea. However, he was not able to obtain from his informants an exegesis of the ritual, which indeed does not seem to exist. Nevertheless, he claims to have been able to reconstruct the unconscious meaning of the ritual. This unconscious meaning would be constituted by a variety of elements pertaining to Umeda society.

In order to justify this reconstruction of the unconscious "semantics" of the ritual, Gell utilizes two arguments. The first is the methodological argument. If the analysis is able to reach a level at which the material to be explained appears perfectly coherent, to the point that there "is a quasi-predictive relation between the parts of the system" (1975: 212–13), then one can be certain that the model is true. The "empirical" proof of this argument would be constituted by the fact that an element of new observation can be reconciled with the system. That is, it appears as the logical consequence of the principles of the system. The second is the "ontological" argument. In order to justify the fact that the meaning thus reconstructed is not "verbalized" by the informants, Gell proposes the following hypothesis: what is "communicated" through non-verbal symbols cannot be communicated through verbal symbols (an hypothesis also accepted by Forge [1965] for a society close to the Umeda one). Thus, the impossibility of expressing the rite in words would be part of the very nature of the rite's meaning—an idea that conveniently justifies the discrepancy between the "meanings" singled out by Gell and the accounts of informants, who appear to know nothing of these meanings.

The first argument is a familiar one. Dumézil, for example, has claimed that "in the speculative disciplines coherence is but one basic quality of reasoning which does not guarantee the truth at all. The empirical sciences, however, are different, for in that case the problem is one of classifying empirical data in their variety and diversity and according to their own nature" (1948: 18). As this excerpt demonstrates, the argument is based on the presupposition that

phenomena that occupy the empirical sciences (among them anthropology) are logically coherent. It would follow that the logical coherence of the model elaborated to explain these phenomena would itself be a guarantee of its truth.

Even accepting that the phenomena to be explained are coherent, however, nothing guarantees that the coherence of the *explanans* coincides with the coherence of the *explanandum*. On the other hand, if one does not admit the intrinsic coherence of the *explanandum*, then the coherence of the *explanans* not only fails to guarantee validity but generates a paradox: the more the model presents its object as a coherent system, the less it is true (cf. Bourdieu [1980] 1990: 250).

All this simply demonstrates that the criterion of coherence is not a guarantee of validity. Any fact may be broken down into elements such as to render it compatible with a given model; but the existence of those elements and the validity of the model are not in this way demonstrated. Analogously, I could reduce a ritual to the "meanings" that are compatible with a coherent model; but I will not thereby have demonstrated that such meanings exist—all the more so if I am not able to single out the interpreter for whom they exist. Without this, the alleged meanings are made to exist in and of themselves, in some Platonic universe, as if just waiting for an anthropologist to discover them (cf. Lewis 1980: 145).

Let us now turn to Gell's "ontological" argument. Even if we admit that non-verbalized messages exist, this does not suffice to prove that a non-verbal behavior actually bears a message; it might even be devoid of meaning. In any case, Gell's argument leads to paradoxical results for the kind of analysis it is supposed to justify. An example will clarify why.

Let us consider music. If it is true that music communicates messages that cannot be expressed in words, then either it is not legitimate to translate music into verbal messages or one can describe verbally only the evocations aroused by the musical phrases, evocations that are vague and changeable depending on the listener. A music critic who takes his or her own personal experience of music to constitute the musical content itself, or, worse, who presumes to describe its semantic-referential content ("this phrase describes the sheep, this other one the fauns"), is considered, rightly so, to be engaging in an arbitrary operation. Yet, it is precisely to the latter operation that Gell subjects the *Ida* ritual!

The intrinsically contradictory character of Gell's position becomes even more evident when he gives his principle a much "stronger" form, claiming that the symbols of the ritual are "symbols of a 'transcendent' reality which cannot

be grasped *except through the symbol itself*" (1975: 214, emphasis in the text). Gell explains neither what this "transcendence" is, nor how the above mentioned claim—derived from Jaspers and Schutz—might be compatible with his semiological analysis. Nevertheless, he believes he can infer from this the observer's right to describe and explain these symbols from the outside. But if it is true that ritual is constituted by experiences of the "transcendent," then a conclusion opposed to Gell's would seem necessary: the observer can only attempt (if it is even possible!) to immerse himself in that kind of experience and evoke it for his readers. The claim to reconstruct "objectively" from outside the meaning of symbols that have been defined a priori as untranslatable and that can be understood only through personal experience (i.e., only subjectively) is an absurdity pure and simple, and in any case is based on the assumption that the observer has direct access to the same transcendence that the Umeda can experience only through symbols (i.e., "unconsciously").

In direct, if tacit, opposition to Gell's, Gilbert Lewis' analysis (1980) of the ritual of the Gnau of Sepik (New Guinea)—a population that is culturally akin to the Umeda—privileges the indigenous interpretation of the rite.

Lewis criticizes the semiological point of view, according to which the ritual can be understood as a communicative code comparable to Saussurian *langue*. In fact, in order to recognize true acts of communication in the ritual, it is necessary to locate the following elements in it: 1) a communicative intention and a sender animated by this intention; 2) a vehicle for communicating; and 3) a receiver who actually receives the message being communicated (ibid.: 18–19).

It is easy to observe that the presence of these three factors is not always found in ritual acts: one could even argue that it is rare that actors in a rite have a communicative intention and that spectators are able to recognize real messages in it. At any rate, different rituals and even different sections of the same ritual are considerably at variance on this point. Therefore, one cannot reduce the problem of the interpretation of ritual to the search for the supposed "code for the transmission of the information."

According to Lewis, the signs used by ritual are not communicative as much as they are expressive: in other words, they are mostly symptomatic or indicative (for example, blushing which betrays the one who blushes) and, therefore, they do not presuppose a code in order to be interpreted; instead, they may be the object of different interpretations, that are subjectively variable. Above all, these signs are complex stimuli which produce complex effects—not just intellectual but also emotional, sensible, and so on. They act in fact on the totality of persons.

The prevalence in rituals of expressive symbolism over communicative symbolism allows us to explain—more efficiently than with a semiological model—ritual's efficacy (i.e., the fact that it has certain effects on participants) (cf. ibid.: 116, 118).

In the concrete analysis of Gnau rites proposed by Lewis, such a theoretical approach generates a certain tension between two opposed tendencies. On the one hand, the refusal to superimpose arbitrarily meanings that are meaningful only to the interpreter over those actually perceived by the natives themselves leads Lewis to adhere as much as possible to the letter of the indigenous exegesis. But, on the other hand, he cannot but realize that the indigenous exegesis itself requires an interpretation (cf. Sperber 1975: 17–50). Furthermore, the distinction between communication and expression and, correlatively, between meaning and evocation creates in and of itself a large field (that of "evocations" or "reactions" produced by either expressive or involuntary signs) of which, by definition, one cannot argue that the indigenous interpretation furnishes an adequate image. This vast field indeed transcends the capacities for verbalization and analysis of the Gnau people.

Consequently, Lewis is forced in his interpretation to invoke a set of traits that would exist implicitly in ritual (1980: 142) and thus to resort to the principle adopted by Forge and by Gell: ritual allows the expression of what cannot be expressed in words (ibid.: 24).

If Lewis recognizes the importance of implied meaning he nevertheless refuses to take into consideration the possibility that some "unconscious meaning" may be present in a rite. But recognizing the fact that the relation between representation and its non-conscious conditions (psychic, social, economic, cultural, and so on in nature) cannot be defined as a symbolic one in the absence of an effectively documented interpretant (cf. Peirce 1897) does not warrant ignoring the role these conditions can have. Rather, such conditions orient representations in certain directions, block access to others, create resistances or censures against recognition of certain facts or interest in others, and so on.

Taking this into account is necessary in order to explain why representations may have a certain structure and a certain content, and ultimately why they may be compatible with a certain social or psychic situation as well as why they may be functional in relation to the given situation.

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Let us discuss a concrete example, namely the ritual to which Lewis devotes a good part of his analysis. On various ritual occasions, Gnau men open a wound in their penis and let it bleed; in particular, when, in the course of a boy's puberty rites, his penis is wounded for the first time, the maternal uncle or, in his absence, an equivalent relative, opens a wound in his penis and lets the blood that gushes bleed on the body of his nephew (1980: 78). The Gnau people maintain that this ritual permits the young man to free himself from his own "bad blood" and to acquire his uncle's "good blood" in exchange (ibid.: 178). The ritual of the penis' artificial hemorrhage is a male secret: no woman must know it exists.

It should be noted that the father can never provide blood from his own penis to his son. The only exception is the ritual in which he smears the face of his first born with his own blood at the moment of birth. Also, younger brothers cannot give blood to older brothers, whereas older ones can give blood to the younger brothers. These differences would seem to be explained by the Gnau theory of conception, according to which every man and every woman possess a certain reserve of blood that is used to generate offspring. When a son is born, he has already received his share of paternal blood; the remaining amount of blood, none of which that son is entitled to receive, must be used to generate more sons. A father, therefore, may not sprinkle his son during rites (ibid.: 176). This theory justifies the fact that relationships within a consanguineous group are determined by birth and cannot be modified by voluntary donations of blood from the father to one of the sons.

According to Lewis, this theory also explains why, within the group of brothers, the ritual donation of blood from the penis may occur only in order of seniority and not in the opposite order. Yet the resort to this rule is not completely satisfactory: for example, the Gnau older brothers do play a "paternal" role in their relations with younger ones and from this point of view transferring blood from the former to the latter would have to be forbidden. At any rate, such a transference represents an alteration of the order of distribution of agnatic blood among consanguines, and as such should be forbidden by virtue of the same principle, according to which the father cannot modify the distribution of his blood among his sons. Moreover, it is not clear why an older brother would have to donate blood to a younger brother, blood that belongs to his own sons. The fact that the rules of blood donation may harmonize with the order of seniority is not enough to eliminate, thereby, the contradictions that exist among some of these rules. Furthermore, it remains to be explained why the father donates blood from his penis to his oldest son at the moment of his

birth: indeed, according to the indigenous theory of conception, the older son has already received his share of paternal blood.

It appears, then, that the indigenous ideology does not explain coherently and completely all the rules. Most particularly, it does not explain why the ideal donor of blood is the maternal uncle. This notwithstanding, Lewis accepts this ideology as if constituting a sufficient explanation.

The main problem, however, is posed by the very existence of the ritual. Why do Gnau men frequently open a wound in their penis and let it bleed, sometimes on one of their relatives?

First, it should be noticed that this ritual is common in the Sepik area and that different populations explain it in different ways. The natives of the Wogeo Island, for example, claim that men need these periodic haemorrhages in order to free themselves from the pollution generated by sexual contact with women. Similar ideas exist among the Abelam (Forge 1965). According to these populations, the artificial hemorrhage from the penis is the equivalent of the natural hemorrhage of women (cf. Hogbin 1970: 88, n. 102). It was thus not wrong of Hogbin, the ethnographer who described Wogeo culture, to title his book *The island of menstruating men*.

Based on these observations, some scholars have interpreted this ritual as the expression of the unconscious desire to menstruate on the part of men, that is to say, to take on the feminine power of procreation. Supposedly, men are envious of this power, and the ritual reveals a latent hostility against women, who indeed are not allowed to take part in it. In essence, this ritual would be sort of male revenge.

But according to Lewis, Gnau do not make the association between the loss of male blood and female menses—on the contrary, they energetically deny it when it is proposed to them (1980: 110–11). Their interpretation of the ritual is completely different: mature men give their blood to younger relatives so that they may grow and become strong (ibid.: 178). This interpretation would be based on the "implicit" idea (i.e., one that is not "explicitly" formulated by the Gnau) according to which blood is associated with life (ibid.: 180); by giving blood, one gives life. For Lewis, the indigenous interpretation would be adequate, and it would be arbitrary to search beyond it.

Lewis' conclusion, however, is not convincing, because the native interpretation is not completely coherent and does not explain all the facts. In the first place, there seems to be a contradiction between two justifications for these hemorrhages: according to one, hemorrhages allow for the elimination of "bad

blood"; according to the other, they serve to transfer "good blood." Why is the blood "bad" for the one who gives it and "good" for the one who receives it? The first justification for the hemorrhage implies, at any rate, that blood is not always associated with life, as Lewis claims; on the contrary, it is the *loss* of blood that seems to promote life. But there is also a more serious problem: the indigenous theory (or Gnau people's claims that Lewis considers as such) does not explain the most typical aspect of the ritual: if it is only the blood that matters, why does it have to be extracted from the penis? This question is not a frivolous one, all the more so in that the operation is painful, and at least for the initiates a cause for anguish. It should also be noticed that, whereas, in extraordinary circumstances, a woman may be present in all the other rites that are normally reserved to men, the operation on the penis is the only one that women are not allowed to attend in any instance (cf. ibid.: 182). This could constitute a point in favor of the thesis that there exists an unconscious association (unconscious because *repressed* from the consciousness) between male hemorrhage and female menstruation. Indeed, the prohibition regarding women would be interpreted as the *conditio sine qua non* so that the story that men tell themselves ("we are also able to menstruate, to give our blood to the children") is not destroyed by the presence of those who in this context represent the reality of the difference between the sexes. Lewis could rightly object that such an interpretation is too conjectural; it is somewhat bolstered, however, by the origin myth of female menstruation: Gnau in fact believe that men, not women, originally menstruated, but that they transferred this nuisance to their female companions with a trick (ibid.: 124). It could be added that through another trick (the rite itself) men periodically re-appropriate their lost prerogative and in the rite, the original trick to which women fell victim is repeated in another form: excluded from the rite, they will never be in a position to apprehend that the transfer was not complete and that men continue to menstruate, though now only when they want to.

If one admits even the partial validity of this interpretation then the Gnau people's denial of the connection between the artificial hemorrhage of the penis and the natural hemorrhage of the vagina does not have the incontrovertible value of proof that Lewis attributes to it. Such a denial could instead be interpreted as a defence against an association repressed into the unconscious of which the myth (even more than the ritual) would constitute the symptom.

One could cite other signs in support of the theory that unconscious psychic formations have an influence on conscious acts and representations whose

existence they help to explain. However, it is not necessary to belabor this point nor to decide here which interpretations of the ritual wherein men provoke a hemorrhage of their penis is most adequate. The point is only to show concretely that Lewis' "phenomenological" and, at times, "literal" approach is not satisfactory because it does not take into account the internal contradictions of ideology, nor the tension between ideology and rules nor, finally, the very existence of the ritual.

In conclusion, the two approaches discussed here both appear to be inadequate. Whereas one ignores the unquestionable existence of unconscious aspects of the ritual, the other disregards completely the conscious interpretation (or lack thereof) and interprets the ritual entirely as an unconscious process of communication.

Without ruling out the existence of unconscious aspects in communication—or, better, "intuitive" or "subliminal," as Jakobson (1970) calls them to highlight that they can be potentially accessible through psychological reflection and thus are not completely unconscious—it should be emphasized that the possibility of inferring information from an unconscious behavior does not turn this behavior *ipso facto* into a "message." In fact, the information is deduced through inference by the observer, not communicated by the person being observed (cf. Lyons 1968: 413–15).

The distinction between "communication" and "inference" allows us to formulate an approach that does not arbitrarily reduce ritual to the single matter of communication but recognizes its cognitive dimension. The following pages are dedicated to illustrating such an approach.

COMMUNICATION OR INVENTION?

The preceding considerations have shown that when ritual is regarded either as a purely communicative mechanism or is made out as the mere enactment of beliefs we quickly find ourselves at a dead end.

Without wanting to deny either the existence of communicative aspects in ritual or the fact that it reflects certain beliefs, we would like to formulate an alternative hypothesis: considered from a cognitive point of view, ritual does not mainly look like a code for the transmission of pre-existing messages, but rather, like a mechanism that allows people to obtain new information. In other words, ritual is, in aggregate, potentially a creator of knowledge.

In order to understand this hypothesis, it is necessary to discuss a few existing relationships between the communicative and ritual process. We have already noted that true communicative acts involve both the intention to communicate and the possibility to choose among alternatives that are known both to the sender and recipient of the message (cf. Gombrich [1962] 1985: 61; Cherry 1961). Not only is the actual presence of these conditions not demonstrable in each and every rite or aspect thereof, but it is not even always possible to single out a sender, or, in other cases, the sender is only imaginary (gods, ancestors, and so on, who can also function as imaginary recipients).

Like the communicative process, the ritual process is based on expectations and projections: the addressee of a sentence "feels" more than he or she actually "hears," because his or her anticipations and expectations constitute the schema with which he or she analyzes aural impressions—choosing some of them as pertinent, interpreting others as mere noise, or integrating them with components that are not actually uttered, but whose occurrence is predicted by analysis of the context.

In the ritual process, however, the element of anticipation and projection becomes predominant with respect to what is effectively received. This is due to the absence of a true process of communication, in which the presence of alternatives known to both the sender and the receiver allows them to keep their projections and anticipations under control. In particular, the sender can adjust his messages in accordance with the recipient's reactions in such a way as to correct those interpretations that do not correspond to the communicative intention.

This element of control is certainly weaker in those one-sided communicative situations where feedback is not possible: films, paintings, and ritual representations cannot be changed in function of the spectator's reactions. One could even claim that those who produce these types of messages deliberately utilize communicative one-sidedness in order to stimulate to the utmost the spectator's projections.

This effect is even more likely when it is not possible to single out in a ritual a sender, a receiver, or a true communicative intention, or when such an intention appears to be only marginal.

In effect, the rite appears then as a collection of signs, although without offering the code that allows for a full interpretation of those signs. On the one hand, it looks as if it is endowed with meaning; on the other hand, it seems devoid of any apparent sense. This contrast powerfully attracts attention and is

tantalizing: it may stimulate a search for meaning in what is ordinarily meaningless but is "put in quotation marks" as if it possessed it. This can then prompt people to "play" with the rite's signs, to establish homologies and oppositions, to reunite things that are normally kept separate, and to separate things that are normally conjoined.

The permanent inadequacy existing between stimulus and answer, as mechanism of provocation, would then constitute not so much an indication that the rite involves "unconscious statements" (Gell 1975: 213), but rather a structural aspect of the rite, one that allows it to function as a means to transcend given meanings and rules. This is particularly true when the rite puts in quotation marks elements and aspects of daily life that are fundamental but at the same time problematic. By reducing the distances among them, reordering them, breaking the barriers that keep them separate from ordinary perception, and stimulating the perception of new relationships among them, the rite allows people to reflect on the fundamental constituents of experience and to derive from them, if not a clear meaning, at least the sense of interconnectedness that results from manipulating them in the same context.

This reflexive work stimulated by the rite can be realized more or less consciously; it can lead to an actual objectification; it can produce reinterpretations, criticisms, reforms, and so on; or it can simply contribute to the learning of structures and social codes, and, therefore, to their reproduction and reinforcement. But it can also remain an unrealized potentiality. Indeed, the degree of actualization varies considerably according to the rites, the circumstances, the presence or absence of other means and situations for the learning and objectivization of structures, and so on. It is precisely for this reason that it would be misleading to identify the rite as a proper metalanguage, a "code of a superior order," collectively constituted. If this were the case, then the whole community would have to be aware of this particular status. On the contrary, the rite is simply a situation that favors reflection because it works by destructuring and restructuring everyday life, and it continues to be efficacious by virtue of the fact that it is not a specific code that can be learned once and for all. The rite is therefore a constant stimulator and potential bearer of new information, an instrument for reinvesting with meaning the world constituted by and crystallized in social experience.

Because it stimulates the subject's projective tendencies and plays with expectations, paradoxes, and obscure areas of experience, the rite tends to make evident both the contradictory or unclear aspects of *external* experience (i.e., of

society and nature), and the problematic or obscure zones of subjects' *internal* experience.

At times, these two blurred and subversive levels of experience are put directly in relation to each other: certain rites trigger a real psychological *acting out* in which, as a response to a collective expectation, elements of the experiences of certain individuals come to be projected upon incomprehensible elements of social experience in order to give them meaning. This happens, for example, in rites involving spirit mediums, shamans, and (to a lesser degree) oracles. In these rites, all that is problematic seems to be mobilized in an attempt to provoke a certain "spark" or a certain unexpected mediation which may allow the rite to restructure, correlatively, collective and individual experience, and give meaning to both. Society utilizes no differently the "creativity" of an artist.

In other kinds of rites, these projective, combinatory, and even "ludic" aspects are more strictly regulated. This is particularly true for feasts, in which a certain controlled destructuring of the everyday has the purpose of reconstructing it in the collective consciousness, reinforcing its meaning through a play of "back and forth" between the internal order of the subjects and the external order of reality.

Finally, there exist rites where the playful aspect is reduced to a minimum and which reproduce normative structures by representing them in a highly ordered and formalized way, in contrast with the relative disorder of their realization in the everyday world. Even in these cases, however, a ludic element still contributes to giving meaning to the rite in a way that recalls the relationship between a "score" and a "performance." It is an interpretive, essentially "musical," and often virtuosic game where what counts is the ability to follow the rules in spite of their difficulty and indeed because of their rigidity. The meaning of the rite lies then not in its semantic significance, but in doing it by the rules, adjusting one's behavior to the requirements of the "text" while at the same time leaving some room for embellishment, interpretation, and invention.

This subtle dialectic between freedom and rule, between individuality and collectivity, becomes then a powerful imaginary scheme for the experience of the relationship between reality and desire, between the social and the individual. The victory of the individual over the norm, within the victory of the norm over the individual, is a pleasing experience of an essentially aesthetic nature.

In these cases, the rite offers an experience quite similar to the one offered by an aesthetically satisfying interpretation of a very well-known musical piece—one that has come to be accepted matter-of-factly, as a tradition, without too many questions about its meaning. What then attracts a person either toward

the "temple of music" or the temple where the rite unfolds (and are they really different?) is ultimately the opportunity to live an experience that could be called "temporal," i.e., a kind of confrontation and—herein lies happiness—a possible reconciliation between traces left in the memory by past performances and impressions of the present performance, which settle upon older ones much as a saline solution orders itself upon its corresponding crystal. Discovery and memory are thus reconciled in the flux of time, which, mastered at last, seems headed on a clear course toward an unknown but secure direction.

A scene from a film comes to mind: an old Dogon man contemplates, as he beats the rhythm of the music with his hand, the rite he attended sixty years earlier. A voice asks him: "Are you happy?" "Yes, I am happy."

AN EXAMPLE

We have seen that the ludic, projective, and meaning-creating aspect of ritual is not present in the same measure and in the same fashion in all rites. Considering the entire ritual system of a society, one observes that rites of different types have complementary functions within that system. Moments of formality, of physical or verbal constraint, and so on, alternate with relatively unstructured moments of playful exploration, whose purpose is to stimulate the objectification and apprehension of mental and physical schemes of *habitus* which inform everyday life but which do not appear clearly to consciousness. Both methods are often employed to reproduce the fundamental schemes of social life, and thus transmit them from one generation to the next and to reinforce them within each individual.

Here, briefly, is an example of the complementarity between these two opposite kinds of rites. The rituals in question were performed in Hawaii each year until the end of the eighteenth century and, in a modified form, until 1819. The year-long ritual cycle consists of two principal phases: the first marks the transition to the new year and lasts four months; the second takes place during the central part of the year and lasts eight months (Malo 1951; ʻĪʻī 1967; Kamakau 1976). During the latter period the men gather in the temples four times a month (for a total of eight days a month) to offer sacrifices and prayers. These rites are extremely complex and require an extraordinary formality, bodily control, and level of attention. Each period spent in the temple ends with a rite (*hono*) during which the participants must seat themselves in the order

of their rank and remain motionless for several hours while listening to the priests' prayers. Anyone who moves is immediately sacrificed to the gods. This rite represents in the clearest way the hierarchical structure of society, which is reproduced in the period spent in the temple.

The ritual period of eight months begins in the main temple with the inauguration of a sovereign on whom all the other temples depend. The rites performed on this occasion last ten days and involve human sacrifices. It is impossible to summarize them: suffice it to say that, given the extremely complicated prescriptions, performing them properly is a real achievement, a triumph for the sovereign and for all of society. These rites constitute the fullest example of the ritual type where the ludic element (when it can actually manifest itself at all) is limited to the performance. Social laws and schemes are superimposed on it in a particularly clear-cut, rigid way.

On the other hand, the situation is much more fluid and the ludic element reigns supreme in the rites of passage from one year to the next. The term "ludic" is to be taken literally in this case, for among the gods who receive cults on this occasion is the "god of games" (Akua pā'ani) who presides over games, feasts, and dances accompanying the passage in each district of another god, Lono makua (Lono the genitor). It is possible to demonstrate that the "god of games" is in fact the transformation of Lono makua. The latter has a threatening aspect: he returns annually to enforce his rights over the land cultivated by men, but he is neutralized by offerings and thereby sent back into the ocean. The neutralization of Lono makua means the temporary neutralization of the law imposed from outside and of the schemes that constitute the basis of society and thought.

These schemes, however, are imposed anew on consciousness through the spontaneous process of the game, set free by the rite. In fact, the ludic process has the same result as the non-ludic one in force during ordinary rites: both help, ultimately, to reinstate the normative structures of society.

During the festival of the new year, dance, mime, and theater, mostly of a comic character, take place. Concretely, these often involve fictitious behaviors that imitate normal behaviors, thus allowing people to reflect on the latter, to objectify them and to place them at a distance. In addition to mime, theater, and dance, fake combats also take place (war is forbidden at this time of year, while it is common during the rest of the year; indeed it provides most of the victims for the human sacrifices).

The rigid social hierarchy is loosened, if not neutralized, during the festival of the new year; even the fundamental opposition between the sexes loses most

of its strength. They join freely, "experimenting" with unusual and even forbidden interpersonal combinations. Something similar happens at the conceptual level: jokes, comedies, and other representational activities reshuffle normal concepts and relationships.

The laughter that accompanies all these behaviors functions as a psychological frame (cf. Bateson 1954). It announces that the calling into question of normal hierarchies and established schemes is not real, but a mere game. But it is this game that generates the possibility of understanding the reason and necessity of the usual social order, and thus of freely accepting it. Also, this game generates ideas and new combinations that could be translated into the normative order. This creative aspect of the feast underlines its temporal context. In fact, the feast takes place in the period following the first rising of the Pleiades after sunset, which was also the moment when the cosmos began to take shape and to differentiate itself from the original state of chaos (Beckwith 1951: 58). It thus seems that the ritual game repeats in consciousness the process of formation of the cosmic order.

However, laughter also demonstrates that this ideology of the feast, according to which the social order can be freely reproduced and learned through the game, is, in part, a fictitious one. Indeed, the fact that the violation of normal relationships is laughed at manifests precisely the distancing of this violation and, therefore, the constant presence, at the heart of the feast, of a norm that the feast does not produce, but rather presupposes in order for it to function.

The fact that the norm is presupposed and, therefore, the existence—from the perspective of the feast—of a residue of "non-sense" and violence, is revealed by the way in which the king puts an end to the new year's rites. He arrives from the sea, conquers the gods of the feast during a fictitious battle in which he emerges victorious, dismantles them, and deposits them in his main temple, where he offers sacrifices. This rite signals the beginning of the return to the cult's ordinary religious period, in which norms are imposed by authority and in which the free interplay between internal and external order is reduced to a minimum.

However, the ordinary period of rituals benefits from the capital of sense and consensus built up during the feast. Thus, the anti-ludic aspect of the temple rite presupposes the ludic aspect of the rite of the new year, much as the latter, in turn, assumes the former. This demonstrates that it is possible to establish the meaning of a given rite only by considering it within the entire social system of which it forms a part. In this way, one realizes that playful and creative elements

exhibited during the Hawaiian ritual year are balanced with other elements that are rigid, formalized, and imposed by authority. Such a complementarity does not coincide, however, with the one described by Victor Turner between *communitas* and *societas*. This instead is the complementarity between two cognitive experiences. During different moments of the ritual cycle, inverse importance is assumed by the combinatory faculty exploring all possibilities and the authority deciding among the various alternatives. Even the feast of the new year, which seems related to Turner's *communitas*, ultimately contradicts his scheme and the hierarchy that Turner establishes between the two terms of the opposition. Indeed, as we have seen, the feast presupposes the very norm that it is instead supposed to found (i.e., *societas*, to use Turner's terminology), and the authority of thought over society is revealed as encompassed by the authority of society over thought.

EFFICACY UPON SOCIETY AND EFFICACY UPON NATURE

The preceding considerations on ludic and aesthetic aspects of ritual account for ritual's potential cognitive efficacy. This, however, remains implicit, and it is not normally conceptualized by indigenous ideology. It may be inferred from the aesthetic judgments expressed by participants in a ritual ("it is beautiful," "it is pleasant," "we are happy," and so on), as well as from the effects that the perception of form and schemes objectified within the ritual has on their performance in social life.

Another type of efficacy is more directly present in indigenous consciousness. It is commonly held that the rite has a certain effect and aims to produce a certain result: it can make an individual move from the status of "adolescent" to the status of "adult"; transform two "engaged" individuals into a "married" couple; move a man from the status of "private citizen" to "chair," "head," or "priest," and so on. In other cases, it is held that the rite may also have results that, from our point of view, are not exclusively social: for example, the rite of passage from the status of "adolescent" to "adult" may be conceptualized as an act that either makes the subject grow (in a biological sense) or causes him or her to become prosperous. Other rites aim to modify or influence "natural" processes: to provoke rain, to stop an epidemic, to make the crops grow, and so on.

In order to account for this particular aspect of ritual behavior, it is good to start with those rites whose efficacy is not supposed to transcend social relations

(thus, with those ties that may properly be called "ceremonies," see Valeri 1977 [Chapter XI, this volume]). These rites still exist in modern societies, a good example being provided by civil marriage. When the judge pronounces a formula of the kind "I now pronounce you man and wife," the engaged couple effectively become husband and wife. In this case, then, we have a linguistic act that is not simply communicative or declarative; by virtue of the declaration, it transforms the social relationship between two individuals. The word thus produces an effect on reality, owing, naturally, to a collective convention: the formula "I now pronounce you man and wife" is uttered by the right person in the right situation, it has the effect of transforming x and y into husband and wife.

The linguistic act that produces this kind of effect is called "performative," and the element within it that is capable of producing real effects (and not simply communicative ones) is called the "illocutionary force" (cf. Austin [1955] 1962, Searle 1969). (Of course, performative acts are not necessarily linguistic: for example, laying a crown on a man's head turns him into a king.) It is true, therefore, that in some cases saying is doing, and that certain rites have real, not just imaginary, effects. These apparently magical effects of rites are, however, not in the slightest way magical. It is not a force intrinsic to language or visual images that explains their power, but rather the power of society over itself—the power to make a decision and to recognize its effect (cf. Bourdieu [1980] 1990: 188). The person who, by simply pronouncing a formula, transforms what is enunciated into a reality exercises a power that has been accorded to him by society and that ceases the moment society takes it back from him.

Even though this illocutionary use of language or any other symbolic expression is not magical, it is possible to discover in it the roots of magic in a proper sense. Indeed, the idea of the real efficacy of certain declarations, orders, and so on, when pronounced by certain people, can be extended from a sphere in which a decision is sufficient to produce the desired effect to another in which the decision is either not sufficient or totally powerless. To say "You are healed" cannot have a real effect because the bodily processes that determine the state of illness or health do not depend on an arbitrary act of collective will; they are not a fact of convention, but a fact of necessity. This seems obvious to us because we are used to radical oppositions between "social rule" and "natural law," "freedom" and "necessity," "society" and "nature," "human" and "nonhuman." However, all these distinctions (which are always anyway fragile) are the result of a slow process of discovery, not the result of immediate facts of experience. On the contrary, the primary tendency is to "anthropomorphize" nature or—no less

important—to "naturalize" society. When angry, we kick on object and break another; if a tile falls on our head, we insult it, and so on. Such behavior does not mean that we believe material objects can feel and hear, or suffer, but indicates that our immediate, uncontrolled reactions cause us to treat material objects as we would treat someone who has hurt us and who may thus become the target of our vengeance.

On the other hand, the fact that certain cultures extend the validity of performative acts beyond the real limits of their validity does not however imply that they totally confuse nature and culture. It only means that the borderline that they establish between these two domains is not as clear as the one that we have established.

At any rate, it can be claimed that wherever religion exists, there exists at least one area in which a certain indistinctness between nature and society is kept in force. Indeed, the element common to all religions is the idea that natural processes depend to some extent on moral order. Disguised under the idea of man's dependence on forces that transcend him—and that are generally located in nature (whether in the skies or in the forest matters little)—religion in reality expresses the idea that nature is dependent on a human order. This is an idea of nature that has it behaving according to rules or morality, a nature that punishes evil with lightning and rewards the righteous with abundance. From experience of the efficacy of the word to which society delegates its authority over itself, society derives the idea that this authority extends to a nature populated by human images, by social and moral projections such as ancestors, gods, evil and beneficent wills, and so on.

Ultimately, this confirms that Durkheim's theory of religion contains a kernel of truth: in order for a rite to be considered efficacious, it is necessary to experience the real force that society exerts over its individuals, as well as—it should be added—experience the effect that this force has over the natural world through its effect on human will. Indeed, that part of nature that depends, through labor, on human will is effectively modified by the collective acceptance of an order, a formula, and so on. In such a case, the formula functions as a performative—efficacious not only on social relations, but also on the part of nature that, being under man's control, is, by virtue of this, part of society.

In the end, nature in its entirety, inasmuch as it is known, categorized, and felt, is in some sense part of society. The mistake of religious (or magical) ideology lies in taking humanity's gnosiological appropriation of nature as a practical

appropriation. Both the reification of concepts and the humanization of nature result from this confusion.

CONVENTION AND EXPERIENCE

The previous discussion should demonstrate that, if performatives are a matter of convention, interpretable in terms of practical reason, the sphere of their application is, in contrast, not purely conventional, but depends on a certain knowledge and experience of the world. Whereas in the Western world we have learned to confine these acts to an area in which convention is indeed efficacious, in other cultures this sphere is not so clearly distinct from nature.

In actual experience, the extension of performatives to nature encounters a *resistance* that has to be taken into account: the gap between the ritual's claim and the events that actually happen can be filled in by interpretation, which points to factors that enable one to justify the rite's failure without abandoning belief in its efficacy (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1937). However, the power of interpretation to neutralize the disproving of experience is not unlimited, as is explicitly or implicitly posited from Frazer forward (cf. Wittgenstein [1931–48] 1979: 17e–18e).

These observations prevent us from recuperating, by means of the theory of performatives, the Durkheimian-functionalist theory according to which ritual acts—inasmuch as they are produced by a social "convention"—refer exclusively to this convention, to the act, and, therefore, to the actors who produce them (cf., for example, Tambiah 1973b: 221), and can thus be interpreted in terms of practical reason only. Such a thesis does not take seriously the fact that ritual acts make predictions that can be confirmed or denied by experience (cf. Lloyd 1966: 178–79; Skorupski 1976: 61, 158, 181), or else it implicitly adopts a theory according to which experience would be wholly conditioned by a certain conceptual form and thus always unable to contradict it. This latter conception was popularized by Lévy-Bruhl ([1910] 1985) and persists even today in more refined forms (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1937), as, for example, in Tambiah's theory of the persuasive use of analogy in magical actions (1973b).

Let us consider an example proposed by Tambiah in order to illustrate his theory. In political rhetoric one can encounter the following analogy: an employer is to his employees as a father is to his sons. The point of this analogy is the transference of a certain quality (love, respect, and so on) from one

relationship to another. The analogy should evoke in the workers the idea that they are like children, and it should lead them to assume an attitude of childish dependency in relation to their employer (ibid.: 211–12).

However, one could argue against Tambiah that the analogical transference would never be accepted by the workers if their experiences contained facts that contradicted it. The formula is efficacious not so much for the persuasive effect of the analogy *per se* but because it is proposed against a background that—like a screen that makes visual illusion possible (cf. Gombrich 1959: 228, 276)—protects it from those experiential signs (for example, the employer's real behavior) that would contradict its suggestions. In such cases, the "screening" action is due to the employer's control of the means of information and of the instruments for interpreting the experience made accessible to the workers. Nevertheless, the experiences that deny the analogy are never completely suppressed, and may be reactivated in other situations.

The necessity to screen experience so that formulae, magical or political, may be effective, shows that experience is not totally conditioned by conceptual form. On the contrary, it preserves a certain degree of resistance, and thus of autonomy. This is why practical motivations for the rite, when its efficacy is extended to nature, may not disregard knowledge of nature itself, that is, the properly gnosiological dimension.

GAME, ART, AND RITE

Our discussion thus far suffices to demonstrate not only the multivalent character and extreme complexity of ritual acts, but also and above all the fact that the category "ritual" in the way it is commonly used does not have a theoretical justification. In fact it includes behaviors that fall into other categories: for example, ludic and aesthetic behaviors.

It is not by chance that these phenomena are so often found in "rituals." Indeed, it could be argued that what is *specifically* ritual, or at least one of its fundamental aspects, is nothing but a particular *variant* in a family of phenomena that also includes games and art.

All three of these phenomena are marked by the presence of a "psychological frame" (cf. Bateson 1954: 184–93), or by metacommunicative signals that oppose actions "in a frame" or "in quotes" to ordinary actions (Valeri 2001 [see Appendix II, this volume]).

The psychological frame communicates that it includes a representation of action or a "fiction," an action that does not belong to the same ontological level of that which it represents and is opposed to.

Among the most common means used to "frame" ritual are "formality" of behavior, a fixed and repetitive character to gestures, colors, scents, special decorations, noise (or, in contrast, complete silence), the utilization of special languages or special levels of a language (Van Gennep 1908), music and special instruments, and so on. Naturally, all these means can have (and generally do have) other functions within ritual, but their presence suffices to identify certain events as rituals.

As we have seen, the frame signals that what it encompasses is "fictitious," "representative," and so on. Yet, the frame has the effect of isolating impressions produced by representations from impressions generated by the real world, which remain outside. In this way, the frame can also function as a screen against those experiential signs that contradict the "reality effect" of the images that it encompasses, when those images are particularly evocative. Thus, paradoxically, the frame assumes two contradictory functions: one signals that what it contains is fictitious; the other causes its fictitious character to be forgotten. The relative importance of the two aspects of the frame's functioning allows one to differentiate between game, art, and rite.

In a game, the evocative power of what is framed is never so great as to obliterate the message "This is a game." If, however, the player identifies too intensely with the game, the latter stops being just a game and may become a craze and sometimes a rite, as the superstitious acts of the most avid players demonstrate.

In art, the illusory effect of representations is more intense than in games. In fact, artistic images trigger the projection of mental images, fulfill expectations and desires, and, as such, are "integrated" by the spectators, who unconsciously add to them what is missing in order for them to appear real (cf. Gombrich 1959: 277).

Abandonment to the illusion is, however, kept under control. The frame's two opposed modes of functioning alternate regularly and quickly: one moment it concentrates the viewer's attention on what it contains (the representation), at the same time blocking the eye's movement toward what lies outside it (reality), yet a moment later it pushes attention outside what it circumscribes (for example, beyond the picture). In the first moment, the viewer yields to the image and its power; in the second, the image recovers its illusory character through confrontation with the reality outside the frame.

Aesthetic pleasure is produced by the sense of control that derives from this quick and regular oscillation: indeed, abandonment to the power of the image

is always followed by the experience of being able to oppose it, of directing our eyes back to reality and breaking the spell. Thus, we are dealing with a pleasure that derives from control over the illusion experienced by voluntarily yielding to it, knowing full well that awareness of the illusion can be recaptured at will.

It is truly the power to resist the power of images that is absent from ritual proper. In rituals, images, words, and gestures are perceived as identical to reality and consequently associated with the humiliating experience of dependency, which indeed is the religious feeling *par excellence* (cf. Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 175–77).

Obviously, the situation in which a complete illusion is achieved—in which the ability to "put in quotes" is completely obliterated—is only an extreme case. An analysis of magical rites, for example, would be able to show that an awareness of the fictitious and, at any rate, "less real" character of ritual practices may be inhibited, but is never absent altogether, and indeed it influences belief, giving it its deepest form: "It is not true, but I believe it; I don't believe in it, but it is true" (cf. Mannoni [1964] 1969). At any rate, one may speak of ritual experience when the balance between the two functions of the frame—between making people aware of the fiction and providing a screen against reality—is altered in favor of the latter.

The theory presented here allows one to account for the fact that an aesthetic experience can be transformed into a ritual one and vice versa. Oscillations from one type of relationship between representation and reality to another are found in the course of a single symbolic action as well as in a diachronic dimension. Indeed, what transfers a given action from the sphere of ritual to that of art or games, and vice versa, is not its intrinsic qualities as much as the variable effects that these properties possess in different contexts and upon different spectators. What yesterday was a rite is today a simple "festival" set up for the aesthetic pleasure it gives; we know of some children's games that were once rituals; when transported from the church to a museum, a sacred image becomes mere "art," although it used to be part of a ritual experience. In sum: the mode of experiencing an image depends on its power within a given culture. Belonging as we do to a civilization in which generalization in use of images has been accompanied by an extraordinary enhancement of the ability to control them and to keep them at a distance, in other words by an unprecedented growth in the specifically aesthetic sphere, it is difficult for us to imagine the disconcerting power that images have long exercised over humans.

APPENDIX

Marcel Mauss and the New Anthropology

Translated from the Italian by Alice Elliot

Everything that has been is eternal: the sea will cast it up again.
— Friedrich Nietzsche

"Above all it is essential to draw up the largest possible catalogue of categories; it is essential to start with all those which it is possible to know man has used. It will be clear that there have been and still are dead or pale or obscure moons in the firmament of reason" (Mauss 1979: 32). With this phrase, Marcel Mauss captures the entire meaning and program of anthropology. The phrase has sustained, for more than half a century, his extraordinary and prophetic oeuvre, which becomes increasingly timely as its deepest intention materializes in new discoveries, in the evolution of the science he contributed to establish. So, paradoxically, despite aging, Mauss becomes increasingly "new," and one is obliged to take a stance, as we are barely at the beginning of the road he has mapped out.

One cannot merely refer to Mauss: with him, one must debate.

The originality of the themes he addresses and the brilliance with which he sketches a solution sets in motion his readers, pushing them forward, beyond the page, so that they cannot but sense him as being both dated and contemporary at the same time, as it is he who pushes beyond himself.

To the page corresponds the man, to his humanism a moral figure, a mental toolkit able to reckon with the whole of humanity. "Mauss knows everything," his students used to say. But his wasn't a self-satisfied knowledge, forgetful of

how things are always vaster than what they seem. He knew only too well that one cannot build a universe *within* oneself, but only between oneself and others. And that we need to advance as much as possible into the latter kind of universe. Indeed, few have created such an array of tools as Mauss did for relating to mankind. His knowledge of sociology, ethnology, psychology, psychopathology (he was a student of Ribot, and among the first to acknowledge the contribution of psychoanalysis to the explanation of ethnological facts), linguistics, history, and philosophy, his prodigious memory, his extraordinary intellectual curiosity and his ability to arouse that of others, made of him an exceptional scholar and teacher. His students, all of them excellent, bear witness to this: Marcel Griaule, B. Maupoil, Michel Leiris, Denise Paulme, Roger Bastide, Jacques Soustelle, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Henri Lehmann, Alfred Metraux, and Georges Devereux.

The merits of Mauss, however, were more than this. He had a profound knowledge of all aspects of the Classical, Germanic, and Celtic worlds, and was above all a remarkable Indologist. For many years, in fact, he was Professor of the History of Indian Religions and, as Louis Dumont (1964: 90) recalls, he never ceased, even in his later lectures, to attach great importance to the Indian world and the Orient in general.

His interests, however, increasingly moved towards ethnology, and he became Director of the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Paris in 1925, together with Lévy-Bruhl and Paul Rivet.

Mauss was thus a man for humanity as a whole, a man, that is, who would not settle for living and thinking within the limits of Western culture. It is for this reason, as Lévi-Strauss has highlighted, that his opus has such an "anticipatory" character, with his theories forerunning those of Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead and, more generally, the American "culture and personality" school. He also anticipates Cannon in the study of the relationship between the physiological and the social. His rigorous method and his patient empirical research influenced English anthropology: not so long ago Evans-Pritchard (1954: 7) wrote:

> We are far from the rigorous discipline which men like Mauss had in mind, a discipline which supposes the specialist study of a lifetime and which, while setting limits to aims and problems, necessitates scholarship which embraces not only a vast range of information about primitive peoples but also the study of the history of religions, of sacred texts, and of exegesis and theology.

In a sense then, because of the extreme breadth of his conceptions, Mauss is still "ahead" of modern anthropology.

Such knowledge, such (thoroughly scientific) care for the tools of comprehension and interpretation, denote a profoundly new mental approach, a humanism which is not self-indulgent, and that refuses to speak of man without knowing him in his most diverse, and contradictory, manifestations—those that reveal him. A humanism that does not settle for a certain cultural tradition, whose history is chewed over again and again to the point of making it unusable, but which, rather, is well aware that venturing out in space is possibly more important than venturing out in time, as time always and only means *our* time, the time we feel as completed and solid, behind us.

In this sense, it is by reverting once again to the teachings of Mauss that Lévi-Strauss is able to write the manifesto for the new anthropology: a science that strives to make the Kantian project of the study of the laws of human thought, of that which makes man man—symbolic activity—scientific. But,

> the ethnologist, unlike the philosopher, does not feel obliged to take the conditions in which his own thought operates, or the science peculiar to his society and his period, as a fundamental subject of reflection in order to extend these local findings into a form of understanding, the universality of which can never be more than hypothetical and potential. Although concerned with the same problems, he adopts an opposite approach in two respects. Instead of assuming a universal form of human understanding, he prefers to study empirically collective forms of understanding, whose properties have been solidified, as it were, and are revealed to him in countless concrete representational systems (Lévi-Strauss 1986: 10–11).

The ethnologist thus chooses the most divergent symbolic systems "in the hope that the methodological rules he will have to evolve in order to translate these systems in terms of his own system and vice versa, will reveal a pattern of basic and universal laws" (ibid.: 11). This approach, whereby all men are equal in the common problem of the essence of man, to which everyone makes a contribution; this humanism, of which ethnology—insofar as it is our code for gathering together these scattered contributions in a single reference system—is its main organ, exposes all the distance between the new and the old anthropology. When confronted with the savage world, Frazer spoke of a "tragic chronicle of human error and folly, of fruitless endeavours, wasted time, and blighted hopes" (1936: vi), while in his *Notebooks*, Lévy-Bruhl confessed how myths "no longer

have any effect on us . . . strange narratives, not to say absurd and incomprehensible . . . it costs us an effort to take an interest in them."[1] Behind these judgments there stood a concept of man identifiable with the concept produced by the West, or rather, with the man of the industrial revolution. The West's arrogance, the mask of its imperialism, is in fact a recent phenomenon.

Until Rousseau, and later still, the savage world, the world of the "others," was still a term of reference for thinking of man; indeed, in the savage world, humanity's common essence revealed itself in its most simple guise, thus allowing empirical analysis. It is perhaps not by chance that Rousseau's "new science" is closely associated with ethnology: "when one wants to study men, one must look around oneself; but to study man, one must extend the range of one's vision. One must first observe the differences in order to discover the properties" (1966: 30–31). Humboldt (1920: 21) too was convinced that an objective knowledge of man required an analysis of the entirety of man's subjectivities: "the subjectivity of humanity *as a whole* becomes however in itself something objective."

Barely sixty years later, Baker, one of the very first ethnographers—whose accounts were central to the development of Lubbock's theories—declared, however, that "human nature viewed in its crude state as pictured amongst African savages is quite on a level with that of the brute, and not to be compared with the noble character of the dog" (Baker 1866: 227). Hegel said, "the transition from monologue to dialogue is the birth of man." With the rejection of "dialogue" so typical of classic anthropology, the exorcism of the specter of the savage, man was dead. He was dead, at least, as a man who poses himself as a problem. One sets oneself as a problem only by considering all men, and thus all the living manifestations of man.

All men interest us, as they are all actualizations of what we *can* be. With the Industrial Revolution, however, the "other" men are not men anymore; they are just objects, nature. Their scientific objectification corresponds to their economic objectification: a purely naturalistic anthropology emerges.

But the negation of the savage's humanity corresponded to the negation, within western civilization itself, of many of man's "provinces," and man was conceived as pure *Homo Oeconomicus*, as pure producer.[2]

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1. In Lévi-Strauss (1966: 121). —Trans.
2. It is interesting to note that Mauss explicitly affirms in *The gift*: "it is only our Western societies that quite recently turned man into an economic animal" (1969: 74).

As Roger Bastide (1964) has noted, the concept of praxis emerging from Marxism is still actually ethnocentric, as it limits itself to the praxis of the western man. Marxism, being concerned solely with the problem of alienation, disengages itself from many of man's components, "from dream, from sensibility and affection" (ibid.: 445); faced with these phenomena, Marx narrows down the concept of praxis of his youth and adopts a "reductionist" approach.

European culture ends up by reacting irrationally to this mutilation of man; the savage world, which has conserved intact a lost reality, is once again reduced to the status of "thing," distanced, mythicized. Savage thought is, for Freud and Jung, a revelation of the unconscious, for Piaget—following in Freud's footsteps—it is narcissistic regression, for Lévy-Bruhl it is "mystic participation" and "paralogism," and for Frobenius, Jensen, and Volhard it is "paideuma," the original intuition of the world, religious emotion.

It is in this context that Mauss works, with a clear humanistic conscience. His approach is closer to that of the Renaissance than to Descartes. For Descartes, it is sufficient to know oneself in order to know the whole of man. Rationalism shuts itself off from *all* of humanity's experience, while the Renaissance, right from the start, related itself to configurations of civilization that were "other" in order to know and complete itself. The Classical world, the Hebraic world and the freshly discovered New Worlds weren't just myths: they were manifestations of a common humanity, and had to be investigated in order to solve one's own problems.

The Renaissance lives in a tension toward the other, the different to oneself; man who seeks completeness feels incomplete in the absence of all other existing men. Thus Montaigne (1743: 20), convinced as he is that "every man carries the entire form of human condition," anticipates the approach of Mauss and modern anthropology. Montaigne searches for a direct contact with those men that we call barbarians solely because "everyone gives the title of barbarity to everything that is not in use in his own country" (228), queries at length a man "that lived ten or twelve years in the New World, discovered in these latter days" (224), "a plain ignorant fellow, and therefore more likely to tell the truth" (227), and collects, as a true ethnologist, savages' songs, of which he declares: "now I have conversed enough with poetry to judge thus much: that not only there is nothing barbarous in this invention, but, moreover, that it is perfectly Anacreontic. To which [it may be added that] their language is soft, of a pleasing accent, and something bordering upon the Greek terminations" (228). He also defends cannibals, accusing Europeans of being far more barbaric than them, who only eat the bodies of the dead. He engages in a long dialogue with a savage

arrived in France, interrogating him on common human feelings: honor, courage, pride, and recognizes him as a man.

Mauss, who has contributed, perhaps more than any other, to the launching of the new anthropology and, above all, given it its meaning (wherein scientificity becomes the attainment of a better humanity and man's reclamation of everything that is human), is closer to the humanism of the Renaissance, the deepest meaning of which we ourselves have lost.

Despite the limitations of its time, his oeuvre still at least preserves, intact and fresh, this reference to man in his totality. This approach is perfectly reflected on the methodological plane: the concept of *total social fact*, his most interesting contribution, is the angle from which the whole of his work needs to be read and discussed.

The total social fact has a tridimensional character: 1) sociological, 2) historical, 3) physio-psychological. It is able, in certain instances, to set in motion society and its institutions as a totality. These "total" facts exist at the social level, but can only be perceived in concrete data, in individuals:

> The tangible fact is Rome or Athens, or the average Frenchman or the Melanesian of some island, and not prayer or law as such. Whereas formerly sociologists were obliged to analyse and abstract rather too much, they should now force themselves to reconstitute the whole. This is the way to reach incontestable facts. They will also find a way of satisfying psychologists who have a pronounced viewpoint, and particularly psycho-pathologists, since there is no doubt that the object of their study is concrete. They all observe, or at least ought to, minds as wholes and not minds divided into faculties. (Mauss 1969: 78)

The tridimensional character of the total social fact on the one hand, and the problem of the relationship between society and the individual on the other (with its corollary problem of the relationship between collective and individual psychology), form the conceptual core of Mauss' project, which is developed in different dimensions through his essays.

It is thus necessary, and more helpful, to trace the development of the theoretical endeavor of Mauss in relation to the concrete analyses to which it is linked. Only this way—remaining loyal to his method—can we attempt to explain what a "total fact" is, and what its explicative value may be.

Compared with his more mature work, the essay "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie"—first in the *Sociologie et anthropologie* collection, now

translated in Italian with the title *Teoria generale della magia e altri saggi*,[3] written in collaboration with Henri Hubert and published in 1902–3 in *Année sociologique*—is, in a way, part of prehistory. It is however one of Mauss' most beautiful and organic essays, and has something of a revolutionary character, with an approach radically contrasting to that of British anthropology, and in particular Frazer. The point of departure for Mauss lies in French sociology's critique of British sociology, which was to be summarized by Lévy-Bruhl (1985: 23) as follows:

> collective representations are social phenomena, like the institutions for which they account; and if there is any one point which contemporary sociology has thoroughly established, it is that social phenomena have their own laws, and laws which the analysis of the individual *qua* individual could never reveal. Consequently, any attempt to "explain" collective representations solely by the functioning of mental operations observed in the individual (the association of ideas, the naïve application of the theory of causality, and so on), is foredoomed to failure.

As we know, this critique dates back to Durkheim's article *Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives* (1898).

Mauss, who was Durkheim's nephew and also his collaborator in *Le suicide* (1897) and "De quelques formes primitives de classification" (1901–2),[4] always remained faithful to this approach, although integrating it with the advances that had been made in psychology and sociology.

This is why the essay on magic has a clearly sociological tone right from the outset: "magic should be used to refer to those things which society as a whole considers magical, and not those qualified as such by a single segment of society only" (Mauss 1972: 18). Magic cannot thus be explained, as Frazer did, as a deformation of individual psychological laws, and nor can it be affirmed that "its two great principles [homeopathy and contagion] turn out to be merely two different misapplications of the association of ideas" (Frazer 1980: 12).

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3. Translated in English as *A general theory of magic* (1972). —Trans.

4. We have included full references for these texts here as they were not included in the original publication. Durkheim, Émile. 1897. *Le suicide*: *Étude de sociologie*. Paris: Félix Alcan. Durkheim, Émile and Marcel Mauss. 1901–02. "De quelques formes primitives de classification." *Année Sociologique* 6: 1–72. —Ed.

What is fundamental, in the determination of magical representations, is their sociological character. What requires investigation are thus magic's *agents*, *acts*, and *representations*.

Mauss also criticizes some of Frazer's other postulations. Sympathetic principles are characteristic not only of magic, but also of religion. And, more generally, magic and religion cannot be clearly distinguished on the basis that the rites of magic are constraining and those of religion persuasive. Rather, religion and magic should be postulated as two opposite poles with a whole range of often difficult to distinguish phenomena appearing between them. Magic is *the pole of sorcery*, religion *the pole of sacrifice*.

From a sociological perspective (and thus, for Mauss, from a "total" perspective), magic is anti-religion: "a magical rite is *any rite which does not play a part in organised cults*—it is private, secret, mysterious and approaches the limit of a prohibited rite" (Mauss 1972: 24).[5] Magic is thus defined on the basis of the conditions in which its rites are produced and the role they play in social life.

Mauss thus analyzes with extreme care the sociological elements he has identified in magic and the psychological consequences derived from them that can explain it.

Firstly, the most important thing to notice is the particular relationship between magician (or shaman) and social group. This topic, which mobilizes and raises the question of the complex relations between the physiological, psychological, and sociological dimensions, will never cease to interest Mauss who, in 1909, again in collaboration with Hubert, was to write an essay on "L'origine des pouvoirs magiques dans les sociétés australiennes," and in 1926 a comment—published in *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*—on the physical effects that the community's ideas about death have on the single individual. The issue, however, remains open to this day and, despite de Martino's studies and the essays by Cannon and Lévi-Strauss (later collected in *Anthropologie structurale*), the problem has yet to be solved. We still know far too little about the complex relations between the physiological and the psychological, the individual and the group, to be able to provide a satisfactory explanation of those phenomena that are exploited by magic and yet exist, under different guises, also in our own society.

5. This argument will be resumed by Durkheim in *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912).

In this sense, Mauss was one of the first to highlight the abnormal nature of the magician and the shaman, in an attempt to match them more closely to our psychopath.

Exceptionally excitable or abnormal individuals constitute a social class that has magical properties "as a consequence of society's attitude towards them and their kind" (Mauss 1972: 28). From this angle, the issue implies a number of problems, and raises the question of the relationships between ethnology and psychology.

Firstly, if we consider society as a system of information, that is a system of symbols, what relationship does the psychopath's symbolism have with that of the group? Taking the issue even further, are psychopathological phenomena exclusively individual? Can the language used to speak of non-collective phenomena be used by the anthropologist for the explanation of collective facts? As Lévi-Strauss noted in his introduction to Mauss, Ruth Benedict was the first to discover how the phenomena dealt with by ethnologists and psychologists are expressible in psychopathological terms. But precisely because she did not have a clear knowledge of the problems we have just outlined here, she was not able to explain this paradox. In truth, the issue could only be solved if we knew something more about the nature of the symbolic function. This too is a field that still lies ahead for anthropology. We can nevertheless agree with Lévi-Strauss when he states that psychological phenomena must be subordinate to sociological ones: it was thus imprudent of Benedict to use psychiatric terminology to characterize social phenomena; if anything, the relationship should be the opposite way, between psychiatry and sociology. "It is natural for society to express itself symbolically in its customs and its institutions; normal modes of individual behaviour are, on the contrary, *never symbolic in themselves*: they are elements out of which a symbolic system, which can only be collective, builds itself. It is only abnormal modes of behaviour which, because desocialised and in some way left to their own devices, realise the illusion of an autonomous symbolism on the level of the individual" (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 12). On the other hand, the domain of the pathological is never confused with that of the individual, as disorders are classified in categories, and each society has its favorite categories of disorders: the actual psychopathological phenomena themselves are determined by society.

Here, a double set of problems arises, which Mauss, with the limited progress of his time in the psychological and social sciences (he still hadn't met Freud when he wrote *A general theory of magic*), could only glimpse from afar.

The first problem pertains to *the relationship that exists between our psychopath and the sorcerer*. Do they or do they not belong to the same order of phenomena?

To address this first problem, we will use the approach Lévi-Strauss adopts in his introduction to the essays of Mauss.

Firstly, as regards phenomena of shamanism, psychiatrists have ruled out that these can be considered *identical* to our psychopathological states, as this would be too simplistic. Furthermore, when not in a possessed state, sorcerers are normal.

The contradiction can be solved in two different ways:

1) Either "trance" behaviors have no connection with our psycho-pathological behaviours
2) Or, they are of the same kind, but in this case "it is their connection with psychopathological states that we need to consider as contingent and as resulting from a condition peculiar to the society in which we live" (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 15)

The latter solution leads to a further alternative:

a.) Either the alleged mental illnesses must be considered as the effect of sociological factors on the behavior of individuals "whose history and personal constitution have partially dissociated them from the group" (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 16)
b.) Or, a truly pathological state is indeed present in these patients, but one of physiological origin, which simply creates fertile ground for certain symbolic behaviors "for which a sociological interpretation would still be the only appropriate thing" (ibid.).

Let us now turn to the second problem: what relationships exist between society and the phenomena it classifies as pathological?

The problem is of interest for two reasons: on the one hand, in fact, it is only by approaching it in this way that we can hope to achieve an understanding of ecstatic, shamanistic, and magic phenomena. On the other, it addresses the actual meaning of the presence of psychopaths in our society, and also the possibility of curing them.

It is clear then that these considerations re-connect to points (a) and (b): they do not claim to answer them (only an aprioristic mentality could hope for

this in the absence of empirical research), but only to delineate a possible direction for research.

We note first of all two things: 1) from the studies of Mauss (particularly the 1909 ones) it emerges that the shaman or the magician, despite being "normal" when not in a possessed state, is subject to a whole series of taboos and prescriptions which maintain him in a state of psychological tension, and separate him from the group, *intentionally* relegating him to a situation of abnormality.

Again: people considered "abnormal" (because unexplainable or socially unclassifiable), such as women during menstruation, children (a world in themselves), psychopaths, foreigners, etc., are particularly fertile ground for magical phenomena, under the psychological pressure of the group. 2) Each society categorizes mental disorders in variable classes. Each society, that is, seems to provoke—one could almost say create the possibility for—only certain disorders.

It thus seems that society, while on the one hand taking cognizance of abnormality, on the other generates it, almost as if it needed it and therefore "chooses" only certain kinds of abnormality. Mauss had already affirmed that "it is public opinion which makes the magician and creates the power he wields" (Mauss 1972: 40).

What, then, is the meaning of pathology and its cure? Is pathology definable unequivocally, or only in relation to a specific society?

We already know, from Malinowski's studies in the Trobriands, that the latter alternative is more plausible. Malinowski (1949) has shown that one of the pathological models present in our society (the Oedipus complex) is absent in Trobriand society, whereas another is present (the matrilineal complex).

If, on the basis of these experimental grounds, we can make a generalization, it could perhaps be argued, hypothetically, that in every society there are:

1) models of normality
2) models of pathology

strictly complementary and dependent on the constant asymmetry between social structure (which tends to be synchronic) and individual demands (which tend to be diachronic).

An attempt to explain this reciprocal functionality, where society specializes in two groups, one immensely more vast, the other smaller (although maybe, as Lévi-Strauss has suggested, in a relationship with one another that remains, for each

society, *stable*), can be based on documentary material provided by Lévi-Strauss in Chapter IX of *Anthropologie structurale*, and by Nadel (1946). A hypothesis on the relationship between the two groups can be derived from these essays.

Society responds to the individual's demands with certain behavioral models that correspond to certain specific possibilities for fitting into the social organization. But, because of the asymmetry mentioned above, a number of demands remain unsatisfiable in terms of "normal" models unless there is a profound restructuring of the social organization itself.

Society, however, needs to frame this residue socially. This presents it simultaneously with a problem of organization and a psychological problem that triggers a classification mechanism. Society classifies its centrifugal tendencies, *in the sense that it makes possible only certain so-called "pathological" behaviors in order to demonstrate their eccentric and peripheral position in relation to its social organization and depict them negatively.* This classification, on the other hand, is strictly complementary to the psychological problem that the pathological elements themselves pose to the group, and to the "abnormal" tendencies that are repressed in "normal" individuals. Probably, a satisfactory explanation for this contradictory yet functional relationship can be attained only by ordering all the social system's elements within a single informational model. Only then perhaps can we understand exactly the instinctive mechanism which, on the one hand, has to deal with the problem of socially framing centrifugal forces that it cannot satisfy, and, on the other, producing these forces according to certain models, in order to placate a potential dissatisfaction (and thus a potential centrifugal force) in its normal elements. A society, in fact, is a system that has to reckon with individuals, who are never entirely reducible to the terms of the model it maps out. If what we are saying is true—that society is unable to include within normal behavioral models certain "demands," and thus certain characteristics, of the individual, and can only offer pathological models of stabilization and "normalcy"—then the complementary relationship between normal and pathological could be expressed as follows. On the one hand, society gives a "peripheral" status to anything not falling within its "central" code, while on the other it makes use of its peripheral elements to vent, through specific "rituals," the potentially pathological and centrifugal traits of normal individuals, deriving from the incomplete overlap between social models of behavior and individual "demands." The shaman thus is used to discharge all the group's anguish and aggression, to objectify and project elsewhere the aggression, the psychic material removed from the group, by means of the scene he acts out. In this sense,

as Lévi-Strauss has brought to light, the shaman has a function that can be compared to that of our psychoanalyst.

What the group also asks of the shaman (or of the psychopath in general) is a unilateral exacerbation of his psychic energies, of his abilities, in a direction that remains extraneous to the group. This explains why the shaman or the magician has tangible "abilities"—and possibilities—for emotional and intellectual experiences that the group uses to rebalance itself.

In this sense, the magician's tricks and prestidigitation are functional behaviors, as they satisfy the group's needs.

An experimental confirmation of this hypothesis can be found in Nadel's study, where he ascertains that societies with shamans—unlike those without shamans—have not recorded an increase in mental illness because of the influence of their contact with our civilization, which is generally a traumatizing event for any group of "primitives."

One could even ask if society needs a class of "abnormals." Because it is through "abnormality" that experiences extraneous to the "normal" person are possible, experiences that he needs for reassurance, for overcoming what de Martino so effectively termed a "crisis of presence," by actually exceeding his "normal" condition, which, in movements of anguish, is felt to be profoundly unsatisfactory. This would explain the compensatory and calming role played by abnormality, and the "exceptional" behavior of certain individuals with regard to the "normality" of the group. A number of equivalents to this relationship can be found in our society: the dictator, the actor, the singer—don't they all produce phenomena extremely close to those observed in magic or shamanic rituals? Notorious criminals like Jack the Ripper are needed by our calm bourgeoisie for venting its sadistic and aggressive instincts.

The mentally ill themselves have an important function. Although in a marginal position, with regard to the system, they are integrated in it. As Lévi-Strauss (1987: 18) observes: "the group seeks and even requires of those individuals that they figuratively represent certain forms of compromise which are not realizable on the collective plain; that they simulate imaginary transitions, embody incompatible syntheses."[6] The magician, says Mauss (1972: 96), "is a

6. One just needs to think of the ways in which some societies—particularly in moments of crisis—have idealized illness as a privileged and eccentric state of being with respect to a system increasingly felt as profoundly unsatisfactory for individual needs. Cf., for example, some of Thomas Mann's reflections in *The magic mountain*.

kind of official, vested by society with authority, and it is incumbent upon the society to believe in him."

Mauss' value, regarding the question we have tried to clarify, is that he was the first to shed light on the terms of the problem. His essay is a turning point because it addresses the relationship between psychological and social phenomena and the relationship between collective and individual behavior. The clarification of the problem, however, has no corresponding satisfactory solution, which, after all, Mauss still didn't have the tools to provide. The qualitative jump to be made was from the portrayals of magical phenomena in some societies to the level where an explanation can be found for these portrayals that unifies them. Mauss wasn't able to make this step. But, here too, he made an important breakthrough by removing magic from the domain of the arbitrary.

Magic is the manifestation of the classifying and ordering faculty of human thought. Going back to the themes of the well-known essay *De quelques formes primitives de classification* ([1902] 1963), Mauss argues that sympathetic relations group things and their properties by similarity and opposition: "in this way, the system of sympathetic and antipathetic magic can be reduced to one of classifying collective representations. Things affect each other only because they belong to the same class or are opposed in the same genus" (Mauss 1972: 78). "Magic becomes possible only because we are dealing with classified species. Species and classifications are themselves collective phenomena. And it is this which reveals both their arbitrary character and the reason why they are limited to such a small number of selected objects" (78–79).

But what mental operation lies at the heart of magic?

Mauss realizes that it is not possible to explain it from an intellectualist perspective, as British anthropology had done. "From the point of view of an individual's intellectualist psychology" (181), magic would simply be an absurdity: "let us see whether a non-intellectualist psychology of man as a community may not admit and explain the existence of this idea" (ibid.). Mauss thus wants to avoid the danger of interpreting categories that are alien to us with our own. But does the method he chooses allow him to achieve the goal he had set himself? The procedure with which Mauss obtains the "single principle" of magic is a good example of his "method of residues," which Lévi-Strauss sets against Durkheim's method of concomitant variation.[7] Mauss explains his method as follows: "the various explanations which can be brought forward as motives for

7. See "La sociologie française," in *La sociologie au XX^e siècle*, Vol. 1 (1947: 542).

beliefs in magical acts leave a residue, which we must now try to describe. . . . It will be here that we shall find the real basis of these beliefs" (Mauss 1972: 106). In truth, this method of residues is simply masking a process of induction: as such, it does not question our interpretive categories, as was postulated, and ends up explaining the problem on the basis of them. The single principle of magical facts cannot be obtained with the normal inductive process we use for our own cultural facts.

And this is because the categories of the European observer of European social facts belong to the same order as the objects being studied, while the same cannot be said of the anthropologist, who constantly has to exercise "anthropological doubt":

> This "anthropological doubt" does not only consist of knowing that one knows nothing, but of resolutely exposing that which one thought one knew, and indeed one's very ignorance, to the insults and contradictions which are directed at one's most cherished ideas and habits by those who can contradict them to the highest degree. Contrary to appearances, I think it is by its more strictly philosophic method that ethnology is distinguished from sociology. (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 120–21)

The purely sociological induction procedure, in fact, applies categories that are commensurable to the social facts, because sociologists are subjects that belong to the social and cultural world they measure. In the induction procedure for cultural facts that are radically different to those the observer (the subject of the research) belongs to, a kind of mental revolution is necessary in order to create some elements of communication between my own subject and the subjects that have produced the fact I am studying. What are necessary are intermediary categories that allow the transition from our cultural and classificatory system to theirs. It is this typically philosophical operation of subjecting the actual categories of our research—the very ways in which we ourselves think—to criticism and analysis, that is vital to the anthropologist.

The final result cannot—we think—be the reaching of the very "essence" of the phenomenon studied, but the setting of the conditions for communicating with it.

In anthropology, it is a relationship between different subjects that is established, rather than a relationship between subject and object. In this sense, the result is characteristically philosophical; it is communication, dialogue,

knowledge of a neutral ground where an encounter is possible, and thus the only possible form of comprehension.

Mauss, therefore, has not developed all the implied consequences of the revolutionary concept of the total social fact. As Lévi-Strauss (1987: 30–31) notes in his Introduction, "an appropriate understanding of a social fact requires that it be grasped *totally*, that is, from outside, like a thing; but like a thing which comprises within itself the subjective understanding (conscious or unconscious) that we would have of it, if, being inexorably human, we were living the fact as indigenous people instead of observing it as ethnographers." Internal learning needs thus to be transposed in terms of external learning. Accomplishing this task is possible because the social sciences reject any clear-cut distinction between the subjective and the objective:

> [T]he subject itself—once the object-subject distinction is posited—can then be split and duplicated in the same way, and so on without end, without ever being reduced to nothing. Sociological observation, seemingly sentenced by the insurmountable antinomy that we isolated in the last paragraph, *extricates itself* by dint of the subject's capacity for indefinite self-objectification, that is to say (without ever quite abolishing itself as subject) for projecting outside itself ever-diminishing fractions of itself. (ibid.: 31–32)

The importance of anthropology in its new humanism derives from the fact that "it offers this unlimited process of objectification of the subject, which is so difficult for the individual to effect; and offers it in a concrete, experimental form" (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 32). Different societies become the subject's different objects: in no case, though, can the subject forget that these objects proceed from him and that analysis integrates them into subjectivity.

The qualitative jump Mauss was not able to accomplish was to reach the level of the unconscious, where the subjective and objective meet. The laws of unconscious activity reside in fact beyond subjective learning, but determine the modalities of this learning.

Mauss actually attributes a lot of importance to the subconscious. But does he draw all the consequences from the statement quoted above, that magic phenomena should be studied like linguistic phenomena?

Mauss is not alone in his awareness of the necessity to reform ethnology by bringing it closer to the methods used in linguistics (the first of the human sciences to make itself more scientific). Troubetzkoy, for example, according to his

autobiographical notes, was already convinced just a few years later that "ethnology, history of religion, culture history, etc. could pass from the 'alchemic' stages of development to a higher stage only if, with regards to method, they would follow the example of linguistics" (Trubetzkoy 1971: 311). But adopting such a method implies studying cultural facts at the level where they become similar to linguistic facts, and thus at the level of the subconscious rules of speech.

Just as one speaks unconsciously following grammatical and syntactic rules, so one thinks and performs certain acts following categories that one is unaware of. Ethnological research requires us to move *beyond* the conscious interpretation an individual or group gives to the phenomena we are studying.

It is precisely this that Mauss did not do. The notion of magic that he applies (like that of the gift, later) is taken from a Melanesian interpretation of magic's potential. Mauss (1972: 108) says

> the idea is that found in Melanesia under the name of *mana*. Nowhere else is it so clearly evident. . . . *Mana* is not simply a force, a being, it is also an action, a quality, a state. In other terms the word is a noun, an adjective and a verb. . . . On the whole, the word covers a host of ideas which we would designate by phrases such as a sorcerer's power, the magical quality of an object, a magical object, to be magical, to possess magical powers, to be under a spell, to act magically.

This, thanks to the method of residues, is where the analysis arrives at.

In actual fact, in identifying the notion of *mana*, Mauss was only able to discover the semantic value it has for the savage. Thus he always remains in the realm of the savage's own description of magic—an ambiguous description, because the essence of magic escapes him, as it does us. The issue is not to know *what* the savage designates with the word *mana*, but the *nature* of those ambiguous phenomena that he designates with the ambiguous word *mana*.

An analysis of the concept of *mana*, therefore, can only be an analysis of the degree of the savage's understanding of these phenomena, and not an analysis of what is being designated with such a term. Lévi-Strauss (1987: 53) suggests that *mana* might be "a function of a certain way that the mind situates itself in the presence of things," which must therefore make an appearance "whenever that mental situation is given." *Mana* is one of those indeterminate terms like *truc*, *coso*, whose function is to fill in the gap between signifier and signified.

Words such as *orenda* and *mana* are used to designate phenomena that are not strictly magic, but that become *magical* to our eyes precisely by virtue of the

extremely generic sign attributed to them. It is precisely this semantic vagueness, this indistinctness, that makes us call these designations magical designations. With this word, the savage designates facts whose precise meaning escapes him, but which he feels immersed in and which he uses (e.g., parapsychological and psychosomatic phenomena, which science, however, isolates).

Magic's substantial ambiguity, seen from the perspective of the indigenous interpretation and subsumed under "objective interpretation" of the phenomenon is, on the other hand, repeatedly acknowledged by Mauss. Regarding this, however, two questions can be asked:

1) Whether the term "magic" subsumes phenomena that are only provisionally declarable as similar to one another, and, if so, whether the analysis of magic actually refers to that level that Mauss doesn't reach but which is the only one common to all these phenomena;
2) Whether this level resides precisely in that *confusion of images* that he recognizes as being typical of magic, but that he does not examine in depth.

What we need to consider, however, is whether this "confusion" has its own laws, and what its actual meaning may be. If we do no more than talk of "confusion," we remain as outsiders and merely state our ignorance, with the properties we attribute to the object being the opposite to the thought we are judging it by.

Magic, on the other hand, like art and myth, is a specific symbolic process, and its scientific investigation is still at a very early stage. There is probably a relationship between the three forms, residing precisely in the trait we have termed "confusion of images": *in these symbolic processes, there is no empirical corroboration and language is used in an "overabundance of meaning" that it has with regard to the object, and nothing is done to put it in a rigorous relationship with the object that has been preliminarily established by a method of investigation.*

The condition for the construction of an order, in myth as in art as in magic, resides in the use of laws that allow for the possibility of constructing an entirely linguistic order. This condition is to be found first and foremost in the very imprecision of language, in the possibility of making it work without a direct confrontation with experience. Is it not the case that what is present in magic under the guise of *technique* is present in all dimensions of this symbolic level? Language is posed as a creator in relation to the world, not as something that requires verification. Language is *always true*, as long as it acquires *a form*. In magic and myth this form is more strictly traditional, as it is very much in art.

The fact that in art language is more flexible, does not make art less "traditional," in the sense that the words, the semantic "pieces" through which it operates, are never artificial, conventionally postulated by the artist: the Saussurean "arbitrariness of the sign" does not exist in art. These semantic "pieces" can be used poetically only because they already contain "resonances" of deep meaning in the language they inhabit: "love" and "heart," as Umberto Saba said, is in fact the most difficult of rhymes,[8] to which all poets dedicate themselves. Do these words take on poetic value because they are in a context that awakens their immanent poetic quality? Why are poetry, myth, magic, at different levels and each in its own field, dominated in such impressive ways by the same themes? But even if we wanted to limit ourselves to the observation that words have resonances of meaning and a semantic value (which the artist finds already formed, and upon which he works), circumscribed to a certain historical domain, does the reasoning not remain nevertheless valid?

In any case, Mauss's theory of *mana* is an interesting chapter in the history of epistemology: it exhibits the importance of words in knowledge. When cultural phenomena, so to speak, are of the same order of the language used to discuss them, the weight of the words is much less perceptible. But in the case of anthropology, the issue becomes macroscopic. The hermeneutic use of certain categories such as *mana*, *orenda*, *potlatch*, or totem, has played nasty tricks on anthropologists.

Words like these indicate a relation between objects and subjects. For example, the word totem, in a given society, corresponds to the human-animal or human-plant relation. But while the objects in the relation remain the same in different societies, the word, and hence the relation, changes. The word, then, is the real distinctive and discriminating criterion, as it is inserted in a system of relations that gives it its meaning, a system it indirectly reflects. The human-animal relation can have very different meanings, and cannot be reduced to the interpretation of any one society. For the ethnologist looking from the outside, the criterion will be that of reconnecting all the relations he knows *objectively to a certain subjective interpretation of that relationship*, an interpretation which, in truth, should be in the class of the objects only, as it is only the interpretation of one studied group. Only *subjective interpretations* can be compared to each

8. The words love (*amore*) and heart (*cuore*) rhyme in Italian. The banal yet complex nature of the rhyme particularly struck the Italian poet Umberto Saba, as we read for example in his poem "Amai" (1946). —Trans.

other: otherwise, phenomena belonging to different classes would be compared as if they belonged to the same class. The ethnologist's task can thus only be that of comparing all the subjective perspectives, all the *languages* with which certain facts are discussed: *to know them, it will not be possible to reduce them to one of those being observed as an object, from the outside.*

The essential task will be to compare these to *our subjectivity*, to *our language*, digging deeply until the points of contact between us and them are found.

The misunderstanding we encountered in the notion of *mana* crops up again in "Essai sur le don" (*Année Sociologique* 1923–24). And despite this, the essay has remained beautiful, exciting. It is in this essay that, for the first time, the concept of *total social fact* is expressed with extreme clarity, and its hermeneutic value is proven. Another thing that makes the essay interesting is its novel approach, the discoveries it discloses (particularly about the primitive economy) have been made possible by direct ethnographic research. Mauss, in fact, draws mainly on Malinowski's ground-breaking studies in the Trobriand, thus demonstrating the importance of research "in the field."

The phenomenon that Mauss analyzes is this: in many societies: "contracts are fulfilled and exchanges are made by means of gifts. In theory such gifts are voluntary but in fact they are given and repaid under obligation" (Mauss 1969: 1). Within this class of phenomena, one single aspect is isolated: "prestations which are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested" (ibid.). The problem to be solved will thus be: "in primitive or archaic types of society what is the principle whereby the gift received has to be repaid?" (ibid.).

To solve this problem, Mauss accepts the use of a restricted comparative method, applied within limited areas, in order not to create confusion. Basically, he applies the method of Durkheim, who had criticized the false "exhaustiveness" of the British comparative method, working instead on "crucial facts" in order to arrive, through successive extensions, at a characterization of the social fact under investigation.

The structure of the *The gift* is thus determined by its method: firstly, the problem is posed; secondly, it is solved by taking as objects of investigation facts that are particularly significant in two delimited, but far apart, geographical areas (some areas of the Pacific and Australia; North America); thirdly, through successive extensions, the survival of gift-based exchange systems in ancient Roman Law, classic Indian law, Germanic law, Celtic law, and Chinese law are studied. Finally, Mauss draws some "conclusions of a moral nature": if sociology

is society becoming conscious of itself, it can do no other than end with conclusions such as these, as it says something about the orientation of human actions.

The essay's structure gives a glimpse into the extraordinary richness of its content. With exceptional erudition and agility, Mauss presents numerous facts in an entirely new light, and unmasks the myth of primitives' inability to conceptualize economic value (as sustained by Karl Bücher).

He also reaches a fundamental conclusion: barter is not—as Bücher believed—the primitive form of exchange and, on the other hand, sale on credit is not found in evolved societies only; indeed, it derives—necessarily—from the gift. "Barter arose from the system of gifts given and received on credit, simplified by drawing together the moments of time which had previously been distinct. Likewise purchase and sale—both direct sale and credit sale—and the loan, derive from the same source" (Mauss 1969: 35)

What is the explanation Mauss feels he can provide for the legal bond of the gift as a primitive form of exchange? Once again, he postulates an indigenous interpretation as an "objective" interpretation.

The interpretation is provided by the Maori: the *hau*. The *hau* is the spirit of the thing given as a gift, which has such a constraining power that it forces its restitution through another object.

"In Maori custom this bond created by things is in fact a bond between persons, since the thing itself is in fact a person or pertains to a person. Hence it follows that to give something is to give a part of oneself" (10).

Exchange has the role of maintaining unity between groups and implementing an actual division of labor. The best example of this is the Trobriand *Kula* studied "in the field" by Malinowski. This seems to be the culminating point of a whole system of prestations and counter-prestations: "the *kula* is the gathering point of many other institutions" (25).

Gift and exchange are the same thing in this system. In the context of social solidarity, in fact, an entirely free gift does not exist: exchange always requires reciprocity.

This specific kind of relationship guarantees foreign, interinsular trade, but also sheds light on the very essence of archaic society: what we have is one of those *total social facts* that activate the societal structure at all its levels. "The obligation is expressed in myth and imagery, symbolically and collectively; it takes the form of interest in the objects exchanged; the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them; the communion and alliance they establish are well-nigh indissoluble. The lasting influence of the objects

exchanged is a direct expression of the manner in which sub-groups within segmentary societies of an archaic type are constantly embroiled within and feel themselves in debt to each other" (Mauss 1969: 31). "The circulation of goods follows that of men, women and children, of festival ritual, ceremonies and dances, jokes and injuries. Basically they are the same. If things are given and returned it is precisely because one gives and returns 'respects' and 'courtesies'. But, in addition, in giving them, a man gives himself, and he does so because he owes himself—himself and his possessions—to others" (44–45).

The conclusion Mauss draws from the archaic system of exchange goes as follows: "the spirit of gift-exchange is characteristic of societies which have passed the phase of 'total prestation' (between clan and clan, family and family) but have not yet reached the stage of pure individual contract, the money market, sale proper, fixed price, and weighed and coined money" (45).

But the study of the gift leads to some considerations concerning the economic structure of our own society. Against the supposedly "natural economy" (which, in reality, as Mauss has demonstrated, is merely a myth unproven by history), against the rigidity and cruelty of our law, against the marked distinction between real and personal rights, Mauss argues that we need to return to a "group morality": "we should return to the old and elemental" (67), to a system of total prestations. "A wise precept has run right through human evolution, and we would be as well to adopt it as a principle of action. We should come out of ourselves and regard the duty of giving as a liberty, for in it there is no risk" (69).

These "moral reflections" are not as utopian as they may seem.

Today, even revolutionary theories—as Fortini[9] recently pointed out—seem to tend exclusively towards a "rationalization" of bourgeois society. The archaic concept of exchange as gift, though, is so much part of our axiological structure that, it seems to us, even the concept of alienation is permeated by it. The rejection of alienation signifies indeed an attempt to return to a model that sees exchange as a gift, and not as a transfer of goods. Alienation only ends when human labor is not "thing-ified,"[10] reduced to pure instrument, but is considered an integral part of the man who is doing it. Giving one's work means—exactly as for the savage—giving something of one's self, giving a *hau* that evokes human

9. *Quaderni piacentini*. Italian trimestral journal (1962–1984) on culture and politics, with Franco Fortini as one of its main collaborators. —Trans.

10. In the Italian original: *cosizzato*.—Trans.

solidarity, that demands a return that is equal to the gift; a kind of exchange, thus, that does not allow pure "thingification."

In a certain sense, the exchange model exists prior to all the rest, and is the categorial form in which man thinks of himself socially. Wherever society comes into being, the category also comes into being: it is not possible to reconstruct its origin from a combination of scattered elements. Therefore, even Mauss' attempt to explain the gift through his particular interpretation of a given group ends up betraying the *a priori* and irreducible nature of exchange. As Lévi-Strauss (1987: 58–59) observes: "exchange is not a complex edifice built on the obligations of giving, receiving and returning, with the help of some emotional-mystical cement. It is a synthesis immediately given to, and given by, symbolic thought, which, in exchange as in any other forms of communication, surmounts the contradiction inherent in it; that is the contradiction of perceiving things as elements of dialogue, in respect of self and others simultaneously, and destined by nature to pass from the one to the other. The fact that those things may be *the one's* or *the other's* represents a situation which is derivative from the initial relational aspect."

But the conclusions of the "Essai sur le don" suggest a further consideration, particularly important at the methodological level.

The *total social fact* cannot be understood, for Mauss, other than in individual elements, in tangible social blocks. The total social fact, that is, exists socially, but it is through concrete experience that one is guaranteed to perceive it. "In society there are not merely ideas and rules, but also men and groups and their behaviors" (Mauss 1969: 78).

Here, it seems we can go further than Mauss and argue that what is consolidated in social relationships needs also to be rediscovered in the individual who lives in them, being one of their poles. Taking it even further, we could perhaps add that the relationships forming the total social fact have to be related, through systematized rules of transformation, to the individual investigating them. As Wiener and Lévi-Strauss have highlighted with regard to the social sciences, the observer is part and parcel of the object studied. "To call the social fact *total* is not merely to signify that *everything observed is part of the observation*, but also, and above all, that in a science in which the observer is of the same nature of his object of study, *the observer himself is part of his observation*" (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 29).

The observer, in fact, is not only in a theoretical relationship with his object: he is in a concrete relationship with it, as the conditions of observation make him part of the object itself.

Recently, Gurvitch, once again, set this interpretation against the fact that "Mauss was a partisan of collective conscience and experience".[11] Gurvitch's observation questions Mauss' interpretation of "collective representations." In actual fact, the assertion that it is necessary to find the total social fact at the individual, or concrete, level does not necessarily imply a complete abandonment of the differentiation between collective and individual psychology. Examining an individual as a specimen in whom the total social fact concretizes itself doesn't mean examining individual, and not social, psychological phenomena. Certainly, though, Lévi-Strauss has provided an interpretation of Mauss which is, at the same time, one step ahead, this being justified however by the fact that the strict Durkheimian separation between collective and individual representations is not shared by Mauss without "nuances."

The essay "Real and practical relationships between psychology and sociology" (published for the first time in the *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, 1924),[12] part three of the collection *Sociologie et anthropologie*, clearly demonstrates this.

Here, Mauss states that certain discoveries in psychology (for example the notions of "mental vigor," "psychosis," "symbol," "instinct") are essential for understanding social facts, and that this convergence between psychology and sociology is made possible by the common "totalizing" approach to their object.

Addressing psychologists, Mauss makes this important observation: all these advances "derive from your consideration not of such and such a mental function, but rather of the mentality of the individual as a whole. You will see that those of the facts that we can submit to your reflections in exchange belong to the same order" (Mauss 1979: 18).

The marked separation between psychology and sociology is here overcome: the two sciences collaborate in their common objective of considering man in his totality. In this sense, it seems to us that Mauss is indeed on the track of Lévi-Strauss, despite Gurvitch's claim to the contrary.

The essay's conclusions confirm this. Although Mauss starts by stating that psychology is the study of individual consciousness, while sociology is the combined study of collective and community consciousness (and not, as McDougall thought, an extension of psychology), he ends by asserting that: "whether we

11. In Bastide (1965: 125).

12. Published in English as Part I of the volume *Sociology and psychology: Essays* (1979). —Trans.

study special facts or general facts, it is always the complete man that we are primarily dealing with, as I have already said. For example, rhythms and symbols bring into play not just the aesthetic or imaginative faculties of man but his whole body and his whole soul simultaneously. In society itself, when we study a special fact it is with the total psychophysiological complex that we are dealing" (ibid.: 27). The sociologist has to ask of the psychologist for "a theory of the relations between the various compartments of the mentality and those between these compartments and the organism" (ibid.).

The assertion that "sociology is only a part of biology just like psychology" (ibid.: 5) will thus be justified. The current separation between sociology and psychology is destined to fade increasingly until the day comes when Mauss' hoped-for theory is formulated. Anthropology, intended as that body of research that tendentially and knowingly approaches this unification, "belongs to the human sciences, as its name adequately proclaims; but while it resigns itself to making its purgatory beside the social sciences, it surely does not despair of awakening among the natural sciences at the hour of the last judgment" (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 118).

This tendency of Mauss to consider man's social being as integrated and realized in his physical being, becomes more accentuated over the years. Evidence of this can be found in the last three essays in *Sociologie et anthropologie:* "The physical effect on the individual of the idea of death suggested by the collectivity" (1926); "A category of the human mind: The notion of person, the notion of self" (1938) and especially "Techniques of the body" (1934).[13]

These works also clarify why a thorough study of the total social fact implies the observation of concrete individuals. If the fact needs to be reconstructed in all its dimensions, bridging the gap between social and physiological facts, then it will be necessary to see how representations and social relationships condition man's corporeal being and how the latter, in turn, makes the former possible. But the corporeal being is an eminently concrete fact; it is the human body, which needs to be studied, and the explanatory model extracted from it can only be compared with an individual body, not with something collective consisting of a set of relationships.

This body's physiological processes, though, are inexplicable without those sign relations that connect them to others. Proof of this is given in the first essay: "Physical effect of theidea of death," which studies information gathered

13. Parts II, III, and IV respectively of *Sociology and psychology: Essays* (1979). —Trans.

in Australia and New Zealand that corroborates the existence of a direct link between the physiological-psychological and the social.

Mauss analyzes the rapid death of individuals that are considered and declared as "dying subjects" by society, despite being physiologically healthy and sound. The individual "believes, for precise collective causes, that he is in a state close to death . . . [he] believes himself to be bewitched or at fault and dies for this reason" (Mauss 1979: 38).

The actual physiological explanation for these events was not given until much later, by Cannon. Once again, Mauss anticipated more recent discoveries by posing the problem in the correct way. In these phenomena—he declares—man's social nature immediately catches up with his biological nature. This is thus a particularly significant example of a total social fact and of how the phenomena it generates span from the pure individuality of the single body where physiological facts take place, to the collectivity that provokes them.

The essay on the notion of person also covers the whole spectrum, from the social to the "bodily": "it is clear . . . that there has never been a human being without the sense not only of his body, but also of his simultaneously mental and physical individuality" (61).

Mauss reconstructs the evolution of this concept, from its most primitive forms to modern philosophy, explaining the relationship between mask and person, suggested immediately by the Latin term "persona."

Also from this sociological study, moral conclusions can be drawn. The evolution of the concept of the person, which up to the nineteenth century was identified with rational and cognizant activities, is now reacquiring its more vast archaic meaning. Although until not so long ago the "person" as mask, the social being, had superseded natural man, de-naturalizing him completely, many present-day phenomena make us think that a slow reaction to this tendency may be taking place. In this sense, we are rediscovering a problem that is vaster than the person itself. How are we anchored to the world? Is our person only form, categorization, discursivity, and thought that shapes the world? Or is it itself produced by the world, by "nature"—not in the sense of a set of concepts that define what is natural, but in the sense of something that is the actual condition for conceptualization, but that also escapes it?

The last essay, on the techniques of the body, is something like a program for the new anthropology that Mauss dreamed of. The techniques of the body are "the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies"

(97). The human body is an immensely vast and unexplored ethnological field: it is "man's first and most natural instrument" (104).

To orient research, Mauss thus proposes a classification of these "physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions" (120).[14]

Sadly, this field has been left largely unexplored, despite Lévi-Strauss proposing the creation of "International Archives of Body Techniques," "providing an inventory of all the possibilities of the human body and of the methods of apprenticeship and training employed to build up each technique" (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 8).

Experience teaches how useful is it for Europeans to study "savage" techniques, techniques made necessary by work conditions similar to those in which primitive man developed them.

It is with this revitalization of the "total" man—"total" at the level of the individual, from his conscious being to his physical being, "total" at the level of humanity, spanning the whole arc of space and time of civilization—that the oeuvre of Mauss closes and the new anthropology begins.

The ethnologist's journey, as any other journey, ends with a return. The knowledge of a world different to ours corresponds to a better knowledge of ourselves, to the wish to be in a new relationship with the savage that is now more familiar to us, because he is part of us.

As Remo Cantoni (1963: 252) writes: "the problem of our times . . . is to explore without preconceptions the real breadth of man, the real breadth of history."

Our very language brings us to classify the phenomena of non-western societies with the term "primitive," evaluating them through the diachronic opposition of "before" and "after," in parallel with those moments of development of western civilization that for us constitute the necessary order of progress. This simply exposes how much our mental categories, our so called "historic" categories (where the magic word "history" becomes the panacea of the lazy), are tainted by ethnocentrism. They are not able to admit, synchronically, simultaneously to us, historical developments and forms of civilization radically different from ours. Our language is impotent (because our history and our experience is impotent) when faced with a so-called primitive civilization. The only place it has found, in our classificatory terms, has been the myth of the past and of the primeval that the West—with a secret and perennial dissatisfaction—has

14. Cf. Mauss' *Manuel d'ethnographie* (1947).

dragged with it through all its history: the golden age, the paradise lost, the Garden of Eden, the state of nature. Primeval moments that always presuppose two contradictory evaluations of our civilization: liberation from a primeval state of barbarism and wilderness, or decadence from a primeval state of goodness and perfection.

The only thing that Western civilization—closed in the magic bottle of its own apparent self-confidence and its firm belief in its "magnificent and progressive destiny"[15]—held on to in this myth of the primeval was a secret remorse, the possibility of a radical overturning of values, of total critique of the direction in which it moved. This myth was like a limit concept, from which the direction of our civilization's progress could be observed and evaluated. And it is significant that it is precisely in these terms that Rousseau intended it.

But when "primitive" peoples, those civilizations different to ours, have presented themselves to us with a direct impact, the myth of the primitive has served only to chase them back into the confusion of the primeval and indistinct state, into the "tourbillon mistique," so that we could relate to them not as terms of comparison or as possibilities for evaluating our own values, but as extraneous, necessarily overtaken by the West's millenarian development. Behind this attitude lies a specific metaphysics of history, a secret anguish and a fear of comparison with others.

Marx and Engels also attempted to make "other" civilizations fall within the metaphysical limbo of *our* primitive, of *our* past, in the timid steps of the first day of Creation. But "other" civilizations are other men that are living here and now on this earth, with us: they are not "primitive societies," they do not belong to our past, but to our present, and to the common future of humanity that is on the road of rediscovering itself in all its parts.

15. Valeri is here evoking Giacomo Leopardi's bitterly ironic critique of the Enlightenment's scientific optimism and progressivism in his poem "La ginestra." —Trans.

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