

# The Elementary Forms of Religious Life

EMILE  
DURKHEIM

A New  
Translation by  
KAREN E. FIELDS



BOOK THREE  
THE PRINCIPAL  
MODES  
OF RITUAL  
CONDUCT\*

\* *Les Principales attitudes rituelles*. The contrast between *croyances* and *attitudes* in the titles of Books Two and Three, respectively, is that between thought and action.

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE NEGATIVE CULT AND ITS FUNCTIONS

### *The Ascetic Rites*

In what follows, I will not undertake a full description of the primitive cult. Since my main goal is to arrive at what is most elemental and fundamental in religious life, I will make no attempt at a detailed reproduction of all ritual acts in their often chaotic multiplicity. But in order to test and, if need be, fine-tune the results to which my analysis of the beliefs has led,<sup>1</sup> I will try to choose from the extremely diverse practices the most characteristic that the primitive follows in the celebration of his cult, to classify the most central forms of his rites, and to determine their origins and significance.

Every cult has two aspects: one negative, the other positive. Actually the two sorts of rites are intertwined; as we will see, they presuppose one another. But since they are different, we must distinguish between them, if only to understand their relationships.

## I

By definition, sacred beings are beings set apart. What distinguishes them is a discontinuity between them and profane beings. Normally, the two sorts of beings are separate from one another. A whole complex of rites seeks to bring about that separation, which is essential. These rites prevent unsanctioned mixture and contact, and prevent either domain from encroaching on the other. Hence they can only prescribe abstinences, that is, negative acts. For this reason, I propose to use the term "negative cult" for the system

<sup>1</sup>I will completely leave aside one form of ritual: oral ritual, which is to be studied in a special volume of the *Collection of the année sociologique*.

formed by these particular rites. They do not mandate obligations to be carried out by the faithful but instead prohibit certain ways of acting. Accordingly, all take the form of prohibitions, or, to follow common usage in ethnography, the form of *taboo*. *Taboo* is the term used in the Polynesian languages to denote the institution in accordance with which certain things are withdrawn from ordinary use;<sup>2</sup> it is also an adjective that expresses the distinctive characteristic of those sorts of things. I have already had occasion to show how problematic it is to transform a local and dialectal term into a generic one. Since there is no religion in which prohibitions do not exist and play an important part, it is regrettable that this accepted terminology should seem to make such a widespread institution a peculiarity specific to Polynesia.<sup>3</sup> The terms "interdictions" or "prohibitions"\* seem to me preferable by far. Still, like the word "totem," the word "taboo" is so widely used that to avoid it altogether would be an excess of purism. Besides, its liabilities diminish if its meaning and scope are carefully specified.

But prohibitions are of different kinds, and it is important to distinguish them. We need not treat every sort of prohibition in this chapter.

To begin, aside from those that belong to religion, there are others that belong to magic. What both have in common is that they define certain things as incompatible and prescribe the separation of the things so defined. But there are also profound differences. First, the punishments are not the same in the two cases. Certainly, as will be pointed out below, the violation of religious prohibitions is often thought automatically to cause physical disorders from which the guilty person is thought to suffer and which are considered punishment for his action. But even when that really does occur, this spontaneous and automatic sanction does not stand alone. It is always supplemented by another that requires human intervention. Either a punishment properly so-called is added (if it does not actually precede the automatic sanction), and that punishment is purposely inflicted by human beings; or, at the very least, there is blame and public disapproval. Even when

\*Between these two terms there is a fine grading of abstractness, *interdiction* being more mundane or applied, and *interdit* more abstract; but Durkheim uses the two interchangeably, although *interdit* is more frequent. Both "interdict" and "interdiction" are good English words, but I have preferred their commoner synonyms: "prohibition," "restriction," "ban," and the like. Trans.

<sup>2</sup>See the article "Taboo" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the author of which is [James George] Frazer [Edinburgh, Adam & Charles Black, 1887].

<sup>3</sup>The facts prove this to be a real liability. There is no dearth of writers who, taking the word literally, have believed that the institution designated by it was peculiar to primitive societies in general or even to the Polynesian peoples only (see [Albert] Réville, *Religion des peuples non civilisés*, Paris, Fischbacher, 1883, vol. II, p. 55; [Gaston] Richard, *La Femme dans l'histoire [étude sur l'évolution de la condition sociale de la femme*, Paris, O. Doin et Fils, 1909], p. 435).

sacrilege has already been punished by the sickness or natural death of its perpetrator, it is also denounced. It offends opinion, which reacts against it, and it places the culprit in a state of sin. By contrast, a magical prohibition is sanctioned only by the tangible consequences that the forbidden act is held to produce with a kind of physical necessity. By disobeying, one takes risks like those a sick person takes by not following the advice of his doctor; but in this case disobedience does not constitute sin and does not produce indignation. In magic, there is no such thing as sin.

In addition, the fact that the sanctions are not the same is part and parcel of a profound difference in the nature of the prohibitions. A religious prohibition necessarily involves the idea of the sacred. It arises from the respect evoked by the sacred object, and its purpose is to prevent any disrespect. By contrast, magic prohibitions presuppose an entirely secular idea of property—nothing more. The things that the magician recommends keeping separated are things that, because of their characteristic properties, cannot be mixed or brought near one another without danger. Although he may ask his clients to keep their distance from certain sacred things, he does not do so out of respect for those things or out of fear that they may be profaned (since, as we know, magic thrives on profanations).<sup>4</sup> He does so only for reasons of secular utility. In short, religious prohibitions are categorical imperatives and magic ones are utilitarian maxims, the earliest form of hygienic and medical prohibitions. Two orders of facts that are so different cannot be studied at the same time, and under the same rubric, without confusion. Here we need concern ourselves only with religious prohibitions.<sup>5</sup>

But a further distinction among these prohibitions themselves is necessary: There are religious prohibitions whose purpose is to separate different kinds of sacred things from one another. We recall, for example, that among the *Wakelbura*, the scaffold on which a dead person is laid out must be built exclusively with materials belonging to the phratry of the deceased. All contact is forbidden between the corpse, which is sacred, and things of the other phratry, which are sacred too, but in a different right. Elsewhere, the weapons used to hunt an animal must not be made of a wood that is classified in the same social group as the animal itself.<sup>6</sup> The most important of

<sup>4</sup>See p. 40, above.

<sup>5</sup>This is not to say that there is a radical discontinuity between religious and magic prohibitions. To the contrary, there are some whose true nature is ambiguous. In folklore, there are prohibitions that often cannot be easily said to be either religious or magic. Even so, the distinction is necessary, for magic prohibitions can be understood, I believe, only in relation to religious ones.

<sup>6</sup>See above, p. 150.

these prohibitions are examined in a later chapter: those aimed at preventing all contact between the sacred pure and the sacred impure, as well as between things that are sacred and auspicious and those that are sacred and disastrous. All of these prohibitions have a common trait: They do not arise from the fact that some things are sacred and others not but from the fact that there are relations of disparity and incompatibility among sacred things. Hence, they are not based upon what is fundamental to the idea of the sacred. Consequently, the observance of these prohibitions can give rise only to isolated, particular, and rather exceptional rites, but they cannot make up a cult, proper, for a cult is above all made up of regular relations between the profane and the sacred as such.

There is another much more extensive and important system of religious prohibitions—not the system that separates different species of sacred things but the one that separates all that is sacred from all that is profane. This system of religious prohibitions derives directly from the notion of sacredness, which it expresses and implements. This system furnishes the raw material for a genuine cult and, indeed, a cult that forms the basis of all the rest; for in their dealings with sacred things, the faithful must never depart from the conduct it prescribes. This is what I call the negative cult. These prohibitions can be said to be religious prohibitions par excellence.<sup>7</sup> They alone will be the subject of the following pages.

They take many forms. Here are the principal types found in Australia.

First and foremost come the prohibitions of contact. These are the primary taboos, and the others are little more than particular varieties of them. They rest on the principle that the profane must not touch the sacred. We

<sup>7</sup>Many of the prohibitions between sacred things are reducible, I think, to the prohibition between sacred and profane. This is true for prohibitions of age or grade. In Australia, for example, there are sacred foodstuffs that are reserved exclusively for the initiated. But those foodstuffs are not all equally sacred; there is a hierarchy among them. Nor are all the initiated equal. They do not enjoy the plenitude of their religious rights immediately, but rather enter into the domain of sacred things gradually. They must pass through a series of grades that are conferred upon them, one after the other, following ordeals and special ceremonies; it takes them months, sometimes even years, to reach the highest. Definite foods are assigned to each of these grades. Men of the lower grades must not touch foods that belong, as a matter of right, to men of the higher grades (see [Robert Hamilton] Mathews, "Ethnological Notes on the [Aboriginal Tribes of New South Wales and Victoria]," *RSNSW*, vol. XXXVIII (1904)], pp. 262ff.; Mrs. [Langloh] Parker [Catherine Sommerville Field Parker], *The Euahlayi Tribe* [London, A. Constable, 1905], p. 23; [Sir Baldwin] Spencer and [Francis James] Gillen, *Northern Tribes [of Central Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1904], pp. 611ff.; [Sir Baldwin] Spencer and [F. James] Gillen, *Native Tribes [of Central Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1899], pp. 470ff.). The more sacred repels the less sacred, but this is because, compared to the first, the second is profane. In sum, all the religious prohibitions fall into two classes: the prohibitions between the sacred and the profane and those between the sacred pure and the sacred impure.

have already seen that the churingas or the bull roarers must under no circumstances be handled by the uninitiated. If adults have free use of those objects, that is only because initiation has conferred upon them a quality of sacredness. Blood (more specifically, the blood that flows during initiation) has a religious virtue<sup>8</sup> and is subject to the same prohibition.<sup>9</sup> The same is true of hair.<sup>10</sup> A dead person is a sacred being because the soul that animated the body adheres to the corpse. For this reason, it is sometimes forbidden to carry the bones of the corpse in any way other than wrapped in a sheet of bark.<sup>11</sup> The very place where the death occurred must be avoided, for the soul of the deceased is thought to remain there still. This is why the people break camp and move some distance away.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes they destroy the camp and all it contains,<sup>13</sup> and a period of time passes before they may return to the same place.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes the person who is dying creates a vacuum around himself, the others deserting him after having settled him as comfortably as possible.<sup>15</sup>

The consumption of food brings about an especially intimate form of contact. Thence arises the prohibition against eating sacred animals or plants, especially those serving as totems.<sup>16</sup> Such an act appears so sacrilegious that the prohibition covers even adults, or at least most adults, and only old men attain sufficient religious status to be not always subject to it. This prohibition has sometimes been explained in terms of the mythical kinship that

<sup>8</sup>See above, p. 136.

<sup>9</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 463.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 538; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 604.

<sup>11</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 531.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 518-519; [Alfred William] Howitt, *Native Tribes [of South-East Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1904], p. 449.

<sup>13</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 498; [Rev. Louis] Schulze, "Aboriginal Tribes of Upper and Middle Finke River," *RSSA*, vol. XIV [1891], p. 231.

<sup>14</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 499.

<sup>15</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 451. [The point made is not at this place in Howitt. Trans.]

<sup>16</sup>The alimentary restrictions applied to the totemic plant or animal are the most important, but they are far from being the only ones. We have seen that there are foods that, because they are considered sacred, are forbidden to the uninitiated. Very different causes can make those foods sacred. For example, as we will see below, the animals that climb to the tops of trees are reputed to be sacred because they are neighbors of the high god that lives in the heavens. It is also possible that, for different reasons, the flesh of certain animals was reserved especially for old men and that, as a result, it seemed to participate in the sacredness that old men are acknowledged to have.

unites man with the animals whose name he bears—the animals being protected, presumably, by the sympathy they inspire, as kin.<sup>17</sup> That the origin of this prohibition is not simply revulsion caused by the sense of familial solidarity is brought out by the following: Consumption of the forbidden flesh is presumed to cause sickness and death automatically. Thus, forces of a different sort have come into play—forces analogous to those forces in all religions that are presumed to react against sacrilege.

Further, while certain foods, because sacred, are forbidden to the profane, other foods, because profane, are forbidden to persons endowed with special sacredness. Thus, certain animals are often specifically designated as food for women. For this reason, they are believed to participate in femaleness and hence are profane. On the other hand, the young initiate undergoes an especially harsh set of rites. An exceptionally powerful beam of religious forces is focused upon him, so as to make it possible to transmit to him the virtues that will enable him to enter the world of sacred things, from which he had previously been excluded. Since he is then in a state of sanctity that repels all that is profane, he is not allowed to eat game that is considered to be women's.<sup>18</sup>

Contact can be established by means other than touching. One is in contact with a thing simply by looking at it; the gaze is a means of establishing contact. This is why, in certain cases, the sight of sacred things is forbidden to the profane. A woman must never see the cult instruments and at most is allowed to glimpse them from afar.<sup>19</sup> The same applies to totemic painting done on the bodies of celebrants for especially important ceremonies.<sup>20</sup> In certain tribes, the exceptional solemnity of initiation rites makes it impossible for women even to see the place where they have been celebrated<sup>21</sup> or the novice himself.<sup>22</sup> The sacredness that is immanent in the entire ceremony is

<sup>17</sup>See [James George] Frazer, *Totemism [and Exogamy]* London, Macmillan, 1910] p. 7.

<sup>18</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 674. I do not address one prohibition of contact because its precise nature is not easy to determine: sexual contact. There are religious periods in which men must not have contact with women (Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 293, 295; Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 387). Is it because the woman is profane or because the sexual act is a dreaded act? This question cannot be settled in passing. I postpone it along with everything related to conjugal and sexual rites. They are too closely bound up with the problem of marriage and the family to be separated from it.

<sup>19</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 134; Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 354.

<sup>20</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 624.

<sup>21</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 572.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 661.



found as well in the persons of those who direct it or who take any part in it—with the result that the novice must not raise his eyes to them, a prohibition that continues even after the rite has been completed.<sup>23</sup> A corpse, too, is sometimes taken out of sight, the face being covered in such a way that it cannot be seen.<sup>24</sup>

Speech is another means of coming into contact with persons or things. The exhaled breath establishes contact, since it is a part of ourselves that spreads outside us. Thus the profane are barred from speaking to sacred beings or even speaking in their presence. Just as the neophyte must look at neither those presiding nor those in attendance, so he is also barred from talking to them in any way other than with signs. This prohibition continues until it is lifted by means of a special rite.<sup>25</sup> Among all the Arunta, there are moments in the grand ceremonies when silence is obligatory.<sup>26</sup> As soon as the churingas are displayed, talking stops; or, if there is talking, it is in a low voice and with the lips only.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the things that are sacred, there are words and sounds that have the same quality; they must not be found on the lips of the profane or reach their ears. There are ritual songs that women must not hear, on pain of death.<sup>28</sup> They may hear the noise of the bull roarers, but only from a distance. Every personal name is considered an essential element of the person who carries it. Since it is closely associated with the idea of that person, the name participates in the feelings that person arouses. If the person is sacred, so is the name; hence it may not be pronounced in the course of profane life. Among the Warramunga is a totem that receives special veneration, the mythical serpent named Wollunqua; that name is taboo.<sup>29</sup> The same holds true for Baiame, Daramulun, and Bunjil; the esoteric forms of their names must not be revealed to the uninitiated.<sup>30</sup> During the period of mourning, the name of the dead person must be mentioned, at least by his relatives, only in cases of

<sup>23</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 386; Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 655, 665.

<sup>24</sup>Among the Wiimbaio, Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 451.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 624, 661, 663, 667; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 221, 382ff.; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 335, 344, 353, 369.

<sup>26</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 221, 262, 288, 303, 367, 378, 380.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>28</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 361.

<sup>29</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 227.

<sup>30</sup>See above, p. 291.

absolute necessity, and even then they must only whisper it.<sup>31</sup> This restriction is often permanent for the widow and certain family members.<sup>32</sup> Among certain peoples, it extends even beyond the family, everyone who has the same name as the deceased being required to change it temporarily.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, relatives and close friends ban certain words from everyday language, probably because they were used by the deceased. The gaps are filled with circumlocutions or with borrowings from some foreign dialect.<sup>34</sup> In addition to their ordinary, public name, men have another that is kept secret. Women and children do not know it, and it is never used in ordinary life because it has a religious quality.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, there are ceremonies during which the participants are required to speak in a special language whose use is forbidden in profane dealings. Here is a beginning of sacred language.<sup>36</sup>

Not only are sacred beings separated from profane ones, but in addition, nothing that directly or indirectly concerns profane life must be mingled with religious life. Total nakedness is often required of the native as the precondition of his being allowed to take part in a rite.<sup>37</sup> He must take off all his usual ornaments, even those he values most and from which he separates himself the less willingly because he imputes to them protective virtues.<sup>38</sup> If he must decorate himself for his ritual role, that decoration must be made especially for the occasion; it is a ceremonial costume, a feast-day vestment.<sup>39</sup> Since these ornaments are sacred by virtue of the use made of them, their use in profane activities is forbidden. Once the ceremony is over, they are buried or burned;<sup>40</sup> and indeed the men must wash themselves, so as not to take away with them any trace of the decorations that adorned them.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 498; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 526; [George] Taplin "The Narrinyeri" [in James Dominick Woods, *The Native Tribes of South Australia*, Adelaide, E. S. Wigg, 1879], p. 19.

<sup>32</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 466, 469ff.

<sup>33</sup>[J. P.] Wyatt, "Adelaide and Encounter Bay Tribes," in Woods, [*The Native Tribes of South Australia*], p. 165.

<sup>34</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 470. [It is actually at p. 466. Trans.]

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 657; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 139; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 580ff.

<sup>36</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 537.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 544, 597, 614, 620.

<sup>38</sup>For example, the hair belt that he usually wears (Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 171).

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 624ff.

<sup>40</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 556.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 587.

More generally, the typical actions of ordinary life are forbidden so long as those of religious life are in progress. The act of eating is profane in itself. A daily occurrence, it satisfies basically utilitarian and physical needs and is part of our ordinary existence.<sup>42</sup> This is why eating is prohibited during religious periods. Thus, when a totemic group has lent its churinga to a foreign clan, the moment when they are brought back and returned to the *ertnatulunga* is one of great solemnity. All those who take part in the ceremony must abstain from eating as long as it lasts, and it lasts a long time.<sup>43</sup> The same rule is followed during the celebration of the rites<sup>44</sup> to be treated in the next chapter, as well as at certain times during initiation.<sup>45</sup>

For the same reason, all secular occupations are suspended when the great religious ceremonies take place. According to an observation by Spencer and Gillen,<sup>46</sup> cited previously, the life of the Australian has two quite distinct parts: One is taken up with hunting, fishing, and war; the other is dedicated to the cult. These two forms of activity are mutually exclusive and repel one another. The universal institution of religious days of rest is based on this principle. In all known religions, the distinguishing feature of feast days is the cessation of work and, beyond that, the suspension of public and private life, insofar as it has no religious object. This pause is not merely a kind of temporary relaxation that men take, so as to abandon themselves more freely to the feelings of elation that holidays generally arouse, since it is no less obligatory during those sad holidays that are devoted to mourning and penance. The reason for the pause is that work is the preeminent form of profane activity. It has no apparent aim other than meeting the secular needs of life, and it puts us in contact only with ordinary things. During holy days, on the other hand, religious life attains unusual intensity. Because the contrast between these two sorts of existence is particularly marked at that

<sup>42</sup>Granted, this act takes on a religious character when the food eaten is sacred. But the act in itself is profane, to such an extent that the consumption of a sacred food always constitutes a profanation. The profanation can be permitted or even prescribed but, as we will see below, only if rites to attenuate or expiate the profanation precede or accompany it. The existence of these rites clearly shows that the sacred thing itself resists being consumed.

<sup>43</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 263.

<sup>44</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 171.

<sup>45</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 674. It may be that the prohibition against speaking during the great religious ceremonies derives in part from the same cause. In ordinary life, people speak, and in particular people speak loudly; therefore, in religious life, they must keep silent or speak in a low voice. The same consideration is germane to the dietary restrictions. (See above, p. 127).

<sup>46</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 33.

time, they cannot abut one another. Man cannot approach his god intimately while still bearing the marks of his profane life; inversely, he cannot return to his ordinary occupations when the rite has just sanctified him. Ritual cessation of work is thus no more than a special case of the general incompatibility that divides the sacred and the profane, and it is the result of a prohibition.

There is no way to enumerate every kind of prohibition that is observed, even in the Australian religions alone. Like the notion of the sacred on which it rests, the system of prohibitions extends into the most varied relations. It is even used intentionally for utilitarian purposes.<sup>47</sup> But however complex this system may be, in the end it comes down to two fundamental prohibitions that epitomize and govern it.

First, religious and profane life cannot coexist in the same space. If religious life is to develop, a special place must be prepared for it, one from which profane life is excluded. The institution of temples and sanctuaries arises from this. These are spaces assigned to sacred things and beings, serving as their residence, for they cannot establish themselves on the ground except by fully appropriating a part of it for themselves. Arrangements of this kind are so indispensable to all religious life that even the simplest religious cannot do without them. The *erntatulunga*, the place where the *churingas* are stored, is a true sanctuary. The uninitiated are banned from approaching it, and indulging in any kind of profane occupation is forbidden there. We will see that there are other sanctified places where important ceremonies are conducted.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Since, from the beginning, there is a sacred principle within each man, the soul, the individual has been surrounded by prohibitions, the first form of the moral prohibitions that today insulate and protect the human person. It is in this way that the body of the victim is considered dangerous by the murderer (Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 492) and is forbidden to him. Prohibitions that have this origin are often used by individuals as a means of withdrawing certain things from common use and establishing a right of property over them. "Does a man depart from camp, leaving weapons, food, etc. there?" asks [Walter Edmund] Roth with regard to the Palmer River tribes (North Queensland). "If he urinates near objects that he has thus left behind, they become *tami* (equivalent of the word "taboo"), and he can be assured of finding them intact upon his return" [possibly, "Marriage Ceremonies and Infant Life," *North Queensland Ethnography*, Bull. 10] in *RAM*, [Sydney, 1908], vol. VII, part 2, p. 75). This is because the urine, like the blood, is held to contain a part of the sacred force that is personal to the individual. Thus it keeps strangers at a distance. For the same reasons, speech also can serve as a vehicle for these same influences. This is why it is possible to ban access to an object simply by verbal declaration. Further, this power of creating prohibitions is variable according to individuals—the greater their sacredness, the greater this power. Men have the privilege of this power to the virtual exclusion of women (Roth cites a single example of a taboo imposed by women). It is at its maximum among chiefs and elders, who use it to monopolize the things they choose ([Walter Edmund] Roth, *Superstition, Magic and Medicine* [Brisbane, G. A. Vaughn, 1903], in *North Queensland Ethnography*, Bulletin No. 5, p. 77). In this way, religious prohibition becomes property right and administrative regulation.

<sup>48</sup>Bk. 3, chap. 2.

Likewise, religious and profane life cannot coexist at the same time. In consequence, religious life must have specified days or periods assigned to it from which all profane occupations are withdrawn. Thus were holy days born. There is no religion, and hence no society, that has not known and practiced this division of time into two distinct parts that alternate with one another according to a principle that varies with peoples and civilizations. In fact, probably the necessity of that alternation led men to insert distinctions and differentiations into the homogeneity and continuity of duration that it does not naturally have.<sup>49</sup> Of course, it is virtually impossible for religion ever to reach the point of being concentrated hermetically in the spatial and temporal milieu that are assigned to it; a little of it inevitably filters out. There are always sacred things outside the sanctuaries and rites that can be celebrated during workdays, but those are sacred things of the second rank and rites of lesser importance. Concentration is still the predominant characteristic of this structure; and indeed, concentration is generally total with respect to the public cult, which must be celebrated collectively. The private, individual cult is the only one that mingles more or less closely with secular life. Therefore, because the individual cult is at its least developed in the lower societies, such as the Australian tribes, the contrast between these two successive phases of human life is at its most extreme there.<sup>50</sup>

## II

Thus far we have seen the negative cult only as a system of abstinences. It appears capable only of inhibiting activity, not stimulating and invigorating it. Nevertheless, through an unexpected reaction to this inhibiting affect, it exerts a positive and highly important influence upon the religious and moral nature of the individual.

Because of the barrier that sets the sacred apart from the profane, man can enter into close relations with sacred things only if he strips himself of what is profane in him. He cannot live a religious life of any intensity unless he first withdraws more or less completely from secular life. The negative cult in a sense is a means to an end; it is the precondition of access to the positive cult. Not confined to protecting the sacred beings from ordinary contact, it acts upon the worshipper himself and modifies his state positively.

<sup>49</sup>See above, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup>See above, p. 220.

After having submitted to the prescribed prohibitions, man is not the same as he was. Before, he was an ordinary being and for that reason had to keep at a distance from religious forces. After, he is on a more nearly equal footing with them, since he has approached the sacred by the very act of placing himself at a distance from the profane. He has purified and sanctified himself by detaching himself from the low and trivial things that previously encumbered his nature. Like positive rites, therefore, negative rites confer positive capacities; both can increase the religious zest of individuals. As has been rightly observed, no one can engage in a religious ceremony of any importance without first submitting to a sort of initiation that introduces him gradually into the sacred world.<sup>51</sup> Anointings, purifications, and blessings can be used for this, all being essentially positive operations; but the same results can be achieved through fasts and vigils, or through retreat and silence—that is, by ritual abstinences that are nothing more than definite prohibitions put into practice.

When negative rites are considered only one by one, their positive influence is usually too little marked to be easily perceptible; but their effects cumulate, and become more apparent, when a full system of prohibitions is focused on a single person. This occurs in Australia during initiation. The novice is subjected to an extreme variety of negative rites. He must withdraw from the society where he has spent his life until then, and from virtually all human society. He is not only forbidden to see women and uninitiated men,<sup>52</sup> but he also goes to live in the bush, far from his peers, under the supervision of a few old men serving as godfathers.<sup>53</sup> So much is the forest considered his natural milieu that, in quite a few tribes, the word for initiation means “that which is of the forest.”<sup>54</sup> For the same reason, the novice is often decorated with leaves during the ceremonies he attends.<sup>55</sup> In this way, he spends long months<sup>56</sup> punctuated from time to time by rites in which he

<sup>51</sup>See [Henri] Hubert and [Marcel] Mauss, “Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice,” in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions* [Paris, F. Alcan, 1909], pp. 22ff.

<sup>52</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 560, 657, 659, 661. Not even a woman's shadow must fall on him (*ibid.*, p. 633). What he touches must not be touched by a woman (*ibid.*, p. 621).

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 561, 563, 670–671; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 223; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 340, 342.

<sup>54</sup>The word *jeraeil*, for example, among the Kurnai; *kuringal* among the Yuin and the Wolgat (Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 518, 617).

<sup>55</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 348.

<sup>56</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 561.

must participate. For him, this is a time for every sort of abstinence. He is forbidden a great many foods, and he is allowed only as much food as is strictly necessary to sustain life.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, rigorous fasting is often obligatory,<sup>58</sup> or he is made to eat disgusting food.<sup>59</sup> When he eats, he must not touch the food with his hands; his godfathers put it in his mouth.<sup>60</sup> In some cases, he must beg for his subsistence.<sup>61</sup> He sleeps only as much as is indispensable.<sup>62</sup> He must abstain from speaking unless spoken to and indicate his needs with signs.<sup>63</sup> He is forbidden all recreation.<sup>64</sup> He must not bathe;<sup>65</sup> sometimes he must not move. He remains lying on the ground, immobile,<sup>66</sup> without clothing of any kind.<sup>67</sup> The result of these multiple prohibitions is to bring about a radical change in the status of the neophyte. Before the initiation, he lived with women and was excluded from the cult. From now on, he is admitted into the society of men; he takes part in the rites and has gained a quality of sacredness. So complete is the metamorphosis that it is often portrayed as a second birth. The profane person that previously was the young man is imagined to have died, to have been killed and taken away by the God of initiation—Bunjil, Baiame, or Daramulun—and to have been replaced by an altogether different individual from the one who existed previously.<sup>68</sup> Thus we capture in the raw the positive effects of which the negative rites are capable. I do not mean to claim that these rites alone produce so profound a transformation, but they certainly contribute to it, and substantially.

In light of these facts, we can understand what asceticism is, what place it holds in religious life, and where the virtues that are widely imputed to it

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 633, 538, 560.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 674; Parker, *The Euahlayi Tribe*, p. 75.

<sup>59</sup>[William] Ridley, *Kamilaroi [and Other Australian Languages]*, Sydney, T. Richards, 1875], p. 154.

<sup>60</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 563.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 611.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 549, 674.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 580, 596, 604, 668, 670; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 223, 351.

<sup>64</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 567. [This note and the phrase to which it is attached are missing from the Swain translation. Trans.]

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 557.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 604; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 351.

<sup>67</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 611.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 589.

originate. In actuality, there is no prohibition whose observance is not to some degree like asceticism. To abstain from something that may be useful or from an activity that, because habitual, must meet a human need, is of necessity to impose restrictions and renunciations upon oneself. For there to be asceticism properly so-called, it is enough for these practices to develop in such a way as to become the foundation for a genuine system of life. The negative cult usually serves as barely more than an introduction to, and a preparation for, the positive cult. But it sometimes escapes that subordination and becomes central, the system of prohibitions swelling and aggrandizing itself to the point of invading the whole of life. In this way, systematic asceticism is born; it is thus nothing more than a bloating of the negative cult. The special virtues it is said to confer are only those conferred through the practice of any prohibition, though in magnified form. They have the same origin, for both rest on the principle that the very effort to separate oneself from the profane sanctifies. The pure ascetic is a man who raises himself above men and who acquires a special sanctity through fasts, vigils, retreat, and silence—in a word, more by privations than by acts of positive piety (offerings, sacrifices, prayers, etc.). History shows what heights of religious prestige are attainable by those means. The Buddhist saint is fundamentally an ascetic, and he is equal or superior to the gods.

It follows that asceticism is not a rare, exceptional, and almost abnormal fruit of religious life, as one might think, but quite the contrary: an essential element of it. Every religion has at least the seed of asceticism, for there is none without a system of prohibitions. In this respect, the only possible difference between cults is that this seed is more or less developed within them. And it is well to add that there probably is not even a single one in which this development does not at least temporarily adopt the characteristic traits of asceticism proper. This generally happens at certain critical periods, when a profound change in an individual's condition must be brought about in a relatively short time. In that case, in order to bring him more rapidly into the circle of sacred things with which he must be put in contact, he is abruptly separated from the profane world. This does not occur without increased abstinences and an extraordinary intensification in the system of prohibitions. Precisely this occurs in Australia at the time of initiation. To transform the youths into men, they are required to lead the life of ascetics. Mrs. Parker quite accurately calls them the monks of Baiame.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup>These ascetic practices may be compared to the ones used during a magician's initiation. Like the young neophyte, the apprentice magician is subjected to a multitude of prohibitions the observance of which helps him acquire his specific powers (see "L'Origine des pouvoirs magiques," in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions*, by Hubert and Mauss, pp. 171, 173, 176). It is the same for husbands on the eve of their mar-



Abstinenances and privations are not without suffering. We hold to the profane world with every fiber of our flesh. Our sensuous nature attaches us to it; our life depends upon it. Not only is the profane world the natural theater of our activity; it enters us from every direction; it is part of us. We cannot detach ourselves from it without doing violence to our nature and without painfully clashing with our instincts. In other words, the negative cult cannot develop unless it causes suffering. Pain is its necessary condition. By this route, people came to regard pain as a sort of rite in itself. They saw it as a state of grace to be sought after and induced, even artificially, because of the powers and privileges it confers in the same right as those systems of prohibitions to which it is the natural accompaniment. To my knowledge, Preuss was the first to become aware of the religious<sup>70</sup> role that is ascribed to pain in the lower societies. He cites cases: the Arapaho who inflict torture upon themselves as protection from the dangers of battle; the Gros-Ventre Indians who submit to torture on the eve of military expeditions; the Hupa who swim in freezing rivers and afterward remain stretched out on the shore as long as possible, to ensure the success of their undertakings; the Karaya who periodically draw blood from their arms and legs with scrapers made of fish teeth, to firm their muscles; the men of Dallmannhafen (Emperor William's Land in New Guinea) who combat sterility in their wives by making bloody cuts on the women's upper thighs.<sup>71</sup>

But similar doings can be found without leaving Australia, especially in the course of initiation rites. Many of those rites involve the systematic infliction of suffering on the neophyte, for the purpose of altering his state and

---

riage or on the day after (taboos of fiancés and of newlyweds); this is because marriage also involves an important change in status. I confine myself to noting these briefly without lingering over them. The former concern magic, which is not my subject, while the latter belong to that system of juridico-religious rules that refer to commerce between the sexes; the study of those will be possible only in conjunction with the other precepts of primitive conjugal morality.

<sup>70</sup>True, Preuss interprets these facts by saying that pain is a means of increasing a man's magical power (*die menschliche Zauberkräft*); it might be thought, following this statement, that suffering is a magic rite and not a religious one. But as I have already pointed out, Preuss calls all anonymous and impersonal forces magic, without great precision, whether they belong to magic or to religion. There no doubt are tortures that serve to make magicians, but many of those he describes are part of authentically religious ceremonies. Hence their aim is to modify the religious states of individuals.

<sup>71</sup>[Konrad Theodor] Preuss, "Der Ursprung der Religion und der Kunst," *Globus*, LXXXVII [1904], pp. 309-400. Preuss categorizes many disparate rites under the same rubric, for example, the sheddings of blood that act through the positive qualities ascribed to blood rather than through the sufferings they involve. I single out only those phenomena in which pain is the essential element of the rite and the source of its efficacy.

making him take on the distinguishing qualities of a man. Among the Larakia, while the youths are on retreat in the forest, their godfathers and overseers constantly assault them with brutal blows, without advance warning and for no apparent reason.<sup>72</sup> Among the Urabunna, at a given moment, the novice lies stretched out on the ground with his face down. All the men present beat him brutally; then they make a series of four to eight incisions on his back, down both sides of his spine, and one along the midline of his neck.<sup>73</sup> Among the Arunta, the first rite of initiation consists of tossing the subject; the men throw him into the air, catch him when he comes down, and then throw him again.<sup>74</sup> In that same tribe, at the end of a long series of ceremonies, the young man is made to lie down on a bed of leaves with live coals under it; and he continues to lie there immobile, in the midst of the heat and suffocating smoke.<sup>75</sup> The Urabunna practice a similar rite, but the initiate is beaten on the back as well.<sup>76</sup> So much are his exertions of this kind that he seems pathetic and half-dazed when he is allowed to resume ordinary life.<sup>77</sup> It is true that all these practices are often presented as ordeals to test the novice's worth and to make known his worthiness for acceptance into religious society.<sup>78</sup> Actually, however, the probationary function of the rite is but another aspect of its efficacy, for the manner in which the novice bears the ordeal proves that the rite has accomplished exactly what it was meant to: to confer on him the qualities that are its primary *raison d'être*.

In other cases, these ritual torments are applied not to the whole body but to an organ or a tissue, in order to stimulate its vitality. Among the

<sup>72</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 331–332.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 335. A similar practice is found among the Dieri (Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 658ff.).

<sup>74</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 214ff. From this example, we see that the rites of initiation sometimes have the characteristics of hazing. This is so because hazing is a true social institution that arises spontaneously whenever two groups that are unequal in their moral and social situations find themselves in intimate contact. In this case, the group that views itself as superior to the other resists the intrusion of the newcomers; it reacts against them in such a way as to make them understand how superior it feels. That reaction, which occurs automatically and takes the form of more or less severe torments, is also aimed at adapting individuals to their new life and assimilating them into their new milieu. It thus constitutes a sort of initiation. In this way, we can explain why initiation constitutes a sort of hazing. It does because the group of elders is superior in religious and moral status to that of the young, and yet the elders must take in the youths. All the conditions of hazing are present.

<sup>75</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 372.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>77</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 675.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 569, 604.

Arunta, the Warramunga, and several other tribes,<sup>79</sup> at a certain moment during the initiation, delegated individuals plunge their teeth into the novice's scalp. This is so painful that usually the patient cannot bear it without crying out. Its purpose is to make the hair grow.<sup>80</sup> The same treatment is applied to make the beard grow. The rite of hair removal, which Howitt reports for other tribes, may well have the same *raison d'être*.<sup>81</sup> Among the Arunta and the Kaitish, according to Eylmann, men and women make small wounds on their arms with red-hot sticks so as to become skillful at making fire or gain the strength they need to carry heavy loads of wood.<sup>82</sup> According to the same observer, Warramunga girls amputate the second and third joints of the index finger on one hand, believing that the finger becomes more skillful at uncovering the yams thereby.<sup>83</sup>

It is not impossible that the extraction of teeth might sometimes be intended to bring about effects of the same kind. It is certain, in any case, that the purpose of such cruel rites as circumcision and subincision is to confer special powers on the genital organs. Since the young man owes special virtues to those rites, he is not allowed to marry until he has undergone them. What makes this *sui generis* initiation indispensable is the fact that, in all the lower societies, sexual union is endowed with a quality of religiousness. It is thought to bring into play awesome forces that man can approach without danger only if he has gained the requisite immunity through ritual procedures.<sup>84</sup> A whole series of positive and negative rites, of which circumcision and subincision are the forerunners, have this purpose. An organ is given sacredness by painful mutilation, for that very act enables it to withstand sacred forces that otherwise it would be unable to confront.

I said at the beginning of this work that all the essential elements of religious thought and life should be found, at least in seed, as far back as the most primitive religions. The foregoing facts reinforce that claim. If one belief is held to be specific to the most modern and idealistic religions, it is the

<sup>79</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 251; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 341, 352.

<sup>80</sup>Consequently, among the Warramunga, the operation must be done by individuals favored with beautiful heads of hair.

<sup>81</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 675, which is about the tribes of Lower Darling.

<sup>82</sup>[Richard] Eylmann, [*Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Süd Australien*, Berlin, D. Reumer, 1908], p. 212.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup>Information on this question is to be found in my article "La Prohibition de l'inceste et ses origines" (*Année Sociologique*, vol. I [1898], pp. 1ff.) and in [Alfred Ernest] Crawley, *The Mystic Rose* [London, Macmillan, 1902], pp. 37ff.

one that attributes sanctifying power to pain. The rites just examined are based upon the same belief, which is variously interpreted, depending upon the historical period in which it is examined. For the Christian, pain is thought to act above all upon the soul—refining, ennobling, and spiritualizing it. For the Australian, it acts upon the body—increasing its vital energies, making the beard and hair grow, toughening the limbs. But in both cases, the principle is the same. In both, pain is held to be generative of exceptional forces. Nor is this belief unfounded. In fact, the grandeur of a man is made manifest by the way he braves the pain. Never does he rise above himself more spectacularly than when he subdues his nature to the point of making it follow a path contrary to the one it would take on its own. In that way, he makes himself unique among all the other creatures, which go blindly where pleasure leads them. In that way, he takes a special place in the world. Pain is the sign that certain of the ties that bind him to the profane world are broken. Because pain attests that he is partially emancipated from that world, it is rightly considered the tool of his deliverance, so he who is delivered in this way is not the victim of mere illusion when he believes he is endowed with a kind of mastery over things. By the very act of renouncing things, he has risen above things. Because he has silenced nature, he is stronger than nature.

Furthermore, that virtue is far from having only aesthetic value. Religious life as a whole presupposes it. Sacrifices and offerings do not go unaccompanied by privations that exact a price from the worshipper. Even if the rites do not require tangible things of him, they take his time and strength. To serve his gods, he must forget himself. To create for them the place in his life to which they are entitled, he must sacrifice some of his profane interests. The positive cult is possible, then, only if man is trained to renunciation, abnegation, and detachment from self—hence, to suffering. He must not dread suffering, for he can carry out his duties joyfully only if he in some measure loves it. If that is to come about, he must train himself to suffering, and this is where the ascetic practices lead. The sufferings they impose are not arbitrary and sterile cruelties, then, but a necessary school in which man shapes and steels himself, and in which he gains the qualities of disinterestedness and endurance without which there is no religion. In fact, if this result is to be achieved, it helps if the ascetic ideal is eminently incarnated in certain individuals who are specialized, as it were, in that aspect of ritual life, almost to excess. Those certain individuals amount to so many living models that encourage striving. Such is the historical role of the great ascetics. When we analyze in detail the things they do, we wonder what the useful point of those things could be. The contempt they profess for all that ordinarily impassions men strikes us as bizarre. But those extremes are necessary to maintain among

the faithful an adequate level of distaste for easy living and mundane pleasures. An elite must set the goal too high so that the mass does not set it too low. Some must go to extremes so that the average may remain high enough.

But asceticism serves more than religious ends. Here, as elsewhere, religious interests are only social and moral interests in symbolic form. The ideal beings to which cults are addressed are not alone in demanding of their servants a certain contempt for pain; society, too, is possible only at that price. Even when exalting the powers of man, it is often brutal toward individuals. Of necessity, it requires perpetual sacrifices of them. Precisely because society lifts us above ourselves, it does constant violence to our natural appetites. So that we can fulfill our duties toward it, our conditioning must ready us to overcome our instincts at times—when necessary, to go up the down staircase of nature. There is an inherent asceticism in all social life that is destined to outlive all mythologies and all dogmas; it is an integral part of all human culture. And, fundamentally, that asceticism is the rationale and justification of the asceticism that religions have taught since the beginning of time.

### III

Having determined what the system of prohibitions consists of and what its negative and positive functions are, we must now uncover its causes.

In a sense, the very notion of the sacred logically entails it. Everything that is sacred is the object of respect, and every feeling of respect is translated into stirrings of inhibition in the person who has that feeling. Because of the emotion it inspires, a respected being is always expressed in consciousness by a representation that is highly charged with mental energy. Hence, it is armed in such a way as to throw any representation that wholly or partly contradicts it far away from itself. Antagonism characterizes the relationship the sacred world has with the profane one. The two correspond to two forms of life that are mutually exclusive, or at least that cannot be lived at the same time with the same intensity. We cannot be devoted entirely to the ideals to which the cult is addressed, and entirely to ourselves and our sensuous interests also; entirely to the collectivity and entirely to our egoism as well. Herein are two states of consciousness that are oriented toward, and that orient our behavior toward, two opposite poles. Whichever is more powerful must push the other out of consciousness. When we think of sacred things, the idea of a profane object cannot present itself to the mind without meeting resistance, something within us that opposes its settlement there. The idea of the sacred does not tolerate such a neighbor. But this psychic antagonism, this mutual exclusion of ideas, must necessarily culminate in the exclusion of the things

that correspond to them. If the ideas are not to coexist, the things must not touch one another or come into contact in any way. Such is the very principle of the prohibition.

Moreover, the world of the sacred is a world apart, by definition. Since the sacred is opposed to the profane world by all the features I have mentioned, it must be treated in a way that is appropriate to it. If, in our dealings with the things that comprise the sacred world, we used the actions, language, and attitudes that serve us in our relations with profane things, that would be to misapprehend the nature of the sacred world and confound it with what it is not. We may freely handle profane things, and we talk freely to ordinary beings. So we will not touch sacred beings or will touch them only with reserve, and we will not talk in their presence or not talk in the ordinary language. All that is customary in our dealings with one set of things must be excluded in our dealing with the other.

But while this explanation is not inaccurate, still it is inadequate. In fact, a good many beings that are objects of respect exist without being protected by strict systems of prohibitions, such as I have been describing. Doubtless, the intellect has a sort of general tendency to situate different things in different environments, especially when they are incompatible with one another. But the profane environment and the sacred one are not merely distinct but also closed to one another; there is a gulf between them. In the nature of sacred beings, there must be some special cause that necessitates this condition of unusual isolation and mutual exclusion. And voilà: By a sort of contradiction, the sacred world is as though inclined by its very nature to spread into the same profane world that it otherwise excludes. While repelling the profane world, the sacred world tends at the same time to flow into the profane world whenever that latter world comes near it. That is why they must be kept at a distance from each other and why, in some sense, a void must be opened between them.

What necessitates such precautions is the extraordinary contagiousness that sacredness has. Far from remaining attached to the things that are marked with it, sacredness possesses a certain transience. Even the most superficial or indirect contact is enough for it to spread from one object to another. Religious forces are so imagined as to appear always on the point of escaping the places they occupy and invading all that passes within their reach. The nanja tree in which an ancestral spirit lives is sacred for the individual who considers himself a reincarnation of that ancestor. But every bird that comes to light upon that tree shares in the same quality; so to touch the bird is forbidden as well.<sup>85</sup> I have already shown how the mere touch of a churinga is enough to

<sup>85</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 133.

sanctify people and things.<sup>86</sup> More than that, all rites of consecration are founded upon this principle, the contagiousness of the sacred. Such, indeed, is the churinga's sacredness that it makes its influence felt at a distance. As we recall, this sacredness spreads not only to the cavity in which churingas are kept but also to the whole surrounding area, to the animals taking refuge there (which may not be killed), and to the plants growing there (which may not be plucked).<sup>87</sup> A snake totem has its center at a place where there is a water hole. The sacredness of the totem is passed on to the place, to the water hole, and to the water itself, which is forbidden to all members of the totemic group.<sup>88</sup> The neophyte lives in an atmosphere full of religiousness, and he himself is as though suffused with it.<sup>89</sup> As a result, everything he has and everything he touches is forbidden to women and withdrawn from contact with them, down to the bird he has struck with his stick, the kangaroo he has run through with his spear, and the fish that has struck his fishhook.<sup>90</sup>

But another side of it is that the rites he undergoes and the things that play a role in them have greater sacredness than he. That sacredness is passed on contagiously to everything that brings either to mind. The tooth that has been pulled from his mouth is regarded as very sacred.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, he cannot eat of animals that have prominent teeth, since they bring to mind the extracted tooth. The ceremonies of the Kuringal end with ritual washing.<sup>92</sup> Aquatic birds are forbidden to the novice because they evoke this rite. The animals that climb all the way to the tops of trees are sacrosanct to him as well, because they are too much the neighbors of Daramulun, the god of initiation, who lives in the heavens.<sup>93</sup> The soul of a dead man is a sacred being. We have already seen that the same property passes to the body in which that soul has lived, to the place where it is buried, the camp where the man lived

<sup>86</sup>See above, p. 120.

<sup>87</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 134–135; [Carl] Strehlow, [*Die Aranda- und Loritja-stämme in Zentral-Australien*, Frankfurt, J. Baer, 1907], vol. II, p. 78.

<sup>88</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 167, 299.

<sup>89</sup>Apart from the ascetic rites of which I have spoken, there are positive ones whose purpose is to fill or, as Howitt says, to saturate the neophyte with religiousness (Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 535). True, instead of speaking of religiousness, Howitt speaks of magic powers, but we know that, for the majority of ethnographers, this word simply means religious virtues that are impersonal in nature.

<sup>90</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 674–675.

<sup>91</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 454. Cf. Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 561.

<sup>92</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 557.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 560.

his life (which is destroyed or abandoned), the name he had, his wife, and his relations.<sup>94</sup> It is as though they themselves are invested with sacredness, so one keeps at a distance from them and does not treat them as mere profane beings. In the societies studied by Dawson, their names, like that of the dead man, must not be spoken during the period of mourning.<sup>95</sup> Certain of the animals he ate may be prohibited as well.<sup>96</sup>

This contagiousness of the sacred is too well known a fact<sup>97</sup> for there to be any need to demonstrate its existence with numerous examples. I have sought only to establish that it is as true of totemism as it is of more advanced religions. Once noted, that contagiousness readily explains the extreme rigor of the prohibitions that divide the sacred from the profane. By virtue of that exceptional volatility, the slightest contact, the least proximity of a profane being, whether physical or simply moral, is enough to draw the religious forces outside their domain. On the other hand, since they cannot exit without belying their nature, a whole system of measures to keep the two worlds at a respectful distance apart becomes indispensable. This is why ordinary people are forbidden not only to touch but also to see or hear that which is sacred, and why these two kinds of life must not mingle in consciousness. Precautions to keep them apart are all the more necessary because they tend to merge, even while opposing one another.

At the same time as we understand the multiplicity of these prohibitions, we understand how they and the sanctions attached to them function. One result of the contagiousness inherent in all that is sacred is this: A profane being cannot violate a prohibition without having the religious force that he has improperly approached extend to him and take him over. But since there is antagonism between himself and that force, he finds himself subject to a

<sup>94</sup>See above, pp. 307, 310. Cf. Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 498; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 506–507, 518–519, 526; Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 449, 461, 469; Mathews, "Aboriginal Tribes of New South Wales and Victoria," *RSNSW*, vol. XXXVIII [1904], p. 274; Schulze, "Aborigines of . . . Finke River," p. 231; Wyatt, *Adelaide and Encounter Bay Tribes*, in Woods [*The Native Tribes of South Australia*], pp. 165, 198.

<sup>95</sup>[James Dawson], *Australian Aborigines*, [*The Languages and Customs of Several Tribes of Aborigines in the Western District of Victoria, Australia*, Melbourne, G. Robertson, 1881], p. 42.

<sup>96</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 470–471.

<sup>97</sup>On this question, see [William] Robertson Smith, [*Lectures on*] *the Religion of the Semites* [London, A. & C. Black, 1889], pp. 152ff., 446, 481; Frazer, "Taboo," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*; [Frank Byron] Jevons, *Introduction to the History of Religions* [London, Methuen, 1896], pp. 59ff.; Crawley, *Mystic Rose*, Chaps. 2–9; Arnold] Van Gennep, *Tabou et totémisme à Madagascar [étude descriptive et théorique*, Paris, E. Leroux, 1904], chap. 3.



hostile power, the hostility of which is inevitably manifested in violent reactions that tend to destroy him. This is why sickness and death are presumed to be the natural consequences of all such transgressions, and such are the consequences that are presumed to occur by themselves with a sort of physical necessity. The culprit feels invaded by a force that takes him over and against which he is powerless. Has he eaten the totemic animal? He feels it pervading him and gnawing at his entrails; he lies on the ground and awaits death.<sup>98</sup> Every profanation implies a consecration, but one that is dreadful to whoever is consecrated and whoever comes near him. Indeed the results of that consecration in part sanction the prohibition.<sup>99</sup>

Notice that this explanation of the prohibitions does not depend upon the varied symbols with whose help the religious forces can be imagined. It is of little consequence whether they are imagined as anonymous and impersonal energies or as personalities endowed with consciousness and feeling. To be sure, they are thought in the first case to react against profaning transgressions mechanically and unconsciously, whereas in the second they are thought to obey goadings of passion aroused by the offense. Fundamentally, however, these two conceptions (which, by the way, have the same practical effects) do no more than express one and the same psychic mechanism in two different languages. Both are based on the antagonism between the sacred and the profane, plus the remarkable capacity of the first to be passed on to the second. The antagonism and the contagiousness act in the same way, whether sacredness is imputed to blind forces or to consciousnesses. So authentically religious life is far from beginning only where mythical personalities exist, for we see in this case that the rite remains the same whether or not the religious beings are personified. This observation is one I will have occasion to repeat in each of the chapters to come.

#### IV

If the contagiousness of the sacred helps to explain the system of prohibitions, how is this contagiousness itself to be explained?

Some have thought they could account for it by the well-known laws

<sup>98</sup>See the references above, p. 128, n. 1. Cf. Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 323, 324; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 168; Taplin, *The Narrinyeri*, p. 16; Roth, [possibly "Marriage Ceremonies"], p. 76.

<sup>99</sup>Bear in mind that when the prohibition violated is religious, these sanctions are not the only ones; there is, besides, either an actual punishment or a public stigma.

governing the association of ideas. Feelings evoked by a person or a thing spread contagiously, from the idea of that thing or person to the representations associated with it, and from there to the objects with which those representations become associated. The respect we have for a sacred being is thereby communicated to all that touches this being and to all that resembles it or calls it to mind. Of course, an educated man is not the dupe of such associations. He knows that the emotions result from mere plays of images, entirely mental combinations, and he will not abandon himself to the superstitions that those illusions tend to create. But, it is said, the primitive objectifies these impressions naively, without critiquing them. Does a thing inspire reverent fear in him? From the fear, the conclusion: A majestic and awesome force does indeed live in it, so he keeps his distance from that thing and treats it as if it was sacred, even though it is in no way entitled to be.<sup>100</sup>

To say this, however, is to forget that the most primitive religions are not the only ones that have ascribed to sacredness such an ability to propagate. Even the most modern cults have a set of rites based on this principle. Does not every consecration by anointing or washing transmit the sanctifying virtues of a sacred object into a profane one? Although that mode of thinking has no natural explanation or justification, still it is hard to see today's enlightened Catholic as a kind of backward savage. Moreover, the tendency to objectify every emotion is ascribed to the primitive quite arbitrarily. In everyday life, in the details of his secular occupations, he does not attribute to one thing the properties of its neighbor, or vice versa. To be sure, he is less infatuated with clarity and distinctness than we are. Even so, it is far from true that living in him is who-knows-what deplorable inclination to scramble everything, to run everything together. It is religious thought alone that has a marked inclination toward fusions of this sort. Clearly, then, it is not in the general laws of human intelligence that we must seek the origin of these predispositions but in the special nature of religious things.

When a force or a property seems to us to be an integral part, a constituent element, of whatever it inhabits, we do not easily imagine it as capable of detaching itself and going elsewhere. A body is defined by its mass and atomic composition; we do not imagine either that it can pass on any of these distinguishing properties by mere contact. On the other hand, if the force is one that has entered the body from outside, the idea that it should be

<sup>100</sup>See Jevons, *Introduction to the History of Religion*, pp. 67–68. I will say nothing about the (by the way, barely formulated) theory of Crawley (*Mystic Rose*, chaps. 4–7), in which the reason taboos are contagious is that certain phenomena of contagion are erroneously interpreted. That is arbitrary. As Jevons quite correctly observes in the passage to which I refer the reader, the contagiousness of the sacred is affirmed *a priori*, and not on the basis of improperly interpreted experiences.

able to escape from that body is in no way unimaginable, for nothing attaches it there. Thus, the heat or electricity that any object has received from outside can be transmitted to the surrounding milieu, and the mind readily accepts the possibility of that transmission. If religious forces are generally conceived of as external to the beings in which they reside, then there is no surprise in the extreme ease with which religious forces radiate and diffuse. This is precisely what the theory I have put forward implies.

Religious forces are in fact only transfigured collective forces, that is, moral forces; they are made of ideas and feelings that the spectacle of society awakens in us, not of sensations that come to us from the physical world. Thus, they are qualitatively different from the tangible things in which we localize them. From those things they may very well borrow the outward and physical forms in which they are imagined, but they owe none of their power to those things. They are not held by internal bonds to the various supports on which they eventually settle and are not rooted in them. To use a word I have used already and that best characterizes them,<sup>101</sup> *they are superadded*. Thus no objects, to the exclusion of others, are predisposed to receiving those forces. The most insignificant objects, even the most commonplace ones, can play this role. Chance circumstances decide which are the elect. Let us recall the terms in which Codrington speaks of mana: "It is a force *that is by no means fixed on a material object, but that can be carried on almost any sort of object.*"<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Miss Fletcher's Dakota portrayed wakan for us as a kind of moving force that comes and goes throughout the world, alighting here or there without settling anywhere once and for all.<sup>103</sup> The religiousness that is inherent in man is no different. It is true that, in the world of experience, no being is closer to the very source of religious life; none participates in it more directly, for human consciousness is the place where it develops. And yet we know that the religious principle that animates man, the soul, is partly external to him.

If the religious forces do not have a place of their own anywhere, their mobility becomes easy to explain. Since nothing binds them to the things in which we localize them, it is not surprising that they escape from those things upon the slightest contact—against their will, so to speak. Their intensity pushes them on toward diffusion, which everything facilitates. This is why the soul itself, though holding onto the body with entirely personal

<sup>101</sup>See above, p. 230.

<sup>102</sup>See above, p. 197. [I have rendered this passage by Codrington according to the two slightly different renderings by Durkheim. Trans.]

<sup>103</sup>See above, p. 201.

bonds, continually threatens to leave it; all the openings and pores of the body are so many channels through which it tends to spread and diffuse to the outside.<sup>104</sup>

But the phenomenon we are trying to understand will be explained better still if, instead of considering the fully formed concept of religious forces, we go back to the mental process from which it results.

We have seen that the sacredness of a being did not depend upon any one of its inherent characteristics. It is not because the totemic animal has this or that appearance or property that it inspires religious feelings. The causes of those feelings are entirely foreign to the nature of the object on which they eventually settle. What constitutes those feelings are the impressions of reassurance and dependence that are created in consciousness through the workings of society. By themselves, these emotions are not bound to the idea of any definite object. But since they are emotions, and especially intense ones, they are eminently contagious as well. Hence, they are like an oil slick; they spread to all the other mental states that occupy the mind. They pervade and contaminate especially those representations in which are expressed the various objects that the man at that very moment has in his hands or before his eyes: Totemic designs that cover his body, bull roarers that he causes to resonate, rocks that surround him, ground that he tramps underfoot, and so on. So it is that these objects themselves take on religious significance that is not intrinsic to them but is conferred on them from outside. Hence contagion is not a kind of secondary process by which sacredness propagates, once acquired, but is instead the very process by which sacredness is acquired. It settles by contagion; we should not be surprised that it is transmitted contagiously. A special emotion gives it the reality it has; if sacredness becomes attached to an object, that happens because the emotion has encountered the object on its path. It naturally spreads from the object to all the others it finds nearby—that is, to all that some cause has brought close to the first in the mind, whether physical contiguity or mere similarity.

Thus, the contagious quality of sacredness finds its explanation in the theory of religious forces that I have proposed, and that very fact serves as confirmation of the theory.<sup>105</sup> At the same time, it helps us understand a feature of primitive mentality to which I previously called attention.

<sup>104</sup>This Preuss clearly demonstrated in the *Globus* articles I cited previously.

<sup>105</sup>It is true that the contagiousness is not peculiar to religious forces, for those belonging to magic have the same property. And yet it is evident that those forces do not correspond to objectified social feelings. This is because the magic forces were conceived on the model of religious forces. I will return later to this point (see p. 366).

We have seen<sup>106</sup> how easily the primitive assimilates disparate kingdoms of nature and sees the most disparate things as identical—men, animals, plants, stars, and so forth. We now see one of the causes that contributed most to facilitating these fusions. Because religious forces are eminently contagious, a single principle is continually found to be animating the most disparate things. It passes among them as a result of mere physical nearness or mere similarity, even superficial similarity. So it is that men, animals, plants, and rocks are held to participate in the same totem: the men because they carry the name of the animal; the plants because they serve as food for the animal; the rocks because they stand where the ceremonies are conducted. The religious forces are considered the source of all that is powerful; as a result, beings that had the same religious principle must have seemed to be of the same essence and to differ from one another only in secondary characteristics. This is why it seemed entirely natural to put them in the same category and to view them as varieties within a single genus and as transmutable into one another.

Once established, this relationship makes the phenomena of contagion appear in a new light. By themselves, they seem alien to logical life. Do they not bring about the mingling and fusion of things, despite the natural differences of those things? But we have seen that these fusions and participations have played a logical role, and one of great utility: They have served to connect things that sensation leaves separate from one another. Thus, the sort of fundamental irrationality that we are at first led to impute to contagion, the source of that bringing together and mixing, is far from being its distinctive mark. Contagion prepared the way for the scientific explanations of the future.

<sup>106</sup>See above, p. 237.

## THE POSITIVE CULT

*The Elements of the Sacrifice*

Whatever its importance and although it has indirectly positive effects, the negative cult is not an end in itself. It gives access to religious life but presupposes, rather than constitutes, that life. If the negative cult commands the faithful to flee the profane world, the point is to draw them closer to the sacred world. Man has never imagined that his duties toward the religious forces could be limited to abstinence from all commerce. He has always thought of himself as maintaining positive bilateral relations with them, which a set of ritual practices regulate and organize. To this special system of rites I give the name "positive cult."

For a long time, we were almost entirely ignorant of what the positive cult of totemic religion might include. We knew almost nothing beyond the initiation rites, and those inadequately. This gap in our knowledge has been partially filled by the studies of Spencer and Gillen on the tribes of central Australia, for which Schulze paved the way and which Strehlow has confirmed. There is one celebration in particular that these explorers were especially intent on describing and that seem to dominate the totemic cult: the one that, according to Spencer and Gillen, the Arunta call the *Intichiuma*. It is true that Strehlow disputes this meaning of the word. According to him, *intichiuma* (or as he spells it, *intijiuma*) means "to teach" and designates the ceremonies that are performed before the young man for the purpose of initiating him into the traditions of the tribe. He says that the feast I will describe bears the name *mbatjalkatiuma*, which means "to fertilize" or "to repair."<sup>1</sup> I will not try to settle this question of vocabulary, which is beside the point—all the more so, in that the rites to be discussed are also conducted during initiation. Be-

<sup>1</sup>[Carl] Strehlow, [*Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien*, Frankfurt, J. Baer, 1907], vol. I, p. 4.

sides, since today the word "Intichiuma" belongs to the common parlance of ethnography, to substitute another would seem pointless.<sup>2</sup>

The date on which the Intichiuma takes place depends largely on the time of year. In central Australia there are two clearly marked seasons: a dry season, which lasts a long time, and a rainy one, which by contrast is short and often irregular. As soon as the rains come, the plants spring from the ground as if by a spell, the animals multiply, and lands that were but sterile deserts the day before are rapidly covered again with luxuriant flora and fauna. The Intichiuma is celebrated at the precise moment when the good season seems at hand. But because the rainy season is quite variable, the date of the ceremonies cannot be set once and for all. It varies according to climatic conditions, which only the head of the totemic group, the Alatumja, is qualified to assess. On the day he judges to be appropriate, he informs his people that the time has come.<sup>3</sup>

Each totemic group has its own Intichiuma. Although the rite is found throughout the societies of the center, it is not the same everywhere. Among the Warramunga it is not the same as it is among the Arunta, and it varies not only by tribe but also by clan within the same tribe. Still, the various procedures in use are too akin to one another to be completely dissociable. There are probably no ceremonies that do not have several of those mechanisms, but quite unequally developed. What exists only as a seed in one case dominates elsewhere, and vice versa. Still it is important to distinguish them carefully. They constitute so many different ritual types that we must describe and explain separately—and only after that try to discern whether they all have a common origin. I will begin with those that are observed more specifically among the Arunta.

## I

The feast has two successive phases. The series of rites that occur one after the other in the first phase are intended to ensure the well-being of the animal or plant species that serves as the totem of the clan. The means used for this purpose are reducible to a few main types.

<sup>2</sup>The word designating that feast varies by tribe. The Urabunna call it *Pijinta* ([Sir Baldwin] Spencer and [Francis James] Gillen, *Northern Tribes [of Central Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1904, p. 284); the Warramunga, *Thalaminta* (*ibid.*, p. 297), etc.

<sup>3</sup>[Rev. Louis] Schulze, "Aborigines of the Upper and Middle Finke River," *RSSA*, vol. XIV [1891], p. 243; [Sir Baldwin] Spencer and [Francis James] Gillen, *Native Tribes [of Central Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1904, pp. 169–170.

Recall that the mythical ancestors from which each clan is thought to descend once lived on earth and left traces of their passage. In particular, those traces include stones or rocks that they are thought to have set down in certain places or that were formed at the places where they sank into the ground. The rocks and stones are considered to be the bodies or body parts of the ancestors whose memory they evoke and whom they represent. Since an individual and his totem are one, it follows that they also represent the animals and plants that were the totems of those same ancestors. Consequently, the same reality and the same properties are accorded to them as to the animals and plants of the same sort that live today. The advantage they have over these latter is to be immortal—to know neither sickness nor death. In this way, they constitute something like a permanent, unchanging, and always available stock of animal and plant life. And in a certain number of cases, it is this reserve that people draw upon annually to ensure the reproduction of the species.

Here, as an example, is how the Witchetty Grub clan, at Alice Springs, conducts its Intichiuma.<sup>4</sup>

On the day set by the chief, all the members of the totemic group gather at the main camp. The men of other totems retire a certain distance; among the Arunta, they are forbidden to be present at the celebration of the rite, which has all the characteristics of a secret ceremony.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes an individual of the same phratry but a different totem may be invited as a courtesy, but only as a witness. Under no circumstances may he take an active role.

Once the men of the totem have gathered, they depart, leaving only two or three of their number at the camp. Completely naked, without weapons, and without any of their usual ornaments, they walk single file, in profound silence. Their attitude and pace are marked with religious solemnity, because the act in which they are taking part is, in their eyes, one of exceptional importance. In addition, they must observe a rigorous fast until the end of the ceremony.

The land they cross is filled with mementos left by the glorious ancestors. Finally they reach a place where a large block of quartzite is stuck in the earth, surrounded by small, rounded stones. The block represents the witchetty grub in its adult state. The Alatunja hits it with a sort of small wooden plate, called an *apmara*,<sup>6</sup> while intoning a chant whose object is to invite the

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 170ff.

<sup>5</sup>Of course, the same obligation binds the women.

<sup>6</sup>The *Apmara* [Durkheim capitalized here. Trans.] is the only object he has brought from the camp.



animal to lay eggs. He does the same with the stones, which represent the eggs of the animal, and, using one of them, he rubs the stomach of each person in attendance. This done, they all descend a little lower, to the foot of a rock that the Alcheringa myths also celebrate, and at the base of which is found another stone that again represents the witchetty grub. The Alatunja strikes it with his apmara; the men accompanying him do the same with gum tree branches that they have gathered on the way, all this amid hymns repeating the invitation earlier addressed to the animal. Nearly ten different places, sometimes a mile apart, are visited one after the other. At each of them, in the back of a sort of cave or hole, is a stone that is said to represent the witchetty grub in one of its aspects or phases of life, and the same ceremonies are repeated on each of these stones.

The meaning of the rite is apparent. The Alatunja strikes the sacred stones in order to detach some dust from it. The grains of this very holy\* dust are regarded as so many seeds of life, each containing a spiritual principle that, by entering an organism of the same species, will give birth therein to a new being. The tree branches that the participants carry are used to spread this precious dust in all directions; it goes forth in all directions to do its work of impregnation. By this means, they believe they have ensured the abundant reproduction of the animal species that the clan watches over, so to speak, and to which it belongs.

The natives themselves interpret the rite in this way. In the clan of the Ilpirla (a sort of manna), they proceed in the following way. When the day of the Intichiuma has come, the group meets at a place where a large rock, about five feet high, stands; a second rock that looks very much like the first rises on top of it, and smaller rocks surround this one. Both represent accumulations of manna. The Alatunja digs in the ground at the foot of these rocks and brings forth a churinga that is said to have been buried there in Alcheringa times and that itself is like the quintessence of mana. He then climbs to the top of the higher rock and rubs it first with this churinga, then with the smaller stones that are around it. Finally, using tree branches, he sweeps the dust that has collected on the surface of the rock. Each of the other participants does the same thing in turn. Now, say Spencer and Gillen, the thought of the natives "is that the dust thus dispersed will go and rest on the mulga trees and there produce manna." These operations are accompanied by a hymn sung by the participants that expresses this idea.<sup>7</sup>

The same rite is found, with variations, in other societies. Among the

\* *Sainte*.

<sup>7</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 185-186.

Urabunna, there is a rock representing an ancestor of the Lizard clan; stones are detached from it and thrown in all directions in order to obtain abundant lizard births.<sup>8</sup> In this same tribe, there is a sand bank that mythological recollection closely associates with the totem of the louse. There are two trees at the same place—one called the tree of the ordinary louse, the other that of the crab louse. The worshippers take some of the sand, rub it against those trees, and throw it in all directions, being convinced that by this means many lice will be born.<sup>9</sup> The Mara go about the Intichiuma of bees by spreading dust that has been detached from sacred rocks.<sup>10</sup> A somewhat different method is used for the plains kangaroo. They collect some kangaroo dung and wrap it in a grass that the animal is very fond of and that therefore belongs to the kangaroo totem. They place the dung on the ground in the wrapping, between two layers of the same grass, and then set fire to all of this. With the flame that results, they light tree branches and then shake them, so sparks fly in all directions. These sparks play the same role as the dust of the preceding cases.<sup>11</sup>

In a number of clans,<sup>12</sup> the men mix some of their own substance with that of the stone, in order to make this rite more efficacious. Young men open their veins and let the blood gush onto the rock. This occurs, for example, in the Hakea Flower Intichiuma, among the Arunta. The ceremony is held at a sacred place, around a stone that is also sacred and that, in the eyes of the natives, represents hakea flowers. After several preliminary operations, "the old man who is conducting the rite asks a young man to open his veins. The young man obeys and lets his blood flow freely onto the stone, while those present continue to sing. The blood flows until the stone is completely covered with it."<sup>13</sup> The object of this practice is to infuse new life into the virtues the stone contains and make it more powerful. Bear in mind that the clansmen themselves are relatives of the plant or animal whose name they bear. The same life-principle resides in them, especially in their blood. Naturally, then, this blood and the mystical seeds carried along by it are used to ensure the regular reproduction of the totemic species. When a man is sick or tired, it is common among the Arunta for one of his young companions

<sup>8</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 288.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>We will see below that these clans are much more numerous than Spencer and Gillen say.

<sup>13</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 184–185.

to open his own veins and sprinkle the ailing man with the blood to revive him.<sup>14</sup> If blood can thus reawaken life in a man, it is not surprising that blood can also serve to awaken life in the animal or plant species with which the men of the clan are identified.

The same technique is used in the Kangaroo Intichiuma at Undiara (Arunta). The setting for the ceremony is a water hole precipitously overhung by a rock. This rock represents an Alcheringa animal-kangaroo that was killed and set in this place by a man-kangaroo of the same period. For that reason, many spirits of kangaroos are thought to reside here. After a number of sacred stones have been rubbed against one another in the manner I have described, several of those present climb onto the rock and let their blood flow all along it.<sup>15</sup> "The purpose of this ceremony, according to what the natives say, is actually the following. The blood of the man-kangaroo is spilled on the rock in order to free the spirits of animal-kangaroos and scatter them in all directions; the effect must be to increase the number of kangaroos."<sup>16</sup>

There is even a case among the Arunta in which blood seems to be the active principle of the rite. In the Emu group, neither stones nor anything resembling stones are used. The Alatunja and certain of those with him sprinkle the ground with their blood. On the ground thus moistened, they trace lines of various colors, which represent the various parts of the emu's body. They kneel around this drawing and chant a monotonous hymn. From the fictive emu incanted in this way, hence from the blood used in doing so, life-principles come forth that will animate the embryos of the new generation and thus prevent the species from dying out.<sup>17</sup>

A clan among the Wonkgongaru<sup>18</sup> has a certain kind of fish as its totem; in the Intichiuma of this totem as well, blood plays the central role. After having painted himself ceremonially, the chief of the group enters a water

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 438, 461, 464; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 596ff.

<sup>15</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 201.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 206. I use the language of Spencer and Gillen and say, as they do, that it is the spirits of kangaroos that come away from the rocks (*spirits or spirit parts of kangaroos*). Strehlow, *Aranda* (vol. III, p. 7), disputes the accuracy of this phrase. According to him, it is real kangaroos, living bodies, that the rite causes to appear. But quite like the dispute over the notion of ratapa (see p. 254–255 above), this one is without interest. Since the kangaroo seeds that escape from the rocks are invisible, they are not made of the same substance as the kangaroos our senses perceive. That is all Spencer and Gillen mean. It is quite certain, moreover, that these are not pure spirits as a Christian might conceive of them. Just like human souls, they have physical forms.

<sup>17</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 181.

<sup>18</sup>A tribe living east of Lake Eyre.

hole and sits down in it. Then, using little pointed bones, he pierces his scrotum and then the skin around his navel. "The blood that flows from these various wounds spreads in the water and gives rise to fish."<sup>19</sup>

The Dieri believe they make two of their totems reproduce, the carpet snake and the woma snake (an ordinary snake), by a similar practice. A Mura-mura called Minkani is believed to live under a dune. His body is represented by fossil bones of animals or reptiles such as are found, Howitt tells us, in the deltas of the rivers that empty into Lake Eyre. When the day of the ceremony comes, the men assemble and go to the place where Minkani is to be found. There they dig until they reach a layer of damp earth, which they call "the excrement of Minkani." From then on, they continue to sift through the soil with great care until "the elbow of Minkani" is uncovered. Then two men open their veins and let the blood flow on the sacred stone. The songs of Minkani are sung while the participants, caught up in a veritable frenzy, strike one another with their weapons. The battle continues until their return to camp, about a mile away. There the women intervene and end the fighting. The blood that flows from the wounds is collected and mixed with the "excrement of Minkani"; the products of the mixture are sowed on the dune. Having carried out the rite, they are convinced that carpet snakes will be born in abundance.<sup>20</sup>

In some cases, the substance used as a vitalizing principle is the same one they are trying to produce. Among the Kaitish, a sacred stone representing the mythical heroes of the Water clan is sprinkled during the rainmaking ceremony. It is apparently believed that the productive virtues of the stone are by this means increased, just as they are with blood, and for the same reasons.<sup>21</sup> Among the Mara, the celebrant goes to draw water in a sacred hole, drinks some and spits some in each direction.<sup>22</sup> Among the Worgaia, when the yams begin to grow, the head of the Yam clan sends people belonging to the phratry to which he himself does not belong to harvest some of the plants; they bring him some and ask him to intervene so that the species will develop well. He takes one, bites it and throws pieces in all directions.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 287–288.

<sup>20</sup>[Alfred William] Howitt, *Native Tribes [of South-East Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1904], p. 798. Cf. Howitt, "Legends of the Dieri and Kindred Tribes of Central Australia," *JAI*, vol. XXIV [1885], pp. 124ff. Howitt believes that the ceremony is conducted by the people of the totem but is not in a position to certify this fact.

<sup>21</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 295.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 314

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 296–297.

Among the Kaitish, when (after various rites which I will not describe) a certain seed grass called erlipinna comes to full maturity, the chief of the totem brings a little to the men's camp and grinds it between two stones. The dust thereby obtained is piously collected, and several grains of it are placed on the lips of the chief, who blows, scattering them in all directions. Undoubtedly, the purpose of this contact with the mouth of the chief, which has a special sacramental virtue, is to stimulate the vitality of the seeds contained within these kernels and that, propelled to all points of the horizon, will spread their fertilizing properties to the plants.<sup>24</sup>

For the native, the efficacy of these rites is beyond doubt: He is convinced that they must produce the results he expects of them, and with a sort of necessity. If the outcome does not live up to his hopes, he merely concludes that they have been cancelled out by the evil deeds of some hostile group. In any case, it does not enter his mind that a favorable outcome might be obtained by other means. If, by chance, the vegetation grows, or if the animals multiply before he has carried out the Intichiuma, he assumes that another Intichiuma has been celebrated—under the earth, by the souls of the ancestors—and that the living reap the benefits of this underground ceremony.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 170.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 519. The analysis of the rites just studied has been made only with the observations that we owe to Spencer and Gillen. After this chapter was written, Strehlow published the third installment of his work, which treats the positive cult and, in particular, the Intichiuma—or, as he says, the rites of *mbatjalkatiuma*. I have found nothing in this publication that obliges me to alter the preceding description, or even to make major amendments. Of greatest interest in what Strehlow teaches us on this subject is that the sheddings and offerings of blood are much more common than might have been suspected from the account of Spencer and Gillen (see Strehlow, *Aranda*, vol. III, pp. 13, 14, 19, 29, 39, 43, 46, 56, 67, 80, 89).

Incidentally, Strehlow's information on the cult must be used circumspectly, for he did not witness the rites he describes. He settled for collecting oral accounts, and in general these are rather sketchy (see vol. III, preface of Leonhardi, p. v). One can even ask whether he has not gone too far in assimilating the totemic ceremonies of initiation to those he calls *mbatjalkatiuma*. To be sure, he has not failed to make a laudable effort to distinguish them: indeed, he has brought out clearly two of their differentiating characteristics. First, the Intichiuma is always conducted in a consecrated place, to which the memory of some ancestor is attached, whereas the initiation ceremonies may be conducted anywhere. Second, offerings of blood are specific to the Intichiuma, which proves that they are part and parcel of what is most essential to these rites (vol. III, p. 7). In the description of the rites that he gives, we find mingled together information that refers indiscriminately to both kinds of rite. In fact, in the ones he describes for us under the name *mbatjalkatiuma*, the young men generally play an important role (see, for example, pp. 11, 13, etc.)—which is characteristic of initiation. Similarly, it even appears that the location of the rite is up to the participants, since they build an artificial stage. They dig a hole and go into it; throughout no reference is made to rocks or sacred trees and to their ritual role.

## II

Such is act one of the feast.

Actually, there is no ceremony as such in the period that immediately follows, yet religious life remains intense. It reveals itself through a heightening in the usual system of prohibitions. The sacredness of the totem is somehow reinforced; there is less inclination to touch it. Whereas the Arunta may eat their totemic animal or plant in ordinary times, provided they do so with moderation, this right is suspended the day after the Intichiuma. The dietary prohibition is strict and unqualified. It is believed that any violation will neutralize the beneficial effects of the rite and arrest the reproduction of the species. Although the people of other totems who happen to be in the same locality are not subject to the same restriction, they are not as free at this time as they ordinarily are. They may not eat the totemic animal just anywhere—in the bush, for example—but are required to bring it to the camp, and only there may it be cooked.<sup>26</sup>

There is a final ceremony to bring these extraordinary prohibitions to an end and adjourn this long series of rites. Although it varies somewhat according to clan, the essential elements are the same everywhere. Here are two of the principal forms the ceremony takes among the Arunta. One refers to the Witchetty Grub and the other to the Kangaroo.

Once the caterpillars have reached full maturity and prove to be abundant, the people of the totem, as well as others, collect as many as possible. Everyone then brings those they have found to camp and cook them until they become hard and crisp. The cooked products are kept in a type of wooden container called a *pitchi*. Caterpillars can be harvested for only a very short time, as they appear only after the rain. When they begin to be less plentiful, the Alatumja summons everyone to the men's camp; at the Alatumja's invitation, each brings his supply. The outsiders place theirs before the people of the totem. With the help of his companions, the Alatumja takes one *pitchi* and grinds the contents between two stones. He then eats a little of the powder thus obtained, and the rest is given to the people of the other clans, who from now on may do what they want with it. The procedure is exactly the same for the supply the Alatumja has made. From this moment on, the men and women of the totem may eat some, but only a little. If they exceeded the permissible limits, they would lose the strength they need to celebrate the Intichiuma, and the species would not reproduce. But if they

<sup>26</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 203. Cf. [Rev. A.] Meyer, *The Encounter Bay Tribe*, in [James Dominick] Woods, [*The Native Tribes of South Australia*, Adelaide, E. S. Wigg, 1879], p. 187.

ate none of it at all, and especially if the Alatumja totally abstained from eating any in the circumstances just mentioned, they would be stricken with the same impotence.

In the totemic group of the Kangaroo that has its center at Undiara, certain features of the ceremony are more obvious. After the rites on the sacred rock that I have described are done with, the young men leave to hunt the kangaroo and bring the game back to the men's camp. The elders, in the midst of whom stands the Alatumja, eat a little of the animal's flesh and with its fat anoint the bodies of those who have taken part in the Intichiuma. The rest is shared among the assembled men. Next, the men of the totem decorate themselves with totemic designs, and the night is spent in singing that recalls the exploits of the men- and animal-kangaroos in Alcheringa times. On the following day, the young men go hunting again in the forest, bringing back more kangaroos than they did the first time, and the ceremony of the previous night resumes.<sup>27</sup>

With variations of detail, the same rite is found in the other Arunta clans,<sup>28</sup> among the Urabunna,<sup>29</sup> the Kaitish,<sup>30</sup> the Unmatjera,<sup>31</sup> and the Encounter Bay tribe.<sup>32</sup> Everywhere it comprises the same basic elements. Several specimens of the totemic plant or animal are presented to the head of the clan, who solemnly eats some and is required to do so. If he did not fulfill this obligation, he would lose his power to celebrate the Intichiuma efficaciously—that is, to create the species each year. Sometimes the ritual eating is followed by an anointing done with the fat of the animal or with certain parts of the plant.<sup>33</sup> Generally, the rite is repeated afterward by the men of the totem, or at least by the elders. Once it is over, the special restrictions are lifted.

At present, there is no such ceremony among the tribes farther north, the Warramunga and neighboring societies.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, one still finds traces that seem to evidence a time when that was not unknown. It is true

<sup>27</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 204.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 205–207.

<sup>29</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 286–287.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>32</sup>Meyer, ["The Encounter Bay Tribe"] in Woods [*The Native Tribes of South Australia*], p. 187.

<sup>33</sup>I have already cited one case of this; others are to be found in Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 205; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 286.

<sup>34</sup>The Walpari, Wulmala, Tjingili, Umbaia.

that the head of the clan never eats the totem ritually and obligatorily. But in certain cases, the people who are not of the totem whose Intichiuma has just been conducted are required to bring the animal or plant to the camp and offer it to the head, asking him if he wishes to eat some. He refuses and adds: "I have made this for you; you may eat freely of it."<sup>35</sup> Thus the custom of presentation persists and the question asked of the chief seems to hark back to a time when ritual eating was practiced.<sup>36</sup>

### III

What gives the system of rites just described its interest is that it contains all the principal elements, and in the most elementary form now known, of a great religious institution that was destined to become a foundation of the positive cult in the higher religions: the institution of sacrifice.

It is well known how much the works of Robertson Smith have revolutionized the traditional theory of sacrifice.<sup>37</sup> Until Smith, sacrifice was seen only as a sort of tribute or homage, either obligatory or freely given, and

<sup>35</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 318.

<sup>36</sup>For this second part of the ceremony, as for the first, I have followed Spencer and Gillen. On this point, Strehlow's recent volume confirms the observations of his predecessors, at least in essentials. He recognizes, indeed, that after the first ceremony (on p. 13 he says two months after), the head of the clan ritually eats a bit of the totemic animal or plant, and that they then proceed to the lifting of the prohibitions; he calls this operation *die Freigabe des Totems zum allgemeinen Gebrauch* (vol. III, p. 7). He even informs us that this operation is important enough to be designated by a special word in the Arunta language. True, he adds that this ritual consumption is not the only one, that sometimes the chief and elders also eat the sacred plant or animal before the initial ceremony, and that the celebrant in the rite does the same after the celebration. There is nothing implausible about this. Such acts of consumption are so many means used by the celebrants or the participants to confer on themselves the virtues they wish to acquire; it is not surprising that they should be multiple. None of that invalidates the account of Spencer and Gillen, for the rite they emphasize, not without reason, is the *Freigabe des Totems*.

Strehlow disputes the claims of Spencer and Gillen on only two points. In the first place, he declares that the act of ritual consumption does not always take place. That fact is beyond question, because some totemic animals and plants are inedible. But the fact remains that the rite is very common; Strehlow himself cites numerous examples of it (pp. 13, 14, 19, 23, 33, 36, 50, 59, 67, 68, 71, 75, 80, 84, 89, 93). In the second place, we have seen that (according to Spencer and Gillen) if the chief of the clan did not partake of the totemic animal or plant, he would lose his powers. Strehlow assures us that native testimony does not corroborate this assertion. But this question seems to me altogether secondary. The certain fact is that this ritual consumption is prescribed—hence that it is judged to be useful or necessary. Like all communions, its only purpose is to confer on the communicant the virtues he needs. It does not follow from the fact that the natives, or some of them, have forgotten that this function of the rite is not real. Must it be repeated that worshippers most often do not know the real reasons for the practices that they carry out?

<sup>37</sup>See [William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on*] *the Religion of the Semites*, 2d. ed., London, A. & C. Black, 1894], Lectures VI to XI, and the article "Sacrifice" in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* [Edinburgh, Adam & Charles Black, 1891].



analogous to those that subjects owe their princes. Robertson Smith was the first to draw attention to the fact that this traditional explanation did not account for two fundamental features of the rite. First, it is a meal; the substance of sacrifice is food. Second, it is a meal of which the faithful who offer it partake at the same time as the god to whom it is offered. Certain parts of the victim are reserved for the deity; others are conferred on the celebrants, who consume them. This is why, in the Bible, the sacrifice is sometimes called a meal prepared before Yahweh. In many societies, the meal is taken in common to create a bond of artificial kinship among the participants. Kin are beings who are made of the same flesh and the same blood. And since food constantly remakes the substance of the body, shared food can create the same effects as shared origin. According to Smith, the object of sacrificial banquets is to have the faithful and the god commune in one and the same flesh, to tie a knot of kinship between them. From this perspective, sacrifice came into view in an altogether novel way. Its essence was no longer the act of renunciation that the word "sacrifice" usually expresses, as was so long believed; it was first and foremost an act of alimentary communion.

In particular details, no doubt, this manner of explaining what sacrificial banquets achieve must be qualified. What they achieve does not result exclusively from the fact of sharing a common table. Man does not sanctify himself only because, in some sense, he sits down at the same table as the god, but principally because the food that he consumes in the ritual meal has sacredness. Indeed, as has been shown, a whole series of preliminary steps in the sacrifice (washings, anointings, prayers, and so on) transform the animal to be immolated into a sacred thing, the sacredness of which is thereafter communicated to the faithful who partake of it.<sup>38</sup> But it is no less true that alimentary communion is among the essential elements of sacrifice. Now, if we go back to the rite that ends the Intichiuma ceremonies, it too consists in an act of this kind. When the totemic animal is killed, the Alatunja and the elders solemnly partake of it. Thus they commune with the sacred principle that inhabits it, and they absorb that principle into themselves. The only difference in this context is that the animal is sacred naturally, whereas ordinarily it acquires sacredness only artificially in the course of the sacrifice.

Furthermore, the function of this communion is manifest. Every member of the totemic clan carries within himself a kind of mystic substance that makes up the higher part of his being: His soul is made from that substance. He becomes a person through it; the powers he ascribes to himself, and his

<sup>38</sup>See Hubert and Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice," in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions* [Paris, F. Alcan, 1909], pp. 40ff.

social role, come to him from it. So he has a vital interest in preserving it intact and in keeping it in a state of perpetual youth as much as possible. Alas, all forces, even the most spiritual, are worn away with the passage of time if nothing replenishes the energy they lose in the ordinary course of events: Herein lies a vital necessity that, as we will see, is the profound cause of the positive cult. The people of a totem cannot remain themselves unless they periodically renew the totemic principle that is in them, and since they conceive this principle in the form of a plant or an animal, they go to that animal or plant to seek the strength they need to renew and rejuvenate it. A man of the Kangaroo clan believes he is, and feels he is, a kangaroo. Through that quality he defines himself, and it determines his place in society. In order to maintain that quality, from time to time he causes a little flesh of that animal to pass into his own substance. A few bits are enough, in accordance with the rule that the part is as good as the whole.<sup>39</sup>

To make all the hoped-for results possible, however, it is important that this procedure not occur at just any time. The time when the new generation has just reached its full development is the most opportune, for that is also when the forces that animate the totemic species come into full bloom. They have just been extracted from the rich reservoirs of life that are the sacred trees and rocks. Besides, all sorts of means have been used to heighten their intensity, such being the purpose of the rites that have occurred in the first part of the Intichiuma. What is more, by their very appearance, the first fruits of the harvest make the energy they contain manifest. In those first fruits, the totemic god asserts himself in all the splendor of youth. This is why, throughout the ages, the first fruits have been considered very sacred food, reserved to very sacred beings. Naturally, therefore, the Australian uses them to regenerate himself spiritually. In this way, both the date and the circumstances of the ceremony are explained.

Perhaps it will seem surprising that such sacred food is eaten by mere profane beings, but there is no positive cult that does not move within this contradiction. All beings that are sacred stand beyond the reach of the profane, by reason of their distinguishing trait. On the other hand, they would lose their whole *raison d'être* if they were not placed in a relationship with those same faithful who must otherwise stay respectfully at a distance from them. There is no positive rite that does not fundamentally constitute a veritable sacrilege. Man can have no dealings with the sacred beings without crossing the barrier that must ordinarily keep him separate from them.

All that matters is that the sacrilege be carried out with mitigating pre-

<sup>39</sup>For an explanation of this rule, see above, pp. 230-231.

cautions. The commonest of those consist of preparing the transition and introducing the faithful into the world of sacred things slowly, and only in stages. Broken up and diluted in this way, the sacrilege does not strike the religious consciousness abruptly. Not felt as such, it vanishes. This is what is happening in the case before us. The effect of a whole sequence of ceremonies conducted prior to the moment when the totem is solemnly eaten has been gradually to sanctify the participants. It is essentially a religious period, which they could not go through without transformation of their religious state. Little by little, the fasts, the contact of sacred rocks and the churingas,<sup>40</sup> totemic decorations, and so forth, have conferred a sacredness on them that they did not have before and that permits them, without scandalous and dangerous profanation, to confront the dangerous and awesome food ordinarily forbidden to them.<sup>41</sup>

If the act by which a sacred being is offered up and then eaten by those who venerate it can be called a sacrifice, the rite just discussed is entitled to the same name. Moreover, the similarities it has with other practices found in many agrarian cults clarify its meaning. As it turns out, even among peoples who have attained a high level of civilization, a common rule is that the first products of the harvest are used as the substance of ritual meals, the paschal meal being the best-known example.<sup>42</sup> Since agrarian rites are at the very foundation of worship in its most advanced forms, we see that the Intichiuma of Australian societies is closer to us than its apparent crudeness might have led us to believe.

By a stroke of genius, Smith had an intuition of these facts without knowing them. Through a string of ingenious deductions (which need not be repeated here, since they are of only historic interest<sup>43</sup>), he came to believe he could establish that at the beginning the animal offered up in the sacrifices must at first have been considered as quasi-divine and as the close kin of those who offered it. Now, these are precisely the characteristics by which the totemic species is defined. Thus, Smith came to suppose that totemism must have known and practiced a rite very similar to the one we have just examined. Indeed, he tended to see this kind of sacrifice as the origin of the

<sup>40</sup>See Strehlow, *Aranda*, vol. III, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup>Besides, it should not be forgotten that among the Arunta, eating of the totemic animal is not forbidden altogether.

<sup>42</sup>See other examples in [James George] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 2d. ed. [London, Macmillan, 1894], pp. 348ff.

<sup>43</sup>*The Religion of the Semites*, pp. 275ff.

sacrificial institution as a whole.<sup>44</sup> At the beginning, sacrifice is instituted not to create a bond of artificial kinship between man and his gods but to maintain and renew the natural kinship that at the beginning united men. Here, as elsewhere, the artifice is born only to imitate nature. But in Smith's book, this hypothesis was presented as little more than a mental construct, which the facts then known did not at all adequately warrant. The few cases of totemic sacrifice that he cites in support of his thesis do not mean what he says they do, and the animals that figure in it were not real totems.<sup>45</sup> But today, one may say that this has been proved, on one point at least: We have just seen that totemic sacrifice, as Smith conceived it, is or was practiced in a large number of societies. Granted, we have no proof that this practice is necessarily inherent in totemism or that it is the seed from which all the other types of sacrifice have emerged. But if the universality of the rite is hypothetical, its existence can no longer be disputed. We must consider it established from now on that the most mystical form of alimentary communion is found as early as the most rudimentary religion now known.

#### IV

On another point, however, the new facts we have at hand undermine Smith's theories. According to him, communion was not only an essential element of sacrifice but also the only element, at least initially. He thought not only that it was a mistake to reduce sacrifice to a mere act of tribute or offering but also that the idea of offering was initially absent; that this idea made only a late appearance, influenced by external circumstances; and that, far from helping us to understand the true nature of the ritual mechanism, the idea of offering masked it. Smith believed that he detected too gross an absurdity in the very idea of sacrifice for it to be viewed as the profound cause of such a great institution. One of the most important functions that fall squarely upon the shoulders of the deity is to see that men have the food they need to live, so it would seem impossible that sacrifice should involve a presentation of food to the deity. It seems contradictory for the gods to expect their food from man, when it is by them that man himself is fed. How

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 318-319.

<sup>45</sup>See on this point Hubert and Mauss, *Mélanges d'histoire des religions*, preface, pp. vff.

could they need his help to claim their just portion of the things that he receives from their hands? From these considerations, Smith concluded that the combined idea of sacrifice-offering could have been born only in the great religions. In them once the gods were separated from the things with which they were originally merged, they were conceived as rather like kings, foremost owners of the land and its products. From then on, according to Smith, sacrifice was confounded with the tribute that subjects pay their prince in return for the rights conceded to them. In reality, however, this new interpretation was an alteration and even a corruption of the original idea. For when the notion that "the idea of property makes everything it touches material" becomes part of sacrifice, sacrifice is denatured and made into a kind of bartering between man and the deity.<sup>46</sup>

The facts I have set forth undermine that argument. The rites I have described are certainly among the most primitive ever observed. As yet, no definite mythical personality is seen to make its appearance in them; there are neither gods nor spirits as such, and only vague, anonymous, impersonal forces are at work. Yet the reasoning they presuppose is exactly the reasoning Smith declared impossible because of its absurdity.

Let us look again at the first act of the Intichiuma: the rites intended to bring about the fertility of the animal or plant species that serves as the totem of the clan. This species is the sacred thing. It incarnates what I was led to call, in a metaphorical sense, the totemic deity. But we have seen that it needs man's help to perpetuate itself. It is man who dispenses life to a new generation each year; without him, it would not see the light of day. If man stopped celebrating the Intichiuma, the sacred beings would disappear from the face of the earth. In a sense, it is from him that they have their being. In another sense, however, it is from them that he has his own. Once they have attained maturity, it is from them that he will borrow the strength needed for the maintenance and repair of his spiritual being. Hence it is man who makes his gods, one can say, or at least, it is man who makes them endure; but at the same time, it is through them that he himself endures. Thus he regularly closes the circle that, according to Smith, is entailed by the very notion of sacrificial tribute. He gives to sacred beings a little of what he receives from them and he receives from them, all that he gives them.

There is more: The offerings that he is required to make each year are not different in nature from those that will be made later, in sacrifices prop-

<sup>46</sup>[William Robertson Smith], *The Religion of the Semites*, pp. 390ff.

erly so-called. The sacrificer offers an animal so that the life-principles within it separate from the organism and go forth to feed the deity. Similarly, the grains of dust that the Australian detaches from the sacred rock are so many principles that spread through space so that they will vitalize the totemic species and bring about its renewal. The movement by which this spreading is done is also the one that normally accompanies offerings. In certain cases, the resemblance between the two rites goes as far as the details of the movements made. We have seen that the Kaitish pour water on a stone in order to have rain; among certain peoples, the priest pours water on the altar for the same purpose.<sup>47</sup> The sheddings of blood, which are customary in some Intichiumas, are true offerings. Just as the Arunta or the Dieri sprinkle the rock or the sacred design with blood, so in the more advanced cults is the blood of the sacrificed victim, or the believer, in many cases poured out on, or in front of, the altar.<sup>48</sup> In this case, it is given to the gods, whose favorite food it is. In Australia, it is given to the sacred species. Thus there are no longer any grounds for the view that the idea of offerings is a recent product of civilization.

A document for which we are indebted to Strehlow brings out this kinship between the Intichiuma and sacrifice. It is a hymn accompanying the Kangaroo Intichiuma that describes the ceremony and states its hoped-for effects. A piece of the kangaroo's fat has been placed by the chief on a support made of branches. The text says that this fat makes the fat of the kangaroos grow.<sup>49</sup> In this case, therefore, they do not confine themselves to spreading sacred dust or human blood; the animal itself is immolated—one can say sacrificed, placed on a kind of altar—and offered to the species whose life it must maintain.

We see now in what sense it is permissible to say that the Intichiuma contains the seeds of the sacrificial system. In the form it takes when fully constituted, sacrifice comprises two essential elements: an act of communion and an act of offering. The faithful commune with the god by ingesting a sacred food and simultaneously make an offering to this god. We find these two acts in the Intichiuma as just described. The only difference is that

<sup>47</sup>R. Smith himself cites such cases, *ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>48</sup>See for example Exodus, 29:10–14; Leviticus, 9:8–11; the priests of Baal let their own blood flow on the altar (I Kings 18:8). [Compare Exodus 39:13 with Durkheim's discussion of special treatment given to the liver, fat, and other parts of sacrificed animals. In I Kings 18:28, we learn about the Baal priests' encounter with Elijah, where Durkheim's claim that "there are no religions that are false" is dramatically contradicted. *Trans.*]

<sup>49</sup>Strehlow, *Aranda*, vol. III, p. 12, verse 7.

they are done simultaneously or immediately after one another in sacrifice proper,<sup>50</sup> whereas they are separated in the Australian ceremony. In the first case, they are part of one indivisible rite; in the second, they occur at different times and may even be separated by a rather long interval, but basically the mechanism is the same. Taken as a whole, the Intichiuma is a sacrifice, but one whose parts are not yet joined and organized.

This comparison has the twofold advantage of helping us understand the nature of both the Intichiuma and sacrifice better.

We understand the Intichiuma better. Indeed, the conception put forth by Frazer, who made it out to be simply a magical operation devoid of any religious character,<sup>51</sup> now seems untenable. To place outside religion a rite that appears to be the herald of such a great religious institution is unimaginable.

We also understand better what sacrifice itself is. In the first place, the equal importance of the two elements that enter into it is henceforth established. If the Australian makes offerings to his sacred beings, there is no basis at all for supposing that the idea of offering was foreign to the original organization of the sacrificial institution and disturbed its natural harmony. Smith's theory must be revised on this point.<sup>52</sup> Sacrifice is certainly a process of communion in part. But it is also, and no less fundamentally, a gift, an act of renunciation. It always presupposes that the worshipper relinquishes to the gods some part of his substance or his goods. Any attempt to reduce one of these elements to the other is pointless. Indeed, the offering may have more lasting effects than the communion.<sup>53</sup>

In the second place, it seems that sacrifice in general, and in particular the sacrificial offering, can be made only to personal beings. The offerings we have just encountered in Australia do not entail any such notion. In other words, sacrifice is independent of the variable forms in which religious forces are thought of; it has deeper causes, which we will examine below.

It is clear, however, that the act of offering naturally awakens in people the idea of a moral subject that the offering is meant to satisfy. The ritual acts

<sup>50</sup>At least, when it is performed in its entirety; in certain cases it can be reduced to only one of these elements.

<sup>51</sup>According to Strehlow [*Aranda*] vol. III, p. 9, the natives "regard these ceremonies as a sort of divine service, in the same way as the Christian regards the practices of his religion."

<sup>52</sup>It might be well to ask whether the sheddings of blood and offerings of hair that Smith sees as acts of communion are not typical offerings. (See Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, pp. 320ff.)

<sup>53</sup>The peculiar sacrifices, of which I will speak more specifically in Bk. 3, chap. 5, consist entirely of offerings. They serve as communions only secondarily.

I have described become easier to understand when they are believed to be addressed to persons. Thus, even while only bringing impersonal powers into play, the practices of the Intichiuma paved the way for a different conception.<sup>54</sup> To be sure, they could not have been sufficient to produce the idea of mythic personalities straightaway. But once formed, the idea was drawn into the cult by the very nature of the rites. At the same time, it became less abstract. As it interacted more directly with action and life, it took on greater reality by the same stroke. Thus we can believe that practice of the cult encouraged the personification of religious forces—in a secondary way, no doubt, but one that deserves notice.

## V

The contradiction that R. Smith saw as inadmissible, a piece of blatant illogic, must still be explained.

If sacred beings always manifested their powers in a perfectly equal manner, it would appear inconceivable that man should have dreamed of offering them favors. It is hard to see what they could have needed from him. But as long as they are merged with things and seen as cosmic principles of life, they are subject to its rhythm. That life unfolds through oscillations back and forth that succeed one another in accordance with a definite law. At some times, life affirms itself in all its splendor; at others, it fades so much that one wonders whether it will not end altogether. Every year, the plants die. Will they be reborn? The animal species tend to diminish through natural or violent death. Will they renew themselves in time, and as they should? Above all, the rain is uncertain, and for long periods it seems to have disappeared, never to return. What these weakenings of nature bear witness to is that, at the corresponding seasons, the sacred beings to which the animals, plants, rain, and so forth are subject pass through the same critical states, so they too have their periods of breakdown. Man can never take part in these spectacles as an indifferent watcher. If he is to live, life must continue universally, and therefore the gods must not die. He therefore seeks to support and aid them; and to do this, he puts at their service the forces he has at his disposal and mobilizes for that purpose. The blood flowing in his veins has fecundating virtues; he will

<sup>54</sup>This has caused these ceremonies often to be spoken of as though they were addressed to personal deities. (See, for example, a text of Krichauff and another of Kempe cited by [Richard] Eylmann, [*Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Süd Australien*, Berlin, D. Reumer, 1908], pp. 202–203.)



pour it out. He will draw upon the seeds of life that slumber in the sacred rocks that his clan possesses, and he will sow them in the wind. In a word, he will make offerings.

In addition, these external and physical crises go hand in hand with internal and mental crises that tend toward the same result. The sacred beings are sacred only because they are imagined as sacred. Let us stop believing in them, and they will be as if they were not. In this respect, even those that have a physical form, and are known to us through sense experience, depend on the thought of the faithful who venerate them. The sacredness that defines them as objects of the cult is not given in their natural makeup; it is superadded to them by belief. The kangaroo is only an animal, like any other; for the Kangaroo people, however, it contains a principle that sets it apart from other beings, and this principle exists only in the minds that think of it.<sup>55</sup> If, once conceived, the sacred beings did not need men in order to live, the representations that express them would have to remain the same. This stability is impossible. In actuality, it is in group life that these representations are formed, and group life is by nature intermittent. Of necessity, then, they share the same intermittence. They achieve their greatest intensity when the individuals are assembled and in direct relations with one another, at the moment when everyone communes in the same idea or emotion. Once the assembly is dissolved and each person has returned to his own existence, those representations lose more and more of their original energy. Overlaid little by little by the rising flood of day-to-day sensations, they would eventually disappear into the unconscious, unless we found some means of calling them back to consciousness and revitalizing them. Now they cannot weaken without the sacred beings' losing their reality, because the sacred beings exist only in and through their representations.\* If we think less hard about them, they count for less to us and we count less on them; they exist to a lesser degree. Thus, here again is a point of view from which the favors of men are necessary to them. This second reason to help them is even more important than the first, for it has existed from time immemorial. The intermittences of physical life affect religious beliefs only when religions are not yet detached from their cosmic magma. But the intermittences of social life are inevitable, and even the most idealistic religions can never escape them.

Moreover, it is because the gods are in this state of dependence on the

\*This sentence is missing from the Swain translation.

<sup>55</sup>In a philosophical sense, the same is true of anything, for things exist only through representation. But as I have shown (pp. 228–229), this proposition is doubly true of religious forces, because there is nothing in the makeup of things that corresponds to sacredness.

thought of man that man can believe his help to be efficacious. The only way to renew the collective representations that refer to sacred beings is to plunge them again into the very source of religious life: assembled groups. The emotions aroused by the periodic crises through which external things pass induce the men witnessing them to come together, so that they can see what it is best to do. But by the very fact of being assembled, they comfort one another; they find the remedy because they seek it together. The shared faith comes to life again quite naturally in the midst of reconstituted collectivity. It is reborn because it finds itself once again in the same conditions in which it was first born. Once it is restored, it easily overcomes all the private doubts that had managed to arise in individual minds. The mental image\* of the sacred things regains strength sufficient to withstand the inward or external causes that tended to weaken it. Despite the obvious failures, one can no longer believe that the gods will die, because they are felt to live again in the depths of one's own self. No matter how crude the techniques used to help the gods, they cannot seem unavailing, because everything happens as if they really were working. People are more confident because they feel stronger, and they are stronger in reality because the strength that was flagging has been reawakened in their consciences.

It is necessary, then, to refrain from believing, with Smith, that the cult was instituted only for the benefit of men and that the gods have no use for it. They still need it as much as their faithful do. No doubt, the men could not live without the gods; but on the other hand, the gods would die if they were not worshipped. Thus the purpose of the cult is not only to bring the profane into communion with sacred beings but also to keep the sacred beings alive, to remake and regenerate them perpetually. To be sure, the material offerings do not produce this remaking through their own virtues but through mental states that reawaken and accompany these doings, which are empty in themselves. The true *raison d'être* of even those cults that are most materialistic in appearance is not to be sought in the actions they prescribe but in the inward and moral renewal that the actions help to bring about. What the worshipper in reality gives his god is not the food he places on the altar or the blood that he causes to flow from his veins: It is his thought. Nevertheless, there remains a mutually reinforcing exchange of good deeds between the deity and his worshippers. The rule *do ut des*,<sup>†</sup> by which the principle of sacrifice has sometimes been defined, is not a recent invention

\*Durkheim said *image*, which here refers to a mental, rather than a physical, representation.

<sup>†</sup>I give in order that you might give.

by utilitarian theorists; it simply makes explicit the mechanics of the sacrificial system itself and, more generally, that of the whole positive cult. Thus, the circle Smith pointed out is quite real, but nothing about it offends the intelligence. It arises from the fact that although sacred beings are superior to men, they can live only in human consciousnesses.

But if, pressing the analysis further and substituting for the religious symbols the realities they express, we inquire into the way those realities behave within the rite, this circle will seem to us even more natural, and we will better understand its sense and purpose. If, as I have tried to establish, the sacred principle is nothing other than society hypostasized and transfigured, it should be possible to interpret ritual life in secular and social terms. Like ritual life, social life in fact moves in a circle. On the one hand, the individual gets the best part of himself from society—all that gives him a distinctive character and place among other beings, his intellectual and moral culture. Let language, sciences, arts, and moral beliefs be taken from man, and he falls to the rank of animality; therefore the distinctive attributes of human nature come to us from society. On the other hand, however, society exists and lives only in and through individuals. Let the idea of society be extinguished in individual minds, let the beliefs, traditions, and aspirations of the collectivity be felt and shared by individuals no longer, and the society will die. Thus we can repeat about society what was previously said about the deity: It has reality only to the extent that it has a place in human consciousnesses, and that place is made for society by us. We now glimpse the profound reason why the gods can no more do without their faithful than the faithful can do without their gods. It is that society, of which the gods are only the symbolic expression, can no more do without individuals than individuals can do without society.

Here we touch the solid rock on which all the cults are built and that has made them endure as long as human societies have. When we see what the rites are made of and what they seem to be directed toward, we wonder with astonishment how men could have arrived at the idea and, especially, how they remained attached to it so faithfully. Where could they have gotten the illusion that, with a few grains of sand thrown to the wind or a few drops of blood poured on a rock or on the stone of an altar, the life of an animal species or a god could be maintained? When, from beneath these outward and seemingly irrational doings, we have uncovered a mental mechanism that gives them sense and moral import, we have made a step toward solving this problem. But nothing assures us that the mechanism itself is anything but a play of hallucinatory images. I have indeed shown what psychological processes make the faithful think that the rite makes the spiritual forces they

need come to life again around them; but from the fact that it can be explained psychologically does not follow that this belief has objective value. To have a sound basis for seeing the efficacy that is imputed to the rites as something other than offspring of a chronic delusion with which humanity deceives itself, it must be possible to establish that the effect of the cult is periodically to recreate a moral being on which we depend, as it depends upon us. Now, this being exists: It is society.

In fact, if religious ceremonies have any importance at all, it is that they set collectivity in motion; groups come together to celebrate them. Thus their first result is to bring individuals together, multiply the contacts between them, and make those contacts more intimate. That in itself modifies the content of the consciousnesses. On ordinary days, the mind is chiefly occupied with utilitarian and individualistic affairs. Everyone goes about his own personal business; for most people, what is most important is to meet the demands of material life; the principal motive of economic activity has always been private interest. Of course, social feelings could not be absent altogether. We remain in relationship with our fellow men; the habits, ideas, and tendencies that upbringing has stamped on us, and that ordinarily preside over our relations with others, continue to make their influence felt. But they are constantly frustrated and held in check by the opposing tendencies that the requirements of the day-in, day-out struggle produce and perpetuate. Depending on the intrinsic energy of those social feelings, they hold up more or less successfully; but that energy is not renewed. They live on their past, and, in consequence, they would in time be depleted if nothing came to give back a little of the strength they lose through this incessant conflict and friction.

When the Australians hunt or fish in scattered small groups, they lose sight of what concerns their clan or tribe. They think only of taking as much game as possible. On feast days, however, these concerns are overshadowed obligatorily; since they are in essence profane, they are shut out of sacred periods. What then occupies the mind are the beliefs held in common: the memories of great ancestors, the collective ideal the ancestors embody—in short, social things. Even the material interests that the great religious ceremonies aim to satisfy are public and hence social. The whole society has an interest in an abundant harvest, in timely rain that is not excessive, and in the normal reproduction of the animals. Hence it is society that is foremost in every consciousness and that dominates and directs conduct, which amounts to saying that at such times it is even more alive, more active, and thus more real than at profane times. And so when men feel there is something outside

themselves that is reborn, forces that are reanimated, and a life that reawakens, they are not deluded. This renewal is in no way imaginary, and the individuals themselves benefit from it, for the particle of social being that each individual bears within himself necessarily participates in this collective remaking. The individual soul itself is also regenerated, by immersing itself once more in the very wellspring of its life. As a result, that soul feels stronger, more mistress of itself, and less dependent upon physical necessities.

We know that the positive cult tends naturally to take on periodic forms; this is one of its distinguishing traits. Of course, there are rites that man celebrates occasionally, to deal with temporary situations. But these episodic practices never play more than a secondary role, even in the religions we are studying in this book. The essence of the cult is the cycle of feasts that are regularly repeated at definite times. We are now in a position to understand where that impulse toward periodicity comes from. The rhythm that religious life obeys only expresses, and results from, the rhythm of social life. Society cannot revitalize the awareness it has of itself unless it assembles, but it cannot remain continuously in session. The demands of life do not permit it to stay in congregation indefinitely, so it disperses, only to reassemble anew when it again feels the need. It is to these necessary alternations that the regular alternation of sacred and profane time responds. Because at least the manifest function of the cult is initially to regularize the course of natural phenomena, the rhythm of cosmic life set its mark upon the rhythm of ritual life. Hence, for a long time the feasts were seasonal; we have observed that such was already a trait of the Australian Intichiuma. But the seasons merely provided the external framework of this organization, not the principle on which it rests, for even the cults that have exclusively spiritual ends have remained periodic. The reason is that this periodicity has different causes. Because the seasonal changes are critical periods for nature, they are a natural occasion for gatherings and thus for religious ceremonies. But other events could play, and have in fact played, the role of occasional causes. Yet it must be acknowledged that this framework, although purely external, has shown remarkable endurance, for its vestige is still found in the religions that are furthest removed from any physical basis. Several Christian feasts are bound with unbroken continuity to the pastoral and agricultural feasts of the ancient Israelites, even though they are neither pastoral nor agricultural any longer.

The form of this cycle is apt to vary from one society to another. Where the period of dispersion is long or the dispersion very great, the period of

congregation is prolonged in turn, and there are veritable orgies of collective and religious life. Feasts come one after the other for weeks or months, and ritual life sometimes rises to outright frenzy. This is true of the Australian tribes and of several societies in the American North and Northwest.<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere, by contrast, these two phases of social life follow one another more closely, and the contrast between them is less marked. The more societies develop, the less is their tolerance for interruptions that are too pronounced.

<sup>56</sup>See Mauss, *Essai sur les variations saisonnières des sociétés Eskimos*, in *AS*, vol. IX [1906], pp. 96ff.

## THE POSITIVE CULT (CONTINUED)

### *Mimetic Rites and the Principle of Causality*

The techniques just discussed are not the only ones used to bring about the fertility of the totemic species. Others with the same purpose either accompany them or take their place.

#### I

In the same ceremonies I have described, various rites apart from blood or other sacrifices are often performed to supplement or reinforce the effects of those practices. They are composed of movements and cries intended to mimic the behavior or traits of the animal whose reproduction is hoped for. For this reason, I call them *mimetic*.

Among the Arunta, the Witchetty Grub Intichiuma involves more than the rites that are carried out on the sacred rocks, as discussed above. Once those have been completed, the participants start back toward the camp. When they are no more than about a mile away from it, they call a halt and decorate themselves ritually, after which they continue their march. Their adornment announces that an important ceremony is to come. And so it does. While the detachment was away, one of the elders left on guard at the camp has built a shelter out of long, narrow branches; it is called the *Umbana* and represents the chrysalis from which the insect emerges. All those who have taken part in the earlier ceremonies gather near the place where this structure has been put up; then they slowly advance, stopping from time to time until they reach the *Umbana*, which they enter. Immediately, all those who do not belong to the phratry to which the Witchetty Grub totem belongs (but who are on the scene, though at a distance) lie face down on the ground; they must stay in this posture until they are given permission to get

up. During this time, a hymn rises from within the Umbana. It recounts the various phases the animal goes through in the course of his development and the myths concerning the sacred rocks. At the end of this hymn, the Alatonja glides out of the Umbana and, still crouching, slowly advances on the ground in front of it. He is followed by all his companions, who imitate his gestures. They apparently mean to portray the insect as it emerges from the chrysalis. The singing that is heard at the same moment, a kind of oral commentary on the rite, is in fact a description of the movements the animal makes at this stage of its development.<sup>1</sup>

In another Intichiuma,<sup>2</sup> celebrated à propos of another sort of grub, the *unchalka*<sup>3</sup> grub, this characteristic is even more pronounced. The participants in the rite adorn themselves with designs representing the unchalka bush, on which this grub lives at the beginning of its life; then they cover a shield with concentric circles of down that represent another kind of bush on which the adult insect lays its eggs. When these preparations are complete, everyone sits on the ground in a semicircle facing the principal celebrant. The celebrant alternately curves his body in two by bending toward the ground and rising on his knees; at the same time, he shakes his outspread arms, a way of representing the wings of the insect. From time to time, he leans over the shield, imitating the manner in which the butterfly hovers over the shrubs in which it lays its eggs. When this ceremony is over, another begins at a different place, to which they go in silence. This time, two shields are used. On one, the tracks of the grub are represented by zigzag lines; on the other are concentric circles of unequal size, some representing the eggs of the insect and the others the seeds of the eremophile bush, on which it feeds. As in the first ceremony, everyone sits in silence while the celebrant moves about, imitating the movements of the animal when it leaves the chrysalis and struggles to take flight.

Spencer and Gillen point out a few more practices from among the Arunta, which are similar but of lesser importance. For example, in the Intichiuma of the Emu, the participants at a given moment try to copy the gait and appearance of this bird in their own behavior;<sup>4</sup> in an Intichiuma of the

<sup>1</sup>[Sir Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, London, Macmillan, 1899], p. 176.

<sup>2</sup>[Sir Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, London, Macmillan, 1904], p. 179. It is true that Spencer and Gillen do not say explicitly that the ceremony is an Intichiuma, but the context leaves no doubt about the meaning of the rite.

<sup>3</sup>In the index of names of totems, Spencer and Gillen spell it *Untjalka* (*Northern Tribes*, p. 772).

<sup>4</sup>[Spencer and Gillen], *Native Tribes*, p. 182.



Water, the men of the totem make the characteristic cry of the plover, a cry that in their minds is associated with the rainy season.<sup>5</sup> But all in all, these two explorers noted rather few instances of mimetic rites. It is certain, however, that their relative silence on this point arises either from the fact that they did not observe enough Intichiumas or that they overlooked this aspect of the ceremonies. Schulze, on the other hand, was struck by the extremely mimetic character of the Arunta rites. "The sacred corroborrees," he says, "are for the most part ceremonies that represent animals"; he calls them "animal tjurungas,"<sup>6</sup> and the documents Strehlow collected have corroborated his reporting. In Strehlow's work, the examples are so numerous that it is impossible to cite them all; there are virtually no ceremonies in which some imitative gesture is not noted. According to the nature of the totems whose feast is celebrated, they jump in the manner of kangaroos and imitate the movements kangaroos make when eating. They imitate the flight of winged ants, the characteristic noise the bat makes, the cry of the wild turkey and that of the eagle, the hissing of the snake, the croaking of the frog, and so forth.<sup>7</sup> When the totem is a plant, they gesture as though picking<sup>8</sup> or eating<sup>9</sup> it, for example.

Among the Warramunga, the Intichiuma generally takes a very unusual form (described in the next chapter) that differs from those studied up to now. Nonetheless, a typical case of a purely mimetic Intichiuma exists among this people: that of the White Cockatoo. The ceremony Spencer and Gillen described began at ten at night. All night long, the head of the clan imitated the cry of the bird with distressing monotony. He stopped only when he had used up all his strength and was replaced by his son; then he began again as soon as he felt a little rested. These exhausting exercises continued without break until morning.<sup>10</sup>

Living beings are not the only ones they try to imitate. In a large number of tribes, the Intichiuma of the Rain basically consists of imitative rites. That celebrated among the Urabunna is one of the simplest. The head of the

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>6</sup>[Rev. Louis] Schulze, "Aborigines of the Upper and Middle Finke River," *RSSA*, vol. XIV [1891], p. 221; cf. p. 243.

<sup>7</sup>[Carl] Strehlow, [*Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien*, Frankfurt, J. Baer, 1907], vol. III, pp. 11, 84, 31, 36, 37, 68, 72.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 81, 100, 112, 115.

<sup>10</sup>[Spencer and Gillen], *Northern Tribes*, p. 310.

clan is seated on the ground, decorated in white down and holding a lance. He moves every which way, probably to shake off the down that is attached to his body and represents the clouds when they are dispersed in the air. In that way, he imitates the great Alcheringa man-clouds that, according to legend, had the habit of rising to the sky to form the clouds from which the rain then came back to earth. In short, the object of the entire rite is to depict the formation and ascent of the rain-bearing clouds.<sup>11</sup>

Among the Kaitish, the ceremony is much more complex. I have already noted one of the means employed: The celebrant pours water on the sacred stones and on himself. Other rites strengthen the effect this sort of offering has. The rainbow is thought to be closely connected to the rain. It is the son, the Kaitish say, and it is always in a hurry to come out and stop the rain. So if the rain is to fall, the rainbow must not appear. They think they can get this result in the following way. On a shield they draw a design representing the rainbow. They take this shield to camp, carefully keeping it hidden from all eyes. They are convinced that, in making this image of the rainbow invisible, they are preventing the appearance of the rainbow itself. Meanwhile, with a pitchi full of water at his side, the head of the clan throws tufts of white down, representing the clouds, in all directions. Repeated imitations of the plover's cry round out the ceremony, which seems to have special solemnity. For as long as it lasts, those who participate in it, whether as actors or as members of the congregation, must have no contact with their wives, not even to speak with them.<sup>12</sup>

The methods of depiction are not the same among the Dieri. The rain is depicted not by water but by blood, which men cause to flow from their veins onto those in attendance.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, they throw handfuls of white down, which symbolize the clouds. Into a hut that has been built ahead of time, they place two large stones that represent the banking up of clouds, a sign of rain. Having left them there for a time, they move the stones a certain distance away and place them as far up as possible on the tallest tree they can find. This is a way of making the clouds mount into the sky. Some powdered gypsum is thrown into a water hole, at the sight of which the rain

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 285–286. It may be that the movements of the lance are to pierce the clouds.

<sup>12</sup>[Spencer and Gillen] *Northern Tribes*, pp. 294–296. On the other hand, interestingly enough, among the Anula, the rainbow is held to bring about rain. (Ibid., p. 314.)

<sup>13</sup>The same procedure is used among the Arunta (Strehlow, *Aranda*, vol. III, p. 132). True, the question arises whether this shedding of blood might not be an offering for the purpose of bringing forth the principles that produce rain. However, Gason says emphatically that it is a way of imitating the falling rain.

spirit immediately makes clouds appear. Finally everyone, young and old, come together around the hut and, with their heads down, rush toward it. They pass violently through it, repeating the movement several times, until the only part of the structure that remains standing is its supporting posts. Then they attack the posts as well, shaking and tearing at them until the whole structure collapses. The operation of piercing the hut all over is intended to represent the clouds parting; and the collapse of its structure, the falling of the rain.<sup>14</sup>

Among the tribes of the northwest studied by Clement,<sup>15</sup> which occupy the territory between the Fortescue and Fitzroy rivers, there are ceremonies conducted for exactly the same purpose as the Intichiumas of the Arunta and that seem in the main to be essentially mimetic.

Among these peoples, the name *tarlow* is given to piles of stones that are apparently sacred because, as we will see, they are the object of important rites. Each animal and plant—each totem or subtotem<sup>16</sup>—is represented by a tarlow, of which a specific<sup>17</sup> clan is the custodian. The similarity between these tarlows and the sacred stones of the Arunta is easy to see.

When kangaroos are scarce, for example, the head of the clan to which the tarlow of the kangaroos belongs goes to the tarlow with some of his companions. There they execute various rites. The principal ones consist of jumping around the tarlow as the kangaroos jump and drinking as they drink—in short, imitating their most characteristic movements. The weapons used in hunting the animal play an important role in these rites. They are brandished, thrown against the stones, and so forth. When it is a matter of emus, they go to the tarlow of the emus; they walk and run as those birds do. The cleverness that the natives display in these imitations is apparently quite remarkable.

Other tarlows are dedicated to plants—grass seeds, for example. In this

<sup>14</sup>[S.] Gason, "The Dieyerie Tribe," in [Edward Micklethwaite Curr, *The Australian Race: Its Origin, Languages, Customs, Place of Landing in Australia and the Routes by Which It Spread Itself over That Continent*, Melbourne, J. Ferres, 1886–1887], vol. II, pp. 66–68; [Alfred William] Howitt (*The Native Tribes [of South-east Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1904], pp. 798–800) mentions another Dieri rite to get rain.

<sup>15</sup>[E.] Clement, "Ethnographical Notes on the Western-Australian Aborigines [with a Descriptive Catalogue of Ethnographical Objects from Western Australia]," in *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, vol. XVI [1903], pp. 6–7. Cf. Withnal, *Marriage Rites and Relationship*, in [*Science of*] *Man: [Australasian Anthropological Journal]*, vol. VI, 1903, p. 42.

<sup>16</sup>I assume that a subtotem can have a tarlow because, according to Clement, certain clans have several totems.

<sup>17</sup>Clement says a tribal family.

case, the techniques used in winnowing or milling those seeds are mimed. And since, in ordinary life, it is women who are ordinarily responsible for such tasks, it is also they who perform the rite amid songs and dances.

## II

All of these rites belong to the same category. The principle on which they are based is one of those on which what is commonly (and improperly<sup>18</sup>) called sympathetic magic is based.

This principle may usually be subdivided into two.<sup>19</sup>

The first can be stated in this way: *Whatever touches an object also touches everything that has any relationship of proximity or solidarity with that object.* Thus, whatever affects the part affects the whole; any force exerted on an individual is transmitted to his neighbors, his kin, and everything with which he is united in any way at all. All these cases are simply applications of the law of contagion, which we studied earlier. A good or bad state or quality is transmitted contagiously from one subject to another that has any relationship with the first.

The second principle is usually summarized in this formula: *Like produces like.* The depiction of a being or a state produces that being or state. This is the maxim that the rites just described put into operation, and its characteristic traits can be grasped best when they occur. The classic example of bewitchment, which is generally presented as the typical application of this same precept, is much less significant. Indeed, the phenomenon in bewitchment is largely a mere transfer. The idea of the image is associated in the mind with the idea of the model. As a result, the effects of any action on the statuette are passed on contagiously to the person whose traits it mimics. In relation to the original, the image plays the role of the part in relation to the whole; it is an agent of transmission. Thus it is believed that one can obtain the same result by burning the hair of the person one wants to get at. The only difference between these two kinds of operation is that, in one, the communication is done by means of similarity, and in the other, by means of contiguity.

The rites that concern us are a different case. They presuppose not

<sup>18</sup>I will explain the nature of this impropriety below (p. 517).

<sup>19</sup>On this classification see [James George] Frazer, *Lectures on the Early History of Kingship*, [London, Macmillan, 1905], pp. 37ff.; [Henri] Hubert and [Marcel] Mauss, ["Esquisse d'une] théorie générale de la magie," *AS*, vol. VII, 1904], pp. 61ff.

merely the passage of a given state or quality from one object into another but the creation of something altogether new. The very act of depicting the animal gives birth to that animal and creates it—in imitating the noise of the wind or the falling water, one causes the clouds to form and dissolve into rain, and so forth. In both kinds of rites, resemblance undoubtedly has a role but a very different one. In bewitchment, resemblance only guides the force exerted in a particular way; it orients a power that is not its own in a certain direction. In the rites just considered, it acts by itself and is directly efficacious. Besides, contrary to the usual definitions, what really differentiates the two principles of the magic called sympathetic and its corresponding practices is not that contiguity acts in some cases and resemblance in others, but that, in the first, there is merely contagious communication and, in the second, production and creation.<sup>20</sup>

Thus to explain the mimetic rites is to explain the second of these principles, and vice versa.

I will not tarry long over the explanation that the anthropological school has put forward, notably Tylor and Frazer. They call upon the association of ideas, just as they do to account for the contagiousness of the sacred. "Homeopathic magic," says Frazer, who prefers this term to that of "mimetic magic," "rests on the association of ideas by similarity, and contagious magic on the association of ideas by contiguity. Homeopathic magic errs by taking things that resemble one another as identical."<sup>21</sup> But this is to misunderstand the specific character of the practices under discussion. From one point of view, Frazer's formula could be applied somewhat justifiably to the case of bewitchment.<sup>22</sup> In that context, it actually is two distinct things—the image and the model it represents more or less schematically—that are assimilated to one another because of their partial resemblance. But only the image is given in the mimetic rites we have just studied, and as for the model, there is none, since the new generation of the totemic species is still no more than a hope, and an uncertain hope at that. Thus there can be no question of assimilation, mistaken or not; there is creation, in the full sense of the word, and how the association of ideas could ever lead one to believe in this cre-

<sup>20</sup>I say nothing about the so-called law of contrariety. As Hubert and Mauss have shown, the contrary produces its contrary only by means of its like (*Théorie générale de la magie*, p. 70).

<sup>21</sup>[Frazer], *Lectures on the Early History of Kingship*, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup>It is applicable in the sense that there really is an amalgamation of the statuette and the person bewitched. But this amalgamation is far from being a mere product of the association of ideas by similarity. As I have shown, the true determining cause of the phenomenon is the contagiousness that is characteristic of religious forces.

ation is not clear. How could the mere fact of representing the movements of an animal produce certainty that the animal will be reborn in abundance?

The general properties of human nature cannot explain such odd practices. Instead of considering the principle on which they rest in its general and abstract form, let us put it back into the moral milieu to which it belongs and in which we have just observed it. Let us reconnect it with the set of ideas and feelings that are the origin of the rites in which it is applied, and we will be in a better position to discern its causes.

The men who gather for these rites believe they really are animals or plants of the species whose name they bear. They are conscious of an animal or plant nature, and in their eyes that nature constitutes what is most essential and most excellent about themselves. When they are assembled, then, their first act must be to affirm to one another this quality that they ascribe to themselves and by which they define themselves. The totem is their rallying sign. For this reason, as we have seen, they draw it on their bodies, and they try to emulate it by their gestures, cries, and carriage. Since they are emus or kangaroos, they will behave like the animals of the same name. By this means, they witness to one another that they are members of the same moral community, and they take cognizance of the kinship that unites them. The rite not only expresses this kinship but also makes or remakes it, for this kinship exists only insofar as it is believed, and the effect of all these collective demonstrations is to keep alive the beliefs on which it rests. So although these jumps, cries, and movements of all kinds are bizarre and grotesque in appearance, in reality they have a meaning that is human and profound. The Australian seeks to resemble his totem just as the adherent of more advanced religions seeks to resemble his God. For both, this is a means of communing with the sacred, that is, with the collective ideal that the sacred symbolizes. It is an early form of the ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ.\*

Still, this first cause applies to what is most specific to the totemic beliefs, and if it was the only cause, the principle of like produces like would not have lived beyond totemism. Since there is perhaps no religion in which rites derived from it are not to be found, another cause must have combined with that one.

In fact, the very general purpose of the ceremonies in which we have seen it applied is not only the one I have just mentioned, fundamental though it is, for they also have a more immediate and conscious purpose: to bring about the reproduction of the totemic species. The idea of this neces-

\*Imitation of God.

sary reproduction haunts the minds of the faithful; they concentrate the force of their attention and will on this goal. Now a single concern cannot haunt an entire group of men to that extent and not become externalized in tangible form. Since all are thinking of an animal or plant to whose destinies the clan is allied, this thinking in common is inevitably manifested outwardly by movements, and the ones most singled out for this role are those that represent the animal or plant in one of its most characteristic forms. There are no movements that as closely resemble the idea that fills consciousnesses at that moment, since they are its direct and almost automatic translation. The people do their best to imitate the animal; they cry out like it; they jump like it; they mimic the settings in which the plant is daily used. All of these processes of representation are so many ways of outwardly marking the goal to which everyone aspires and of saying, calling on, and imagining the thing they want to bring about.<sup>23</sup> Nor is this the need of any one era or caused by the beliefs of any one religion. It is quintessentially human. This is why, even in religions very different from the one we are studying, once the faithful are gathered together to ask their gods for an outcome that they fervently desire, they are virtually compelled to depict it. To be sure, speech is one means of expressing it, but movement is no less natural. Springing from the body just as spontaneously, it comes even before speech or, in any case, at the same time.

But even if we can thus understand how these movements found their way into the ceremony, we must still explain the power that is ascribed to them. If the Australian repeats them regularly at each new season, it is because he thinks they are required for the success of the rite. Where could he have gotten the idea that imitating an animal makes it reproduce?

Such an obvious error seems barely intelligible so long as we see in the rite only the physical purpose it apparently has. But we know that apart from its presumed effect on the totemic species, it has a profound influence on the souls of the faithful who take part. The faithful come away from it with an impression of well-being whose causes they do not see clearly but that is well founded. They feel that the ceremony is good for them; and in it they do indeed remake their moral being. How would this kind of euphoria not make them feel that the rite has succeeded, that it actually was what it set out to be, that it achieved its intended goal? And since the reproduction of the totemic species is the only goal that is consciously pursued, it seems to be achieved by the methods used, the efficacy of which stands thereby demonstrated. In this way, men came to ascribe creative virtues to movements that

<sup>23</sup>On the causes of this outward manifestation, see above, pp. 231ff.

are empty in themselves. The power of the rite over minds, \* which is real, made them believe in its power over things, which is imaginary; the efficacy of the whole led men to believe in that of each part, taken separately. The genuinely useful effects brought about by the ceremony as a whole are tantamount to an experimental justification of the elementary practices that comprise it, though in reality all these practices are in no way indispensable to its success. Moreover, the fact that they can be replaced by others of a very different nature, without change in the final result, proves that they do not act by themselves. Indeed, it seems there are Intichiumas made up of offerings only and without mimetic rites; others are purely mimetic and without offerings. Nevertheless, both are thought to be equally efficacious. Thus if value is attached to these various manipulations, it is not because of value intrinsic to them but because they are part of a complex rite whose overall utility is felt.

We can understand that way of thinking all the more easily since we can observe it in our midst. Especially among the most cultivated peoples and milieux, we often come upon believers<sup>†</sup> [*croiyants*] who, while having doubts about the specific power ascribed by dogma to each rite taken separately, nonetheless persist in their religious practice. They are not certain that the details of the prescribed observances can be rationally justified, but they feel that it would be impossible to emancipate themselves from those without falling into moral disarray, from which they recoil. Thus the very fact that faith has lost its intellectual roots among them reveals the profound causes that underlie it. This is why the faithful [*fidèles*] are in general left indifferent by the facile criticisms that a simplistic rationalism has sometimes leveled against ritual prescriptions. The true justification of religious practices is not in the apparent ends they pursue but in their invisible influence over consciousnesses and in their manner of affecting our states of mind. Similarly, when preachers undertake to make a convert, they focus less upon directly establishing, with systematic evidence, the truth of some particular proposition or the usefulness of such and such observance, than upon awakening or reawakening the sense of moral support that regular celebration of the cult provides. In this way, they create a predisposition toward believing that goes in advance of proof, influences the intellect to pass over the inadequacy of

\* *L'efficacité morale du rite, qui est réelle, a fait croire à son efficacité physique, qui est imaginaire.* . . . Here the term "moral" refers to mind as opposed to matter.

<sup>†</sup>Durkheim here uses the term *croiyants* in contrast with *fidèles*, used twice as often. Professor Douglas Kibbee was kind enough to give me an exact count, plus the exact contexts, using his database searcher. Personal communication, 4 May 1992.



the logical arguments, and leads it to go, as if on its own, beyond the propositions the preachers want to get it to accept. This favorable prejudice, this leap toward believing, is precisely what faith is made of; and it is faith that gives the rites authority in the eyes of the believer—no matter who he is, the Christian or the Australian. The Christian is superior only in his greater awareness of the psychic process from which belief results. He knows that salvation comes “by faith alone.”

Because such is the origin of faith, it is in a sense “impervious to experience.”<sup>24</sup> If the periodic failures of the Intichiuma do not shake the confidence the Australian has in his rite, it is because he holds with all the strength of his soul to those practices he comes to for the purpose of renewing himself periodically. He could not possibly deny them in principle without causing a real upheaval of his entire being, which resists. But however great that resistance might be, it does not radically distinguish the religious mentality from the other forms of human mentality, even from those other forms that we are most in the habit of opposing to it. In this regard, the mentality of the savant differs only in degree from the foregoing. When a scientific law has the authority of numerous and varied experiments, to reject it too easily upon discovery of one single fact that seems to contradict it is contrary to all method. It is still necessary to ensure that this fact has only one interpretation and cannot be accounted for without abandoning the proposition that seems discredited. The Australian does no differently when he puts down the failure of an Intichiuma to evildoing somewhere, or the abundance of a harvest that comes too soon to some mystic Intichiuma celebrated in the beyond.

He has even less grounds for doubting his rite on the strength of a contrary fact, since its value is, or seems to be, established by a larger number of facts that accord with it. To begin with, the moral efficacy of the ceremony is real and directly felt by all who take part; therein is a constantly repeated experience whose import no contradictory experience can weaken. What is more, physical efficacy itself finds at least apparent confirmation in the results of objective observation. It is in fact normal for the totemic species to reproduce itself regularly. Thus, in the great majority of cases, everything happens as if the ritual movements truly have brought about the hoped-for results. Failures are not the rule. Not surprisingly, since the rites, especially the periodic ones, demand only that nature take its regular course, it seems most often to obey them. In this way, if the believer happens to seem resistant to certain lessons from experience, he does so by relying on other experiences

<sup>24</sup>[Lucien] Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* [Paris, F. Alcan, 1910], pp. 61–68.

that seem to him more conclusive. The researcher does this more methodically but acts no differently.

Thus magic is not, as Frazer held,<sup>25</sup> a primary datum and religion only its derivative. Quite the contrary, the precepts on which the magician's art rests were formed under the influence of religious ideas, and only by a secondary extension were they turned to purely secular applications. Because all the forces of the universe were conceived on the model of sacred forces, the contagiousness inherent in the sacred forces was extended to them all, and it was believed that, under certain conditions, all the properties of bodies could transmit themselves contagiously. Similarly, once the principle that like produces like took form to satisfy definite religious needs, it became detached from its ritual origins and, through a kind of spontaneous generalization, became a law of nature.<sup>26</sup> To comprehend these fundamental axioms of magic, we must resituate them in the religious milieu in which they were born and which alone permits us to account for them. When we see those axioms as the work of isolated individuals, lone magicians, we wonder how human minds imagined them, since nothing in experience could have suggested or verified them. In particular, we cannot understand how such a deceptive craft could have abused men's trust for so long. The problem disappears if the faith men have in magic is only a special case of religious faith in general, if it is itself the product, or at least the indirect product, of a collective effervescence. In other words, using the phrase "sympathetic magic" to denote the collection of practices just discussed is not altogether improper. Although there are sympathetic rites, they are not peculiar to magic. Not only are they found in religion as well, but it is from religion that magic received them. Thus, all we do is court confusion if, by the name we give those rites, we seem to make them out to be something specifically magical.

Hence the results of my analysis strongly resemble those Hubert and Mauss obtained when they studied magic directly.<sup>27</sup> They showed magic to be something altogether different from crude industry, based on crude science. They have brought to light a whole background of religious conceptions that lie behind the apparently secular mechanisms used by the ma-

<sup>25</sup>[James George Frazer], *Golden Bough*, 2d. ed. vol. I [London, Macmillan, 1894], pp. 69–75.

<sup>26</sup>I do not mean to say that there was a time when religion existed without magic. Probably, as religion was formed, certain of its principles were extended to nonreligious relations, and in this way, a more or less developed magic came to complement it. Even if these two systems of ideas and practices do not correspond to distinct historical phases, nevertheless there is a definite relationship of derivation between them. This is all I have set out to establish.

<sup>27</sup>[Mauss and Hubert, *Théorie générale de la magie*], pp. 108ff. [Actually, pp. 131–187. Trans.]

gician, a whole world of forces the idea of which magic took from religion. We can now see why magic is so full of religious elements: It was born out of religion.

### III

The principle just explained does not have a merely ritual function; it is of direct interest to the theory of knowledge. In effect, it is a concrete statement of the law of causality and, in all likelihood, one of the earliest statements of it ever to have existed. A full-fledged notion of the causal relation is implied in the power thus attributed to "like produces like." And because it serves as the basis of cult practices as well as the magician's technique, this conception bestrides primitive thought. Thus, the origins of the precept on which mimetic rites rest can explain how the principle of causality originated. The one should help us understand the other. I have just shown that the first arises from social causes. It has been fashioned by groups with collective ends in view, and collective feelings express it. Thus we may presume that the same is true of the second.

To verify whether this is indeed the origin of the elements from which the principle of causality is made, it is enough to analyze the principle itself.

First and foremost, the idea of causal relation implies efficacy, effective power, or active force. We usually understand "cause" to mean "that which is able to produce a definite change." Cause is force before it has manifested the power that is in it. Effect is the same power, but actualized. Humanity has always imagined causality in dynamic terms. To be sure, some philosophers deny this conception any objective basis; they see it only as an arbitrary construct of imagination that relates to nothing in things. For the moment, however, we do not have to ask ourselves whether it has a basis in reality; noticing that it exists and that it constitutes, and has always constituted, an element of ordinary thought (as is acknowledged even by those who criticize it) is enough. Our immediate purpose is to find out not what causality amounts to logically but what accounts for it.

It has social causes. The analysis of the evidence has already permitted us to show that, in prototype, the idea of force was *mana*, *wakan*, the totemic principle—various names given to collective force objectified and projected into things.<sup>28</sup> So the first power that men imagined as such does indeed appear to have been that which society exerts upon its members. Analysis later confirms this result of observation. Indeed, it is possible to establish why this

<sup>28</sup>See above, p. 205ff.

idea of power, of efficacy and of active force, could not have come to us from anywhere else.

It is obvious at first glance, and recognized by all, that external experience cannot possibly give us this idea. The senses show us only phenomena that coexist with or follow one another, but nothing they perceive can give us the idea of that constraining and determinative influence that is characteristic of what we call a power or a force. The senses take in only states that are realized, achieved, and external to one another, while the internal process that binds these states together eludes the senses. Nothing they teach us can possibly suggest to us the idea of something that is an influence or an efficacy. For just this reason, the philosophers of empiricism have seen these different ideas as so many mythological aberrations. But even supposing that there was nothing but hallucinations in all these, it would still behoove us to say how they came to be.

If external experience has no part in the origin of these ideas and if, on the other hand, it is inadmissible that they should have been given us ready-made, we must assume that they come to us from internal experience. In fact, the idea of force is obviously full of spiritual elements that could only have been borrowed from our psychic life.

It has often been thought that the act by which our will comes to a decision, holds our desires in check, and rules our bodies could have served as the model for this construction. In an act of will, it is said, we directly perceive ourselves as a power in action. Seemingly, therefore, once man came upon that idea, extending it to things was all it took for the concept of force to come into being.

As long as the animist theory passed for demonstrated truth, that explanation could seem confirmed by history. If the forces with which human thought at first populated the world really had been spirits—that is, personal and conscious beings more or less like man—we might believe that our individual experience was enough to furnish us with the elements from which the idea of force is made. Instead, we know that the first forces men imagined are anonymous, vague, diffuse forces, the impersonality of which resembles cosmic forces, and which therefore stand in the strongest contrast with the eminently personal power that is the human will. Hence they could not have been conceived in the image of the will.

Moreover, there is a fundamental characteristic of impersonal forces that would be inexplicable on that hypothesis: their communicability. The forces of nature have always been conceived of as being able to pass from one object into another, to mingle and combine with one another, and to change into one another. Indeed, that property is what gives them explanatory

value. By virtue of that property, the effects can be joined to their causes without discontinuity. Now, the "I" is exactly opposite in character; it is incommunicable. It cannot change bases or spread from one to another. It spreads in only a metaphorical sense. The manner in which it arrives at and carries out its decisions cannot possibly suggest to us the idea of an energy that is communicated, that can even assimilate into others and, through those combinations and mixtures, give birth to new effects.

Thus, as implied in the causal relation, the idea of force must have a twofold character. First, it can come to us only from our inward experience; the only forces we can touch directly are of necessity moral forces. At the same time, however, they must also be impersonal, since the idea of impersonal power was constituted first. Now, the only forces that satisfy this twofold condition are those that arise from life in common: collective forces. In actuality, they are on the one hand wholly psychic, made exclusively of objectified ideas and feelings, and on the other hand, they are by definition impersonal, since they are the product of cooperation. Being the work of all, they are the property of no one in particular. So little do they belong to the personalities of the subjects in which they reside that they are never fixed there. Just as they enter subjects from outside, so are they always ready to detach themselves from those subjects. They have a spontaneous tendency to spread further and invade new domains. As we know, none are more contagious and hence more communicable.

Granted, physical forces have the same property, but we cannot have direct consciousness of them. Because they are external to us, we cannot even apprehend them as such. When I run against an obstacle, I have a sensation of confinement and discomfort; however, the force causing that sensation is not in me but in the obstacle and thus beyond the range of my perception. We perceive its effects but not the force itself. This is not the case with social forces. Since they are part of our interior life, we not only know the results of their action but see them in action. The force that isolates the sacred being and holds the profane ones at a distance is, in reality, not in that being; it lives in the consciousness of the faithful. Thus the faithful feel it at the very moment that it acts on their wills to prohibit certain actions and prescribe others. Because this happens entirely within us, we capture in action the constraining and necessitating influence that escapes us when it comes from an external thing. Of course, we do not always interpret that influence adequately, but we cannot fail to be conscious of it.

Furthermore, the idea of force bears the mark of its origin overtly. It in fact entails an idea of power that does not go without those of ascendancy, mastery, domination—and, correspondingly, of dependence and subordina-

tion. The relations that all these ideas express are eminently social. It is society that has classified beings as superior and subordinate, as masters who command and subjects who obey; it is society that has conferred on the first that singular property that makes command efficacious and that constitutes *power*. So everything tends to show that the first powers the human mind conceived are those that societies instituted as they became organized. It is in their image that the powers of the physical world were conceived. Thus man could not have arrived at the idea of himself as a force in charge of the body in which it resides without introducing concepts borrowed from social life into the idea he had of himself. In fact, he had to differentiate himself from his physical double and impute a higher sort of dignity to himself than to this double—in a word, he had to think of himself as a soul. In fact, it is in the form of the soul that he has always imagined the force that he believes he is. But we know that the soul is something altogether different from a name given to the abstract faculty to move, think, or feel. Above all, it is a religious principle, a particular aspect of the collective force. In sum, man feels he is a soul, and thus a force, because he is a social being. Although an animal moves its legs just as we do and has the same control over his muscles as we, nothing warrants our supposing that he has consciousness of himself as of an active and efficient cause. This is because it has no soul—or, more precisely, it does not impute a soul to itself. But if it does not impute a soul to itself, this is because it does not participate in a social life comparable to that of men. Among animals, nothing resembling a civilization exists.<sup>29</sup>

The idea of force is not all there is to the principle of causality. This principle consists in a judgment stating that a force develops in a definite manner and that its state at each moment of its evolution predetermines the succeeding state. The first is called cause; the second, effect; and the causal judgment affirms the existence of a necessary conjunction between these two moments of any force. Ruled by a sort of constraint from which it cannot free itself, the mind sets up this relation in advance of any proof. It postulates this relationship, as people say, *a priori*.

Empiricism has never succeeded in giving an account of that apriorism and that necessity. Never have the philosophers of that school been able to explain how an association of ideas reinforced by habit could produce anything other than a state of expectancy, a more or less strong predisposition on the part of ideas to call themselves to mind in a definite order. Now, the

<sup>29</sup>Of course, there are animal societies. Even so, the meaning of the word is by no means the same when applied to men and animals. The institution is the characteristic phenomenon of human societies; there are no institutions in animal societies.

principle of causality has an entirely different character. It is not simply an inherent tendency for our thought to unfold in a certain way; it is a norm external and superior to the flow of our representations, which it rules and regulates absolutely. It is endowed with an authority that binds the intellect and goes beyond the intellect; in other words, the intellect is not its creator. In this regard, it does no good to substitute hereditary for individual habit. The nature of habit does not change because it lasts longer than a man's life; it is only stronger. An instinct is not a rule.

The rites just studied enable us to discern a source of that authority that until now has been little suspected. Let us recall how the causal law that the mimetic rites put into practice was born. The group comes together, dominated by one concern: If the species whose name it bears does not reproduce, the clan is doomed. In this way, the common feeling that animates all its members is expressed outwardly in the form of definite movements that always recur in the same way in the same circumstances. And for the reasons set forth, it turns out that the desired result seems to be obtained when the ceremony has been conducted. An association is thereby formed between the idea of this result and that of the actions preceding it. This association does not vary from one subject to the other. Because it is the product of a collective experience, it is the same for all who take part in the rite. Nonetheless, if no other factor intervened, only a collective state of waiting would result. Having completed the imitative movements, everyone would wait, more or less confidently, to see the imminent approach of the hoped-for event. Even so, an imperative rule of thought would not come into being.

Because a social interest of premier importance is at stake, society cannot let things take their course, at the mercy of circumstances; hence it intervenes to regulate their course to suit its needs. Society requires this ceremony, which it cannot do without, to be repeated whenever necessary and, hence, the actions that are the condition of success to be regularly done. It imposes them as an obligation. Those actions imply a definite attitude of mind that, in response, shares the same quality of obligation. To prescribe that the animal or plant must be imitated to make them come to life again is to make "like produces like" into an axiom that must not be doubted. Opinion cannot permit individuals to deny this principle in theory, without at the same time permitting them to violate it in their conduct. It therefore imposes the principle, as it does the practices that derive from it, and in this way the ritual precept is reinforced by a logical principle that is none other than the intellectual aspect of the ritual one. The authority of both derives from the same source: society. The respect evoked by society passes into those ways of thinking and acting to which it attaches value. One cannot stand

aside from either without meeting resistance from prevailing opinion. This is why the ways of thinking require the adherence of the intellect in advance of all examination, just as the ways of acting directly bring about the submission of the will.

Using this example, we can test once again how a sociological theory of the idea of causality, and the categories more generally, both diverges from the classical doctrines on this question and accords with them. Here, as in apriorism, causality retains the *a priori* and necessary character of the causal relation. The sociological theory does not simply affirm it but also accounts for it and yet does not, as in empiricism, make it disappear while ostensibly accounting for it. Besides, there can be no question of denying the part that belongs to individual experience. That the individual by himself notes regular sequences of phenomena, and in so doing acquires a certain *sensation* of regularity, is not to be doubted. But this sensation is not the *category* of causality. The first is individual, subjective, and incommunicable; we make it ourselves from our personal observations. The second is the work of the collectivity, which gives it to us ready-made. It is a framework in which our empirical observations arrange themselves and which enables us to think about them—that is, to see them from an angle that enables us to understand one another on the subject of those observations. To be sure, if the framework can be applied to the content, that is because it is not without relationship to that content, but the framework does not merge with what it contains. It transcends and dominates the content because it has a different origin. It is not simply a collection of individual memories; it is made, first and foremost, to satisfy the needs of life in common.

In sum, the mistake of empiricism has been to see the causal tie as only a learned construct of speculative thinking and the product of a more or less systematic generalization. Pure speculation can give birth only to views that are provisional, hypothetical, and more or less plausible, but views that must always be regarded as suspect. We do not know whether some new observation will invalidate them in the near future. Therefore an axiom that the mind does and must accept, without testing and without qualification, cannot come to us from that source. The demands of action, especially of collective action, can and must express themselves in categorical formulas that are preemptory and sharp and that brook no contradiction, for collective movements are possible only if they are concerted, and thus regulated and well defined. They preclude blind groping, which is the source of anarchy. They tend by themselves toward an organization that, once established, imposes itself upon individuals. And since action cannot do without the intellect, the intellect is eventually pulled along in the same way, adopting without argu-



ment the theoretical postulates that practice requires. The imperatives of thought and those of the will are probably two sides of the same coin.

It is far from my intention, however, to offer these observations as a complete theory of the concept of causality. That issue is too complex to be resolved in this way. The principle of cause has been understood differently in different times and places; in a single society it varies with social milieu, and with the realms of nature to which it is applied.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, one cannot possibly determine what causes and conditions lie behind it after considering only one of the forms it has taken historically. The views that have just been set forth must be regarded only as indicative; they will have to be tested and fleshed out. Nonetheless, since the causal law just considered is surely one of the most primitive in existence and since it has played an important role in the development of human thought and industry, it constitutes a choice experiment, and so it can be presumed that the observations it has allowed us to make are in some measure generalizable.

<sup>30</sup>The idea of cause is not the same for a scientist as for a man who is scientifically uneducated. Besides, many of our contemporaries understand the principle of causality differently depending on the phenomena to which it is applied—social or physicochemical. In the social realm, there is an idea of causality that is extraordinarily reminiscent of the one on which magic was based for so long. We might well ask ourselves whether a physicist and a biologist imagine the causal relation in the same fashion.

## THE POSITIVE CULT (CONTINUED)

### *Representative or Commemorative Rites*

In the two preceding chapters, the explanation of the positive rites that I offered ascribes to them moral and social meaning, first and foremost. The physical efficacy ascribed to them by the faithful is an interpretation that hides their fundamental reason for being: They are deemed to have an effect on things because they serve to remake individuals and groups morally. This hypothesis enabled me to account for the facts, but it cannot be said to have been proved directly. Indeed, it seems at first glance to jibe rather poorly with the nature of the ritual mechanisms I have analyzed. Whether these mechanisms be offerings or mimetic practices, the actions that constitute them have purely physical ends in view. Their sole purpose is or seems to be to induce the rebirth of the totemic species. In that case, is it not surprising that their real function should be to serve moral ends?

It is true that their physical function may very well have been exaggerated by Spencer and Gillen, even in the cases where it is most clearly incontestable. In the view of those authors, each clan celebrates its Intichiuma in order to provide a useful foodstuff to the other clans. The whole cult supposedly involves a kind of economic cooperation among different totemic groups, each supposedly working for all the rest. But, according to Strehlow, this notion of Australian totemism is utterly foreign to the native mentality. He says: "If, while doing their utmost to multiply the animals or plants of the consecrated species, the members of a totemic group seem to be working for their fellow men of other totems, we must refrain from seeing this collaboration as the fundamental principle of Arunta or Loritja totemism. Never have the black men themselves told me that the point of their ceremonies was any such thing. Of course, when I suggested this idea to them and explained it, they understood and went along. But no one will blame me if I have a cer-

tain mistrust for responses obtained under these conditions." Strehlow observes, furthermore, that this way of interpreting the rite is contradicted by the fact that the totemic animals or plants are not all edible or useful; some have no use, and indeed some are dangerous. Thus the ceremonies that concern them cannot have nutritional ends in view.<sup>1</sup>

Our author concludes: "When the natives are asked the decisive reason for these ceremonies, they reply unanimously: It is because the ancestors have so instituted things. That is why we act in this way and not some other."<sup>2</sup> But to say that the rite is observed because it comes from the ancestors is to acknowledge that its authority is one and the same as the authority of tradition, which is eminently a social thing. It is celebrated to keep faith with the past and preserve the group's moral\* identity, not because of the physical effects it can bring about. Thus, its profound causes can be glimpsed through the very manner in which the faithful explain it.

There are cases in which this aspect of the ceremonies is immediately obvious.

## I

This aspect of the ceremonies is best observed among the Warramunga.<sup>3</sup> Among this people, each clan is held to be descended from a single ancestor who, although born in a definite place, spent his life on earth traveling the country in all directions. He it is who gave the land its present form during those travels, they say, and he who made the mountains and the plains, the water holes and the streams, and so forth. At the same time, along his route he sowed the seeds of life that came forth from his body and, through successive reincarnations, became the present-day members of the clan. The

\*Note the term "moral," here used in the sense that encompasses *conscience collective* in its cognitive and normative meanings.

<sup>1</sup>Of course, these ceremonies are not followed by alimentary communion. According to Strehlow, they have a distinct generic name, at least when they involve inedible plants: They are called *knujilelama*, not *mbatjalkatiama*. ([Carl Strehlow, *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien*] vol. III [Frankfurt, J. Baer, 1907], p. 96).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>The Warramunga are not the only people among whom the Intichiuma takes the form I will describe. It is also found among the Tjingilli, the Umbaia, the Wulmala, the Walpari, and even the Kaitish, although the Kaitish ritual is in some ways reminiscent of the Arunta one ([Sir Baldwin] Spencer and [Francis James] Gillen, *Northern Tribes [of Central Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1904], pp. 291, 309, 311, 317). I adopt the Warramunga as the type case because they have been very well studied by Spencer and Gillen.

purpose of the Warramunga ceremony, which corresponds exactly to the Intichiuma of the Arunta, is to depict and commemorate the mythical history of the ancestor. It involves neither sacrifice nor, with only a single exception,<sup>4</sup> mimetic practices. The rite involves remembering the past and making it present, so to speak, by means of a true dramatic performance [*représentation*]. This term is all the more appropriate in the present case, since the celebrant is by no means viewed as an incarnation of the ancestor he represents. He is an actor playing a role.

Here, as an example, is what the Intichiuma of the Black Snake consists of, as observed by Spencer and Gillen.<sup>5</sup>

The initial ceremony does not seem to refer to the past; at least, the description given us does not justify such an interpretation. It consists of running and jumping by two celebrants<sup>6</sup> adorned with figures that represent the black snake. When both at last fall exhausted to the ground, those in attendance run their hands gently over the emblematic designs that cover the backs of the two actors. This gesture is said to please the black snake. Only after that does the series of commemorative rites begin.

They act out the mythical history of the ancestor, Thalaualla, from the moment he came out of the ground to the moment he finally disappeared into it again. They follow him through all his travels. According to the myth, he conducted totemic ceremonies in each of the localities where he so-journed. These are repeated in the same order in which they are said to have taken place at the beginning. The movement that recurs most frequently is a sort of rhythmic and violent trembling of the entire body because, in mythical times, the ancestor shook himself in this way to bring out the seeds of life within him. The actors have their skin covered with down that comes off and flies away as a result of this shaking. This is a means of depicting the flight of the mystical seeds and their dispersion in the air.

We recall that among the Arunta, the place where the ceremony occurs is ritually determined. It is the site of the sacred rocks, trees, and water holes, and the faithful must go there to celebrate the cult. Among the Warramunga, though, the choice of site is arbitrary and a matter of convenience. Theirs is a conventional stage. The actual place where the events that are the theme of the rite occurred is represented by drawings. Sometimes these drawings are

<sup>4</sup>This is true for the Intichiuma of the white cockatoo; see p. 357 above.

<sup>5</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 300ff.

<sup>6</sup>One of the two actors does not belong to the Black Snake clan but to the Crow. This is because the Crow is considered an associate of the Black Snake—in other words, its subtotem.

made on the bodies of the actors themselves. For example, a small circle colored in with red and painted on the back and stomach represents a water hole.<sup>7</sup> In other examples, the image is traced in the dirt. On ground previously dampened and covered with red ochre, they make curved lines from a series of white points, symbolizing a stream or a mountain. This is a rudimentary theatrical set.

In addition to the strictly religious ceremonies that the ancestor is said to have conducted in the past, simple epic or comic episodes of Thalaualla's earthly career are presented. Thus, at a certain moment, while three actors are busy on stage with an important rite, another hides behind a clump of trees some distance away. Hung around his neck is a packet of down representing a wallaby. As soon as the main ceremony has ended, an old man traces on the ground a line that leads to the place where a fourth actor is hiding. The others walk behind, with their eyes lowered and fixed upon this line as if they are following a path. When they discover the man, they act surprised, and one of them beats him with a stick. This entire mimicry portrays an incident in the life of the great black snake. One day, his son went off to hunt alone, bagged a wallaby, and ate it without giving any to his father. The father followed his tracks, surprised him, and forced him to vomit. This incident is alluded to in the beating that ends the performance.<sup>8</sup>

I will not state here all the mythical events that are presented one after the other. The foregoing examples are enough to show the character of these ceremonies. They are plays, but plays of a very particular kind. They act, or at least are thought to act, upon the course of nature. When the commemoration of Thalaualla is over, the Warramunga are convinced that black snakes cannot fail to increase and multiply. Thus these dramas are rites, and in fact rites that, by the way they work, are comparable in every respect to those that make up the Arunta Intichiuma.

Consequently, the two sets of rites can shed light upon one another. Indeed, comparing them is all the more legitimate because there is no radical discontinuity between them. Not only is the same goal pursued in both cases, but what is most characteristic of the Warramunga ritual is to be found in embryonic form in the other. As the Arunta generally practice it, the Intichiuma contains what amounts to a kind of implicit commemoration. The places where it is celebrated are, obligatorily, those that the ancestors made illustrious. The paths the faithful take in their pious pilgrimages are those

<sup>7</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 302.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 305.

traveled by the Alcheringa heroes; the places where they stop to conduct rites are those where the ancestors themselves sojourned, where they vanished into the ground, and so forth. Thus everything calls their memory back into the minds of those in attendance. Moreover, they quite often supplement the physical rites\* with hymns recounting the ancestors' exploits.<sup>9</sup> Let those stories be acted out rather than told, and let them develop in this new form so as to become the essence of the ceremony, and we will have the Warramunga ceremony. More than that: From one standpoint, the Arunta Intichiuma is already a sort of play. The celebrant, in fact, is one and the same as the ancestor from whom he descends and whom he reincarnates.<sup>10</sup> The movements he makes are those the ancestor made in the same circumstances. To speak precisely, of course, he is not playing the ancestral personage as an actor might do; he is that very personage. In a sense, it is still the hero who is on the stage. To accentuate the representative character of that rite, all it takes is to accentuate the duality of the ancestor and the celebrant. This is precisely what happens among the Warramunga.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, there is mention of at least one Intichiuma among the Arunta, in which certain people are responsible for portraying ancestors with whom they have no mythical relation of descent and thus in which there are dramatic performances in the full sense. This is the Intichiuma of the Emu.<sup>12</sup> In this case, too, contrary to what usually happens among this people, it does seem that the theater of the ceremony is artificially set up.<sup>13</sup>

\* *Rites manuels*. These stand in contrast to *rites oraux*, "oral rites."

<sup>9</sup>See Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes [of Central Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1889], p. 188; Strehlow, *Aranda*, vol. III, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Strehlow himself recognizes this: "The totemic ancestor and his descendant, that is to say the one who depicts him (*der Darsteller*), are presented in these sacred songs as one and the same" ([*Aranda*], vol. III, p. 6). Since this incontestable fact contradicts the thesis that ancestral souls are not reincarnated, Strehlow adds in a note, "During the ceremony, there is, properly speaking, no incarnation of the ancestor in the person who depicts him." If Strehlow means that incarnation does not occur during the ceremony, nothing is more certain. But if he means that there is no incarnation at all, I do not understand how the celebrant and the ancestor can merge.

<sup>11</sup>Perhaps this difference arises in part from the fact that, among the Warramunga, each clan is thought to descend from a single ancestor around whom the mythical history of the clan has gradually condensed. This is the ancestor commemorated in the rite; however, the celebrant is not necessarily descended from him. Indeed, we might ask whether these mythical chiefs, demigods of a sort, undergo reincarnation.

<sup>12</sup>In that Intichiuma, three participants depict ancestors "of considerable antiquity"; they actually play a role (Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 181-182). Spencer and Gillen add, it is true, that those are ancestors who came after the Alcheringa period. But they are nonetheless mythical personages, and they are portrayed during a rite.

<sup>13</sup>Indeed, we are not told of sacred rocks and water holes. The center of the ceremony is an image of an emu that is drawn on the ground and can be drawn anywhere.

That these two kinds of ceremonies have a certain air of kinship, despite the differences between them, does not mean that there is a definite relationship of succession between them, and that one is a transformation of the other. The resemblances observed may actually arise from their having the same origin—that is, from their being divergent forms of the same original ceremony. We will see, in fact, that this hypothesis is the most probable. But there is no need to take a position on that question, and the preceding is enough to establish that these are rites of the same kind. Thus we have a basis for comparing them and for using the one to help us understand the other better.

What is peculiar to those Warramunga ceremonies that I have just discussed is that not one movement is made for the purpose of helping or directly causing the totemic species to be reborn.<sup>14</sup> If we analyze the movements made together with the words said, we find nothing that reveals any intention of this kind. Everything takes place in dramatic performances\* that have no purpose other than to make the clan's mythical past present in people's minds. But the mythology of a group is the collection of beliefs common to the group. How the society imagines man and the world is expressed in the traditions whose memory the mythology perpetuates; it is a morality and a cosmology at the same time as it is a history. Therefore the rite serves and can only serve to maintain the vitality of those beliefs and to prevent their memory from being obliterated—in other words, to revitalize the most essential elements of the collective consciousness and conscience. Through this rite, the group periodically revitalizes the sense it has of itself and its unity; the nature of the individuals as social beings is strengthened at the same time. The glorious memories that are made to live again before their eyes, and with which they feel in accord, bring about a feeling of strength and confidence. One is more sure in one's faith when one sees how far into the past it goes and what great things it has inspired. This is the feature of the ceremony that makes it instructive. The tendency of the whole ceremony is to act on minds, and on minds alone. But if it is believed to act on things at the same time, and to bring about the prosperity of the species, this can only be as a counterpart of the moral influence it exercises—and that moral influence obviously is the only one that is real. Therefore, the hypothesis I have proposed is verified by a revelatory experiment and is the more compelling

\* *Tout se passe en représentations qui ne peuvent être destinées qu'à rendre présent aux esprits le passé mythique du clan.* The word *représentation* neatly joins two meanings: "dramatic performance" and "idea."

<sup>14</sup>I do not mean to say, however, that all the ceremonies of the Warramunga are of this type. The example of the white cockatoo, discussed above, proves that there are exceptions.

because, as I have just established, the ritual systems of the Warramunga and the Arunta do not differ fundamentally. The one simply brings out with greater clarity what we had already guessed about the other.

## II

There are ceremonies in which this representative and ideal feature is even more pronounced. In the ceremonies just discussed, dramatic representation was not an end in itself; it was only a means to a completely mundane end, the reproduction of the totemic species. But there are others that are not particularly different from the preceding and yet from which interests of that sort are entirely absent. In those, the past is represented for the sole purpose of representing it and impressing it more deeply upon minds, with no expectation that the rite should have any particular influence upon nature. At the very least, the physical effects that are sometimes imputed to the rite are entirely secondary and unrelated to the liturgical importance it is given. This is notably the case of the feasts the Warramunga celebrate in honor of the snake Wollunqua.<sup>15</sup>

As I have already said, Wollunqua is a totem of a very special kind. It is not an animal or plant species but a unique being; only one Wollunqua exists. Furthermore, he is a purely mythical being. The natives imagine him as a sort of colossal snake, so tall that his head is lost in the clouds when he stands on his tail. He is believed to live in a water hole, called Thapauerlu, which is hidden deep in a lonely valley. But although Wollunqua differs in some respects from ordinary totems, still he has all the distinguishing features of one. He serves as a collective name and emblem for a whole group of individuals who see him as their common ancestor. And the relations they have with this mythical beast are identical to those that the members of other clans believe they have with the founders of their own respective clans. In Alcheringa times,<sup>16</sup> Wollunqua traveled the country in every direction. In the various localities where he stopped, he sowed spirit-children, spirit principles that continue to serve today as souls for living beings. Wollunqua is

<sup>15</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 226ff. Cf. on the same subject certain passages of Eylmann that apparently refer to the same mythical being ([Richard] Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen [der Kolonie Süd Australien]*, Berlin, D. Reumer, 1908], p. 185). Strehlow also mentions a mythical snake among the Arunta (Kulaia, water snake), which may well be the same as Wollunqua (Strehlow, *Aranda*, vol. I, p. 78; cf. vol. II, p. 71, where Kulaia figures on the list of totems).

<sup>16</sup>So as not to complicate the terminology, I use the Arunta term. Among the Warramunga, this mythical time is called Wingara.



even regarded as a kind of preeminent totem. The Warramunga are divided into two phratries, one called Uluuru and the other Kingilli. Almost all the totems of the first are various species of snake. They are all considered to be descendants of Wollunqua; he is said to be their grandfather.<sup>17</sup> From this one can guess how, in all likelihood, the Wollunqua myth was born. To explain the presence of so many similar totems in one phratry, they were all imagined to be derived from one and the same totem; but of necessity, he had to be given gigantic form, so that, by his very appearance, he would fit the important role assigned to him in the history of the tribe.

Wollunqua is the object of ceremonies no different in nature from those we studied previously. These are performances in which the principal events of his mythical life are depicted; he is shown coming out of the ground and moving from one locality to the other; the various episodes of his life and his travels are acted out; and so forth. Spencer and Gillen were present at fifteen ceremonies of this kind, which occurred one after the other between 27 July and 23 August, following a prescribed order in such a way as to form a true cycle.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the details of the rites that make up this feast do not distinguish it from an ordinary Intichiuma among the Warramunga; that much is recognized by the authors who have described it for us.<sup>19</sup> But on the other hand, it is an Intichiuma that cannot possibly have the aim of ensuring the fecundity of an animal or plant species; Wollunqua is a species in himself and does not reproduce. He is; and the natives apparently do not feel that he requires a cult in order to go on being. Not only do these ceremonies not have the efficacy of the classic Intichiuma, but they do not seem to have material efficacy of any kind. Wollunqua is not a deity set over a definite range of natural phenomena, and thus no definite service is expected of him in exchange for worship.

True, it is said that if the ritual prescriptions are improperly observed, Wollunqua becomes angry, leaves his retreat, and avenges himself upon the faithful for their negligence. And when everything has been properly done, they tend to believe that all will be well and that some happy event will occur. But the idea of these possible sanctions was apparently born only after

<sup>17</sup>"It is not easy," say Spencer and Gillen, "to express in words that which is a rather vague feeling among the natives. But after having carefully observed the different ceremonies, we gained the quite distinct impression that, in the minds of the natives, Wollunqua corresponded to the idea of a dominant totem." (Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 248.)

<sup>18</sup>Among the most solemn of these ceremonies is the one I had occasion to describe above (pp. 219-220), during which an image of Wollunqua is drawn on a sort of mound that is later broken into pieces amid a general effervescence.

<sup>19</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 227, 248.

the fact, so as to account for the rite. It seemed natural that, once born, the ceremony should have some purpose, and hence that to omit prescribed observances was somehow dangerous. But the rite was not instituted to prevent these mythical dangers or to bring about particular advantages. Incidentally, these dangers are conceived in the vaguest of terms. For example, when everything is done with, the elders announce that Wollunqua will send rain if he is satisfied. But they do not celebrate the feast for the purpose of having rain.<sup>20</sup> They celebrate it because the ancestors did, because they are attached to it as a very respected tradition, and because they come out of it with a sense of moral well-being. Other considerations play only a supplementary role; they can serve to strengthen the faithful in the conduct that the rite imposes, but they are not the *raison d'être* of that conduct.

Here, then, is a whole collection of ceremonies whose sole purpose is to arouse certain ideas and feelings, to join the present to the past and the individual to the collectivity. In fact, not only are these ceremonies incapable of serving other ends, but the faithful themselves seek nothing more from them. This is additional evidence that the psychic state in which the assembled group finds itself does indeed constitute the only solid and stable basis of what might be called the ritual mentality. So far as beliefs ascribing this or

<sup>20</sup>Here is how the terms used by Spencer and Gillen describe the proceedings in their only passage about a possible relationship between the Wollunqua and the phenomenon of rain. Some days after the rite that is celebrated at the mound, "the elders declare that they have heard Wollunqua speak, that he was satisfied with what happened, and that he would send rain. The reason for this prophecy is that they had heard, as we had, the thunder resounding some distance away." Rainmaking is so far from being the immediate aim of the ceremony that it was not imputed to Wollunqua until several days after the rite had been celebrated, and following accidental circumstances. Another fact shows how vague the ideas of the natives are on this point. Several lines further on, the thunder is presented as a sign, not of Wollunqua's satisfaction but of his annoyance. Despite the prognostications, continue our authors, "the rain did not fall. But some days later, thunder was again heard rumbling far away. The elders said that Wollunqua was rumbling because he was angry" about the way in which the rite had been conducted. Thus, the same phenomenon, the sound of thunder, is interpreted sometimes as a sign of favorable intentions and at others, of evil ones.

There is, however, a detail of the ritual that would have direct efficacy, if one accepted the explanation of it that Spencer and Gillen suggest. According to them, the mound is destroyed in order to frighten Wollunqua and, by magical means, prevent him from leaving his retreat. To me, this interpretation appears very suspect. As a matter of fact, in the circumstances just described in which it was announced that Wollunqua was angry, this anger was attributed to the fact that they had neglected to clean up the debris from the mound. Hence, this cleanup is far from being aimed at intimidating and coercing Wollunqua; Wollunqua himself demands it. This is probably no more than a special case of a more general rule in effect among the Warramunga: The cult instruments must be destroyed after each ceremony. Thus, when the rite has been completed, the ritual ornaments in which the celebrants are dressed are torn off forcefully. (Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 205.)

that physical efficacy to the rites are concerned, those are accessory and contingent matters, since they can be absent without change to the essence of the rite. Thus, even more markedly than the preceding, the Wollunqua ceremonies in a sense lay bare the positive cult.

If I have given special emphasis to those ceremonies, it is because of their unusual importance, but others are of the same character. Thus, the Warramunga have a "Laughing Boy" totem. Spencer and Gillen say that the clan of this name has the same organization as the other totemic groups. Like them, it has its sacred places (*mungai*) where the founding ancestor conducted ceremonies in mythical times and where he left behind spirit-children who became the men of the clan. The rites connected with this totem are indistinguishable from those related to animal or plant totems.<sup>21</sup> It is obvious, however, that the rites cannot possibly have physical efficacy. They are a series of four more or less repetitious ceremonies, their sole purpose being to amuse, to provoke laughter by laughter—that is, to cultivate gaiety and good humor within the group that more or less specializes in those traits.<sup>22</sup>

We find among the Arunta themselves more than one totem that has no other Intichiuma. In fact, among this people, the folds or depressions in the land that mark the place where some ancestor sojourned are sometimes used as totems.<sup>23</sup> To such totems are attached ceremonies that obviously cannot have physical effects of any kind. They can only be made up of performances whose purpose is to commemorate the past, and they can have no goal other than that commemoration.<sup>24</sup>

While these ritual performances help us understand the nature of the cult better, they also bring out an important element of religion: its recreational and aesthetic element.

I have already shown that they are closely akin to dramatic performances.<sup>25</sup> This kinship stands out even more clearly in the ceremonies just described. Not only do they use the same techniques as drama, but they have

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 207–208.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>23</sup>See numbers 432–442, in the list of totems compiled by Strehlow ([*Aranda* ], vol. II, p. 72).

<sup>24</sup>See *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 8. Also among the Arunta, there is a *Worra* totem that greatly resembles the Warramungas' "Laughing Boy" totem (*ibid.* and vol. III, p. 124). *Worra* means "young men." The object of the ceremony is to make the young men take more pleasure in the game of *labara* (on this game, see *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 55, n. 1).

<sup>25</sup>See above, p. 376.

the same sort of goal. Since utilitarian purposes are in general alien to them, they make men forget the real world so as to transport them into another where their imagination is more at home; they entertain. Sometimes they even go as far as having the outward appearance of recreation. We see those present laughing and openly having fun.<sup>26</sup>

The representative rites and the collective recreations are so close to one another that people move from one genre to the other without any sense of discontinuity. The trait of the specifically religious ceremonies is that they must be performed on consecrated ground, from which women and the uninitiated are excluded.<sup>27</sup> In others, this religious feature is somewhat obscured, although not gone completely. They occur away from the ceremonial ground, which shows that to some extent they are already secular; even so, the profane (women and children) are not admitted. Hence they straddle the boundary between two domains. In general, they relate to mythical personages that do not fit neatly into the scheme of totemic religion. The personages are spirits, most often evil ones, that are more connected with the magicians than with the ordinary faithful, and sorts of bogeymen in which men do not believe with the same degree of seriousness and firm conviction as they accord to properly totemic beings and things.<sup>28</sup> In step with the weakening of the tie that binds events and personages to the history of the tribe, both take on a more unreal appearance, and the nature of the corresponding ceremonies changes. In this way, we gradually enter into the domain of pure fantasy and pass from the commemorative rite to the ordinary corroboree, mere public rejoicing that is no longer religious in any way and in which everyone, without distinction, may take part. Indeed, perhaps certain of these performances that today are only for entertainment are ancient rites whose function has changed. In fact, the boundaries between these two kinds of ceremonies are so fluid that it is hard to say precisely to which group they belong.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup>An example of this kind is to be found in Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 204.

<sup>27</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 118 n. 2, 618ff.; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 716ff. However, there are sacred ceremonies from which women are not totally excluded (see, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 375ff.); but that is the exception.

<sup>28</sup>See Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 329ff.; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 210ff.

<sup>29</sup>This is the case, for example, of the Molonga corroboree, among the Pitta-Pitta of Queensland and neighboring tribes (see [Walter Edmund] Roth, *Ethnological Studies among the North West Central Queensland Aborigines* [Brisbane, E. Gregory, 1897], pp. 120ff.). Information on these ordinary corroborees is to be found in Stirling [Sir Baldwin] Spencer, *Report [on the Work] of the Horn [Scientific] Expedition to Central Australia* [London, Dulau, 1896], Part IV, p. 72, and in Roth, *Queensland Aborigines*, pp. 117ff.

It is well known that games and the principal forms of art seem to have been born in religion and that they long maintained their religious character.<sup>30</sup> We can see why: while pursuing other goals directly, the cult has at the same time been a form of recreation. Religion has not played this role by chance or a happy coincidence but as a result of its inherent logic. Indeed, as I have shown, although religious thought is something other than a system of fictions, the realities to which it corresponds can gain religious expression only if imagination transfigures them. Great is the distance between society, as it is objectively, and the sacred things that represent it symbolically. The impressions really felt by men—the raw material for this construction—had to be interpreted, elaborated, and transformed to the point of becoming unrecognizable. So the world of religious things is partly an imaginary world (albeit only in its outward form) and, for this reason, one that lends itself more readily to the free creations of the mind. Moreover, because the intellectual forces that serve in making it are intense and tumultuous, the mere task of expressing the real with the help of proper symbols is insufficient to occupy them. A surplus remains generally available that seeks to busy itself with supplementary and superfluous works of luxury—that is, with works of art.

What is true of practices is true of beliefs. The state of effervescence in which the assembled faithful find themselves is translated outwardly by exuberant motions that are not easily subordinated to ends that are defined too strictly. They escape, partly without destination, displaying themselves merely for the sake of displaying themselves, and taking pleasure in what amount to games. Besides, to the extent that the beings to which the cult is addressed are imaginary, they are in no position to contain and regulate this exuberance; the weight of tangible and durable realities is needed to press activity into exact and harmonious adaptations. Therefore, we risk misunderstandings when, to explain rites, we believe an exact purpose and *raison d'être* must be assigned to each movement. Some serve no purpose; they merely satisfy the worshippers' need to act, move, and gesticulate. The worshippers are seen jumping, whirling, dancing, shouting, and singing, and they are not always able to assign a meaning to this turbulence.

Thus, religion would not be religion if there was no place in it for free combinations of thought and action, for games, for art, for all that refreshes a spirit worn down by all that is overburdening in day-to-day labor. That

<sup>30</sup>On that question, see especially the excellent work of [Stewart] Culin, "Games of the North American Indians," *Twenty-Sixth Report, BAE*, [Washington, Government Printing Office, 1907].

which made art exist makes it a necessity. It is not merely an outward adornment that the cult can be thought of as dressing up in, in order to hide what may be too austere and harsh about it; the cult in itself is aesthetic in some way. Because of the well-known connections mythology has with poetry, scholars have sometimes wanted to situate mythology outside religion.<sup>31</sup> The truth is that there is a poetry inherent in all religion. The representative ceremonies just studied make this aspect of religious life obvious, but there are virtually no rites that do not manifest it in some degree.

Obviously, it would be a grave error to see only this aspect of religion or to overstate its importance. When a rite serves only as entertainment, it is no longer a rite. The moral forces that religious symbols express are real forces that we must reckon with and that we may not do with as we please. Even if the purpose of the cult is not to achieve physical effects, but deliberately stops at acting upon minds, it exerts its influence in a different direction than does a pure work of art. The representations it works to arouse and maintain are not empty images that correspond to nothing in reality and that we call up for no purpose, merely for the pleasure of watching them appear and combine with one another before our eyes. They are as necessary to the good order of our moral life as food is to the nurture of our physical life. It is through them that the group affirms and maintains itself, and we know how indispensable the group is to the individual. Thus a rite is something other than a game; it belongs to the serious side of life.

But while the unreal and imaginary element is not the essence, it still plays a role that is far from negligible. That element enters into the feeling of comfort that the faithful draw from the accomplished rite. Recreation is one form of the moral remaking that is the primary object of the positive cult. Once we have fulfilled our ritual duties, we return to profane life with more energy and enthusiasm, not only because we have placed ourselves in contact with a higher source of energy but also because our own capacities have been replenished through living, for a few moments, a life that is less tense, more at ease, and freer. Religion gains thereby an appeal that is not the least of its attractions.

For this reason, the idea of a religious ceremony of any importance naturally elicits the idea of a festival. Inversely, every festival has certain characteristics of a religious ceremony, even if it is of purely secular origin. In every case, its effect is to bring individuals together, to put the masses into motion, and thus induce a state of effervescence—sometimes even delirium—which

<sup>31</sup>See above, p. 79.

is not without kinship to the religious state. Man is carried outside himself, pulled away from his ordinary occupations and preoccupations. We observe the same manifestations in both cases: cries, songs, music, violent movements, dances, the search for stimulants that increase vitality, and others. It has often been observed that popular festivals lead to excesses, causing people to lose sight of the boundary between the licit and the illicit,<sup>32</sup> there are also religious ceremonies that bring about a kind of thirst for violating those rules that ordinarily are widely obeyed.<sup>33</sup> To be sure, this is not because there is no basis for distinguishing between the two forms of public activity. Simple rejoicing, the profane corroboree, has no serious purpose, but when taken as a whole, a ritual ceremony always has a serious purpose. Once again, we must notice that there is no rejoicing in which the seriousness of life has no echo at all. Instead, the basic difference lies in the different proportions in which the two elements are combined.

### III

As it happens, a more general fact confirms the preceding views. In their first work, Spencer and Gillen presented the Intichiuma as a perfectly circumscribed ritual entity. They spoke of it as if it was a process devoted exclusively to ensuring the reproduction of the totemic species; and it seemed that the Intichiuma must necessarily lose any sort of meaning beyond this single function. But in their *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, the same authors use different language, perhaps without being aware of it. They recognize that these same ceremonies can just as well take place in the Intichiumas proper as in the initiation rites.<sup>34</sup> They serve just as well either to make animals and plants of the totemic species or to confer upon the neophytes the qualities it takes

<sup>32</sup>Notably, in sexual matters. Sexual license is common in the ordinary corroborees (see Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 96–97, and *Northern Tribes*, pp. 136–137). On sexual license in popular feasts generally, see [Alfred] Hagelstange, *Süddeutsches Bauernleben im Mittelalter* [Leipzig, Duncker & Humbolt, 1898], pp. 221f.

<sup>33</sup>Thus, the rules of exogamy are obligatorily violated during certain religious ceremonies (see above, p. 218, n. 27). We probably should not seek precise ritual meaning in this license. It simply arises mechanically from the state of overexcitement provoked by the ceremony. It is an example of those rites that have no definite object in themselves but are merely discharges of activity (see above, p. 385). The native himself does not assign it a definite purpose; he says only that if this license is not committed, the rite will not produce its effects; the ceremony will be botched.

<sup>34</sup>These are the very words Spencer and Gillen use: "They (the ceremonies connected to the totems) are often, but not always, associated with those that concern the initiation of young men, or else they are part of the Intichiumas" (Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 178).

to become full members of the society of men.<sup>35</sup> From this point of view, the Intichiuma appears in a new light. No longer is it a distinct ritual mechanism based on principles that are peculiar to it but instead a particular application of more general ceremonies that can serve quite different purposes. This is why, before speaking of the Intichiuma and of initiation, they devote a special chapter of their new work to totemic ceremonies in general, apart from the various forms they may take depending on the purposes they serve.<sup>36</sup>

This inherent indeterminacy of the totemic ceremonies was only pointed to by Spencer and Gillen, and indeed rather indirectly, but it has been confirmed by Strehlow in the most explicit terms. He says, "When the young novices are passed through the various initiation celebrations, rites are performed one after another for them. Nevertheless, although these rites reproduce those of the cult proper, down to the most characteristic details (*Read: the rites that Spencer and Gillen term Intichiuma*), their purpose is not to multiply the corresponding totem and make it prosper."<sup>37</sup> So the same ceremony is used in both cases; only the name is changed. When its purpose is strictly the reproduction of the species, it is called Mbatjalkatiuma, and when it is a procedure of initiation it is given the name Intichiuma.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, among the Arunta, certain secondary characteristics distinguish these two kinds of ceremonies from one another. Although the structure of the rites is the same in both cases, the shedding of blood and, more generally, the offerings characteristic of the Arunta Intichiuma are lacking in their initiation ceremonies. Furthermore, whereas the Arunta Intichiuma is held at a place authoritatively set by tradition and to which people must pilgrimage, the stage on which the initiation ceremonies are held is purely conventional.<sup>39</sup> But when the Intichiuma consists merely of a dramatic performance, as is the case among the Warramunga, the lack of distinction be-

<sup>35</sup>I leave aside the question of what this trait consists in. That question would lead into a development that would be very long and very technical and, for this reason, would have to be handled separately. The question does not, however, affect the propositions that are established in the course of the present work.

<sup>36</sup>This is Chapter VI, titled "Ceremonies Connected with the Totems."

<sup>37</sup>Strehlow, *Aranda*, vol. III, pp. 1-2.

<sup>38</sup>The error with which Strehlow taxes Spencer and Gillen is explained in this way: They applied to one form of the rite the term that more especially suits the other. But in this instance, the error does not seem as grave as Strehlow makes it out to be.

<sup>39</sup>Indeed, it cannot have any other character. In fact, since initiation is a tribal feast, the novices of different totems are initiated at the same time. The ceremonies that occur one after the other in this way, at the same place, always refer to several totems, and consequently, they must take place outside the localities to which myth attaches them.



tween the two rites is total. The past is commemorated in both; the myth is put into action—performed—and cannot be performed in two markedly different ways. Thus, depending on the circumstances, one and the same ceremony fulfills two distinct functions.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, it can lend itself to a good many other uses. As we know, since blood is a sacred thing, women must not see it flowing. Nevertheless, a quarrel may on occasion break out in their presence and end in bloodshed. A ritual infraction is thereby committed. Among the Arunta, in order to atone for this lapse, the man whose blood has flowed first must “conduct a ceremony that refers either to his father’s or his mother’s totem.”<sup>41</sup> That ceremony bears a special name, *Alua uparilima*, which means “erasing of the blood.” But, in and of itself, it is no different from those conducted during initiation or at the Intichiumas; it portrays an event of the ancestors’ history. Thus it can serve equally well to initiate, to act upon the animal species, or to expiate a sacrilege. We will see below that a totemic ceremony can take the place of a funeral rite.<sup>42</sup>

Hubert and Mauss have already drawn attention to a functional ambiguity of the same sort in the case of sacrifice and, more specifically, Hindu sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> They have shown that the sacrifices of communion, expiation, oaths, and contracts were but variants of the same mechanism. As we now see, this phenomenon is far more primitive and by no means confined to the institution of sacrifice. There is perhaps no rite that does not display similar indeterminacy. The mass is used for marriages as well as for burials; it redeems the sins of the dead, ensures divine favor to the living, and so on. Fasting is an expiation and a penance, but it is also a preparation for communion; it even

<sup>40</sup>How it happens that I have nowhere studied rites of initiation in and of themselves will now be understood. They do not constitute a ritual entity but are a composite made from various sorts of rites. For example, there are prohibitions, ascetic rites, and representative ceremonies that are indistinguishable from those conducted during the Intichiuma. Thus I have had to take this composite system apart and separately treat each of the elementary rites that comprise it, classifying them with those similar rites with which they must be compared. In addition, we have seen (pp. 288–289) that initiation has served as the point of departure for a new religion that tends to move beyond totemism. But it was enough to show that totemism contained the seed of that religion; I did not have to pursue its development. Since the object of this book is to study the elementary beliefs and practices, I must stop at the moment they give birth to more complex forms.

<sup>41</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 463. If the individual can, as he chooses, conduct a ceremony of either his father’s or his mother’s totem, that is because, for the reasons set forth above (p. 185), he belongs to both.

<sup>42</sup>See below, Bk. 3, chap. 5, p. 399.

<sup>43</sup>See [Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss], “Essai sur [la nature et fonction du] sacrifice,” in *Mélanges d’histoire des religions* [Paris, F. Alcan, 1909], p. 83.

conveys positive virtues. This ambiguity shows that the real function of a rite is not the specific, well-defined results it seems intended to reap and by which it is usually characterized. Instead, its real function is a general result, which can take different forms in different circumstances and yet remain always and everywhere the same.

The theory I have put forward presupposes exactly this. If the true function of the cult is to arouse in the faithful a certain state of soul, one of moral strength and confidence, and if the various effects imputed to the rites are only due to secondary and variable causes of this fundamental state, then it is not surprising that the same rite should seem to produce multiple effects while keeping the same components and structure. In every case, those mental dispositions that its permanent function is to bring about remain the same; they depend on the fact that the group is assembled, not on the particular reasons why the group is assembled. On the other hand, however, they are interpreted differently to fit the circumstances to which they apply. Is it a physical effect that one wants to obtain? The confidence felt will lead to believing that this result has been or will be obtained by the means used. Has one committed some lapse that one wants to erase? The same state of moral assurance will cause the same ritual movements to take on expiatory virtues. In this way, the apparent efficacy will seem to change, even though the real efficacy remains unchanging; and the rite will seem to fulfill disparate functions even though in fact it has only one, which is always the same.

Conversely, just as a single rite can serve several ends, several rites can be used interchangeably to bring about the same end. To ensure the reproduction of the totemic species, sacrifices, mimetic practices, or commemorative performances can be used equally well. This interchangeability of rites demonstrates once again—just as their plasticity demonstrates—the extreme generality of the useful influence they exercise. What matters most is that individuals are assembled and that feelings in common are expressed through actions in common. But as to the specific nature of these feelings and actions, that is a relatively secondary and contingent matter. To become conscious of itself, the group need not perform some acts rather than others. Although it must commune in the same thought and the same action, the visible forms in which this communion occurs hardly matter. The external forms probably do not come about by chance. They have their causes, but these causes do not go to the essence of the cult.

Everything brings us back, then, to the same idea. First and foremost, the rites are means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically. And perhaps, beginning there, we can achieve a hypothetical reconstruction of the manner in which the first totemic cult must have been born. Men who feel

united—in part by ties of blood but even more by common interests and traditions—assemble and become conscious of their moral unity. For the reasons I have set forth, they are led to conceive this unity as a very special kind of consubstantiality. They regard themselves as all participating in the nature of a certain animal. Under those conditions, there will be only one way for them to affirm their collective existence: to affirm themselves as animals of that same species—and this not only in the silence of consciousness but by physical doing. It is this doing that will form the cult, and obviously it can only be movements by which the man imitates the animal with which he identifies himself. Thus understood, the mimetic rites come into view as the primitive form of the cult. Some will find that this is to attribute a rather large historical role to practices that at first glance resemble childish games. But, as I have shown, these naive and gauche gestures, these crude modes of representation, express and nurture a feeling of pride, confidence, and reverence that is entirely comparable to the feeling expressed by the faithful of the most idealist religions when, gathered together, they proclaim themselves to be the children of the all-powerful God. In both cases, this feeling stems from the same impressions of security and respect that are aroused in individual consciousnesses by the great moral force that dominates them: the collective force.

In all likelihood, the other rites we have studied are no more than variations on this fundamental rite. Once the close union between animal and man was accepted, man strongly felt the need to ensure the regular reproduction of the totemic species, and that reproduction was made the principal object of the cult. In this way, those mimetic practices that probably had only a moral aim at the beginning found themselves subordinated to a utilitarian, material one, and he conceived of them as means of producing the desired result. But with further evolution in the mythology that at first identified the ancestor hero with the totemic animal, the ancestor figure became more distinct and personal, imitation of the ancestor replaced imitation of the animal, and the representative rites replaced or supplemented the mimetic ones. Finally, to become more certain of attaining the goal he was striving toward, man felt the need to bring into play all the means available to him. Having in hand reserves of life-forces accumulated in the sacred rocks, he used those; since the man's blood was of the same nature as the animal's, he used it for the same purpose, and he shed it. Inversely, because of that same kinship, the man used the animal's flesh for the purpose of remaking his own substance. Thence came the rites of sacrifice and communion. In the end, however, all these varied practices are variations on the same theme: Fundamentally, we encounter everywhere the same state of soul, differently interpreted according to the circumstances, historical moments, and inclinations of the faithful.

## THE PIACULAR RITES\* AND THE AMBIGUITY OF THE NOTION OF THE SACRED

No matter how greatly the actions they involve may differ from one another, the various positive rites just reviewed have one feature in common: They are all carried out with confidence, joy, and enthusiasm. Although the wait for a future and contingent event is never without uncertainty, usually the rain falls when the season comes, and the animal and plant species reproduce on schedule. Repeated experience has shown that the rites generally bring about the hoped-for effect that is their *raison d'être*. They are celebrated with assurance, and with rejoicing in advance of the happy event they induce and announce. The actions contribute to that state of mind. To be sure, the seriousness that always attends a religious ceremony marks them, but that seriousness precludes neither high spirits nor joy.

Those ceremonies are joyful. But there are sad ceremonies as well, whose purpose is to meet a calamity or to remember and mourn one. These rites take on a distinctive form that I will characterize and explain. Since they reveal a new aspect of religious life, it is all the more necessary to examine them separately.

I propose to call ceremonies of this type "piacular." The advantage of the term "piaculum" is that while suggesting the idea of expiation, it nevertheless has a much broader meaning. Any misfortune, anything that is ominous, and anything that motivates feelings of disquiet or fear requires a piaculum

\*Durkheim formulated this concept of rites conducted on the occasion of death, misfortune, or collective crisis that are not expressions of individual feeling. He introduced the term into the study of religion and ritual. See the *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*, London, 1986.

and is therefore called piacular.<sup>1</sup> This word seems well suited to designating rites that are conducted under conditions of uncertainty or sadness.

## I

Mourning offers us an initial, and important, example of piacular rites.

The various rites used for mourning must be distinguished. Some consist only of prohibitions: It is forbidden to pronounce the name of the deceased<sup>2</sup> or to remain at the place where the death occurred;<sup>3</sup> the relatives, especially the female ones, must abstain from all communication with outsiders;<sup>4</sup> the ordinary occupations of life are suspended, just as they are during feasts;<sup>5</sup> and so on. Since all these practices belong to the negative cult and are explained as rites of that sort, they need not concern us here. They arise from the fact that the deceased is a sacred being. As a result of contagion, everything that is or was in contact with him is in a religious state that precludes all contact with the things of profane life.

But mourning consists of more than prohibitions to be respected. Positive acts are required, and kin are both the agents and the objects of them.

These rites quite commonly begin as soon as death seems imminent. Here is a scene that Spencer and Gillen witnessed among the Warramunga. A totemic rite had just been celebrated, and the actors and spectators were leaving the sacred ground when suddenly a piercing scream arose from the

<sup>1</sup>"*Piacularia auspicia appellabant quae sacrificantibus tristia portendebant*" (Paul ex. Fest., p. 244, ed. Muller). [They used to call the auspices piacularia auspices, which portended sad things to the people sacrificing. Trans.] The word *piaculum* is even used as a synonym of misfortune. "*Vettonica herba*," says Pliny [The Elder, *Natural History*], "*tantumque gloriae habet ut domus in qua sata sit tuta existimetur a piaculis omnibus*" (XXV, 8, 46). [The vetonica herb is so renowned that the house in which it is planted is considered safe from all piacula. I am indebted to Kathryn Argetsinger for these Latin translations.]

<sup>2</sup>[Sir Baldwin] Spencer and [Francis James] Gillen, *Northern Tribes [of Central Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1904, p. 526; [Richard] Eylmann, [*Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Süd Australien*], Berlin, D. Reumer, 1908], p. 239. Cf. above, p. 310.

<sup>3</sup>[Robert] Brough Smyth [*The Aborigines of Victoria*], vol. I [Melbourne: J. Ferres, 1878], p. 106; [James] Dawson, [*Australian Aborigines; The Languages and Customs of Several Tribes of Aborigines in the Western District of Victoria, Australia*], Melbourne, G. Robertson, 1881], p. 64; Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen*, p. 239.

<sup>4</sup>Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, p. 66; Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen*, p. 241.

<sup>5</sup>[Sir Baldwin] Spencer and [Francis James] Gillen, *Native Tribes [of Central Australia]*, London, Macmillan, 1899], p. 502; Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, p. 67.

encampment. A man was dying there. Immediately, the whole company began to run as fast as possible, and most of them began to scream even as they ran. "Between us and the camp," say these observers, "there was a deep stream on whose banks sat several men; scattered here and there, heads down between their knees, they cried and lamented."

As we crossed the stream, we found the camp broken up, as required by custom. Some of the women, who had come from all directions, lay upon the body of the dying man; others stood or knelt all around it, pushing the points of their digging sticks into the tops of their heads, thereby causing wounds from which the blood ran down over their faces. They kept up a continuous wailing all the while.

At this juncture, some men run up to the body, throwing themselves down upon it as the women get up; after a few moments, nothing is visible but a writhing mass of interlaced bodies. To one side, seated with their backs to the dying man, and still dressed in their ceremonial decorations, three men of the Thapungarti class let out piercing cries. After a minute or two, another man of the same class rushes onto the scene, screaming with pain and brandishing a stone knife. As soon as he reaches the camp, he makes such deep incisions across his thighs, into the muscles, that, unable to hold himself up, he finally falls on the ground in the midst of a group; two or three of his female relatives pull him away and apply their lips to his gaping wounds while he lies senseless.

The sick man did not die until late that evening. As soon as he had drawn his last breath, the same scene began again. This time, the moans were even more penetrating. Caught up in the same frenzy, men and women ran back and forth, cutting themselves with knives and pointed sticks; the women hit each other, with no one trying to fend off the blows. Finally, after an hour, a torchlight procession moved across the plain to the tree in whose branches the body had been placed.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever their violence, these displays are tightly controlled by etiquette. Custom designates the individuals who make bloody gashes on themselves; they must have specified kinship relations with the deceased. In the case Spencer and Gillen observed among the Warramunga, those who slashed their thighs were the maternal grandfather, maternal uncle, and wife's brother of the deceased.<sup>7</sup> Others are required to cut their whiskers and hair

<sup>6</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 516-517.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 520-521. The authors do not tell us whether these are tribal or blood relatives. The first hypothesis is the more likely.

and then cover their scalps with pipe clay. The women have especially rigorous obligations. They must cut their hair and cover their entire body with pipe clay; furthermore, total silence is imposed on them for the period of mourning, which can last up to two years. As a result of this prohibition, it is not uncommon among the Warramunga for all the women of a camp to be condemned to absolute silence. They become so accustomed to it that, even after the period of mourning expires, they voluntarily give up spoken language and prefer sign language (which they use with remarkable skill). Spencer and Gillen knew an old woman who had not spoken for more than twenty-four years.<sup>8</sup>

The ceremony I have described opens a long sequence of rites that occur one after the other for weeks and even months. It is repeated in various forms over the days that follow. Groups of men and women sit on the ground, crying, lamenting, and embracing one another at particular times. These ritual embraces are repeated often over the period of mourning. The individuals feel the need to come close to one another, it seems, and to commune intimately. They can be seen pressed together and entwined to the point of forming a single mass that emits loud moans.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the women go back to lacerating their heads, and they go to the extreme of applying the ends of red-hot sticks to the wounds they make, in order to aggravate them.<sup>10</sup>

Practices of this sort are common throughout Australia. Funeral rites—that is, the ritual attention given the corpse, the manner in which it is buried, and so forth—vary from tribe to tribe<sup>11</sup> and, within a single tribe, according to the age, sex, and social rank of the individuals.<sup>12</sup> But the ceremonies of

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 525–526. Although only an abstinence, this prohibition against speaking, specifically women's, has all the signs of a piacular rite, for it is a way of inconveniencing oneself. This is why I mention it here. Fasting also can be either a piacular or an ascetic rite, depending on the circumstances. It depends on the conditions in which the fasting occurs and the aim sought (see below, p. 400, on the difference between these two sorts of rites).

<sup>9</sup>A plate in Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 525, illustrates this rite quite vividly.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 522.

<sup>11</sup>On the principal kinds of funeral rites, see [Alfred William] Howitt, *Native Tribes [of South-East Australia]*, New York, Macmillan, 1904], pp. 446–508, for the tribes of the southeast; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 505, and Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 497ff., for the tribes of the center; [Walter Edmund] Roth, *North Queensland Ethnography*, Bull. 9, in *RAM*, VI, part 5, 1907, pp. 365ff. (“Burial Ceremonies and Disposal of the Dead”).

<sup>12</sup>See, for example, Roth, “Burial Ceremonies,” p. 368; [Edward John] Eyre, *Journals of Expeditions [of Discovery] into Central Australia* [London, T. and W. Boone, 1845], vol. II, pp. 344–345, 347.

mourning itself vary only in detail, repeating the same theme everywhere. Everywhere, there is the same silence punctuated by wailing,<sup>13</sup> the same obligation to cut the hair or beard<sup>14</sup> and cover the head with pipe clay, ashes, or even excrement;<sup>15</sup> everywhere, finally, there is the same frenzy of beating, lacerating, and burning oneself. In the center of Victoria, "when there is a death, the women cry, lament, and tear the skin of their temples with their fingernails. The relatives of the deceased lacerate themselves furiously, especially if they have lost a son. The father hits his head with a tomahawk and sobs bitterly. The mother, seated near the fire, burns her breast and abdomen with a stick reddened in the fire. . . . Sometimes, these burns are so cruel that death results."<sup>16</sup>

According to an account by Brough Smyth, here is what occurs in the southern tribes of the same state. Once the body is lowered into the grave,

the widow begins her funeral observances. She shears off the hair above her forehead, and, reaching outright frenzy, takes hold of red-hot sticks and applies them to her chest, arms, legs, and thighs. She seems to enjoy the tortures she inflicts on herself. It would be rash and, besides, useless to try to stop her. When she is so exhausted that she can no longer walk, she goes on trying to kick the ashes of the fire and throw them in all directions. Having fallen on the ground, she takes ashes into her hands and rubs her wounds with them; then she scratches her face (the only part of her body that the sticks passed through the fire have not touched). The blood that flows mingles with the ashes that cover her wounds and, still scraping herself, she laments and cries out.<sup>17</sup>

The description of mourning rites among the Kurnai that Howitt gives us is remarkably similar to the preceding. Once the body has been wrapped in opossum skin and enclosed in a bark shroud, a hut is built, and in it the relatives gather. "There, lying on the ground, they lament their fate, saying for example: 'Why have you left us?' From time to time, their grief is inten-

<sup>13</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 500; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 507, 508; Eylmann [*Die Eingeborenen*], p. 241; Mrs. Langloh Parker [Catherine Sommerville Field Parker], *The Euahlayi Tribe* [London: A. Constable, 1905], pp. 83ff.; Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. I, p. 118.

<sup>14</sup>Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, p. 66; Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 466; Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen*, pp. 239-240.

<sup>15</sup>Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. I, p. 113.

<sup>16</sup>W. E. Stanbridge, *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, n.s., vol. I, p. 286.

<sup>17</sup>Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. I, p. 104.



sified by penetrating moans from one of them: The wife of the deceased cries, 'My husband is dead,' or the mother, 'My child is dead.' Each of those present repeats the same cry: Only the words change, depending upon the tie of kinship each has with the deceased. Using sharpened stones or tomahawks, they beat and tear themselves until their heads and bodies stream with blood. The cries and moans continue through the night."<sup>18</sup>

Sadness is not the only feeling expressed during these ceremonies. A kind of anger is usually mingled with it. The relatives apparently need somehow to avenge the death suffered. They are seen throwing themselves upon and trying to wound each other. The attack is sometimes real and sometimes pretended.<sup>19</sup> There are even cases in which a kind of dueling is organized. Among the Kaitish, the hair of the deceased goes by right to his son-in-law. In turn, the son-in-law must go, together with a company of relatives and friends, to challenge one of his tribal brothers (that is, a man who belongs to the same marriage class as he and who, as such, could also have married the daughter of the deceased). The challenge may not be refused, and the two combatants inflict serious injuries upon one another's shoulders and thighs. When the duel is over, the challenger gives his adversary the hair he had conditionally inherited. The adversary leaves, in his own turn, to challenge and fight another of his tribal brothers to whom the precious relic is then transmitted, but always conditionally; in this way it passes from hand to hand and circulates from group to group.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, some part of these same feelings enters into the sort of rage with which each relative beats, burns, or slashes himself. A pain that reaches such great intensity does not go without anger. One cannot but be struck by the similarities of these customs to those of the vendetta. Both arise from the same principle: that death calls for the shedding of blood. The only difference is that the victims are relatives in one case and strangers in the other. Although we need not specifically discuss the vendetta, which falls under the domain of legal institutions, it is appropriate to show how it is connected to the mourning rites, whose end it announces.<sup>21</sup>

In some societies, mourning concludes with a ceremony whose effervescence matches or even surpasses that produced during the opening ceremonies. Among the Arunta, this rite of cloture is called *Urpmilchima*.

<sup>18</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 459. Similar scenes will be found in Eyre, *Journals of Expedition*, vol. II, pp. 255 n, 347; Roth, "Burial Ceremonies," especially pp. 394, 395; [George] Grey, [*Journal of the Two Expeditions in North Western and Western Australia*, London, T. and W. Boone, 1841], vol. II, pp. 320ff.

<sup>19</sup>Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. I, pp. 104, 112; Roth, "Burial Ceremonies," p. 382.

<sup>20</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 511-512.

<sup>21</sup>Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, p. 67; Roth, "Burial Ceremonies," pp. 366-367.

Spencer and Gillen were present at two of these. One was conducted in honor of a man, the other of a woman. Here is the description they give of the woman's.<sup>22</sup>

They begin by making ornaments of a very special type, which are called Chimurilia by the men and Aramurilia by the women. Using a sort of resin, they glue small animal bones (which have previously been collected and stored) to locks of hair furnished by relatives of the dead woman. They attach these pendants to one of those headbands of the kind that women often wear, adding white cockatoo and parakeet feathers to it. When these preparations are complete, the women gather in their camp. They paint their bodies with different colors, according to the degree of their kinship with the deceased. After having held themselves in a mutual embrace for about ten minutes, wailing all the while, they begin to walk toward the tomb. At a certain distance along the way, they meet a blood brother of the deceased, who is accompanied by some of her tribal brothers. They all sit on the ground, and the wailing begins again. Then, a pitchi<sup>23</sup> containing the Chimurilias is presented to the older brother, who presses it against his stomach; this is said to be a means of lessening his pain. They bring out one of these Chimurilias, and the mother of the dead woman puts it on her head for a few moments. Then it is put back into the pitchi, which the other men take turns pressing against their breasts. Finally, the brother places the Chimurilias on the heads of the two older sisters, and they set out again for the tomb. En route, the mother throws herself on the ground several times, trying to slash her head with a pointed stick. Each time, the other women lift her up again and seem absorbed in preventing her from hurting herself. Once at the tomb, she throws herself on the mound and tries to destroy it with her hands, while the other women literally dance on top of her. The tribal mothers and aunts (father's sisters of the dead woman) follow her example. They, too, throw themselves on the ground, beating and tearing at one another. In the end, blood streams over their entire bodies. After a time, they are pulled away. The older sisters then make a hole in the earth of the tomb, into which they place the Chimurilias, which have previously been broken into pieces. Once again, the tribal mothers throw themselves on the ground and slash each other's heads. At this moment, "the crying and wailing of the women who have remained all around seemed to rouse them to the ultimate degree of excitement. The blood that flowed the length of their bodies, over the pipe clay

<sup>22</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 508-510.

<sup>23</sup>The small wooden vessel already described, above p. 338.

with which they were covered, gave them the appearance of ghosts. At the end, the old mother remained alone lying on the tomb, completely exhausted and groaning feebly." The others then lifted her up again, and removed the pipe clay in which she had been covered. This was the end of the ceremony and of the mourning.<sup>24</sup>

Among the Warramunga, the final rite has rather special features. Although the shedding of blood seems to have no place in it, the collective effervescence is expressed differently. Among this people, before the body is finally buried, it is laid out on a sort of platform in the branches of a tree and left there slowly to decompose until only the bones remain. The bones are then collected and, with the exception of one humerus, placed inside an anthill. The humerus is wrapped in a bark sheath that is decorated in various ways. The sheath is carried to the camp amid the shrieks and moans of women. In the days that follow, the Warramunga conduct a series of totemic ceremonies, which refer to the totem of the deceased and to the mythical history of the ancestors from whom the clan is descended. When all these ceremonies are over, they move on to the rite of cloture.

A trench one foot deep and fifteen feet long is made on the ceremonial ground. A totemic design has previously been drawn on the ground at a distance from it, the design representing the totem of the deceased and certain places where the ancestor sojourned. A small trench has been dug in the ground very near this design. Ten decorated men then advance, one after the other. With their hands crossed behind their heads and their legs apart, they stand astride the trench. When the signal is given, the women rush from the camp, in the deepest silence. When they are near, they get into single file, the last holding in her hands the sheath containing the humerus. Then they all throw themselves on the ground and, moving on their hands and knees between the spread legs of the men, crawl the full length of the trench. This scene marks a state of great sexual excitement. As soon as the last woman has passed, the sheath is taken away from her and carried toward the hole, near which stands an old man; he breaks the bone in one stroke, and the pieces are speedily buried. During this time, the women have remained farther away with their backs to the scene, which they are forbidden to watch. But when they hear the blow of the axe, they flee, shrieking and moaning. The rite is over; the mourning done.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 508–510. The other last rite that Spencer and Gillen attended is described on pp. 503–508 of the same work. It does not differ fundamentally from the one I have just analyzed.

<sup>25</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 531–540.

## II

These rites belong to a category very different from those I have constructed thus far. This is not to say that important resemblances between them cannot be found, and there will be occasion to note those; but the differences are perhaps more obvious. Instead of joyful dances, songs, and dramatic performances, which entertain and relax the spirit, there are tears and laments—in short, the most varied displays of anguished sorrow and a kind of mutual pity that takes up the entire scene. Although there certainly is shedding of blood in the course of the Intichiuma, that is an offering made out of pious enthusiasm. So although the actions resemble one another, the feelings they express are different and even opposite. Similarly, ascetic rites do indeed involve abstinences, prohibitions, and mutilations that must be borne with impassive firmness and a kind of serenity. But here, despondency, cries, and tears are the rule. The ascetic tortures himself in order to prove—in the eyes of his neighbor as well as his own—that he is above suffering. In mourning, people hurt themselves in order to prove that they are in the grip of suffering. All these signs are recognizable as characteristic traits of piacular rites.

How may these rites be explained?

One initial fact remains constant: Mourning is not the spontaneous expression of individual emotions.<sup>26</sup> If the relatives cry, lament, and beat themselves black and blue, the reason is not that they feel personally affected by the death of their kinsman. In particular cases, to be sure, the sadness expressed may happen to be truly felt.<sup>27</sup> But generally there is no relationship between the feelings felt and the actions done by those who take part in the rite:<sup>28</sup> If, at the very moment when the mourners seem most overcome by the pain, someone turns to them to talk about some secular interest, their faces and tone often change instantly, taking on a cheerful air, and they speak with all the gaiety in the world.<sup>29</sup> Mourning is not the natural response of a private sensibility hurt by a cruel loss. It is an obligation imposed by the group. One laments not simply because one is sad but because one is obli-

<sup>26</sup>Contrary to what [Frank Byron] Jevons says, *Introduction to the History of Religions* [London, Methuen, 1896], pp. 46ff.

<sup>27</sup>This is what leads Dawson to say that people mourn sincerely (*Australian Aborigines*, p. 66). But Eylmann declares that he has known only one case of wounding for sadness really felt (*Die Eingeborenen*, p. 113).

<sup>28</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 510.

<sup>29</sup>Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen*, pp. 238–239.

gated to lament. It is a ritual facade that must be adopted out of respect for custom, but one that is largely independent of the individuals' emotional states. Moreover, this obligation is sanctioned by mythic or social penalties. It is believed, for example, that when a relative does not properly carry out mourning, the soul of the deceased dogs his steps and kills him.<sup>30</sup> In other cases, society does not leave the punishment of the neglectful to religious forces but steps in to punish ritual lapses. If a brother-in-law does not carry out the funeral obligations he owes to his father-in-law, if he does not make the mandatory incisions on himself, his tribal fathers-in-law take his wife back and give her to someone else.<sup>31</sup> In order to do right by custom, therefore, sometimes they force tears artificially.<sup>32</sup>

Where does this obligation come from?

Ethnographers and sociologists have generally been satisfied with the natives' own answer to this question. The natives say that the dead man wants to be mourned, that he is offended if denied his rightful tribute of sorrow, and that the only way to prevent his anger is to conform to his wishes.<sup>33</sup>

But this mythological explanation merely changes the terms of the problem and does not solve it; we still need to know why the dead man imperatively demands mourning. It will be said that it is in the nature of man to want to be mourned and missed: But to use this feeling to explain the complex apparatus of rites that constitute mourning is to ascribe affective needs to the Australian that even the civilized man does not display. Let us grant something that is not self-evident *a priori*: that the idea of not being too quickly forgotten is naturally pleasing to the man who thinks of the future. Even if that was true, we would still need to establish that it has always had so large a place in the hearts of the living that an attitude based almost entirely on such a concern could reasonably have been ascribed to the dead. It seems especially improbable that such a feeling could have managed so completely to preoccupy and impassion men who just barely have the habit of thinking beyond the present. It is far from true that the desire to live on in the memory of the survivors must be regarded as the root of mourning. Rather, one begins to ask oneself whether it is not mourning itself, once instituted, that awakened the notion of and taste for posthumous lamentation.

If we know what primitive mourning is, the standard interpretation seems all the more untenable. It consists not merely of pious regrets accorded

<sup>30</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 507; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 498.

<sup>31</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 500; Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen*, p. 227.

<sup>32</sup>Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. I, p. 114.

<sup>33</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 510.

to the one who is no more but also of harsh abstinences and cruel sacrifices. The rite not only demands that one think of the deceased in a melancholy way but that one beat, bruise, lacerate, and burn oneself. We have even seen that people in mourning are so carried away in torturing themselves that they sometimes do not survive their wounds. What would be the dead man's reason for imposing such tortures upon them? Such cruelty on his part indicates something other than a desire not to be forgotten. For the deceased to find pleasure in seeing his own suffer, he would have to hate them and thirst for their blood. This ferocity will no doubt seem natural to those for whom every spirit is necessarily an evil and dreaded power. But we know that there are all kinds of spirits. How does it happen that the soul of the deceased should necessarily be an evil spirit? As long as the man is alive, he loves his kin and trades favors with them. Is it not strange that his soul should slough off his earlier feelings the instant it is freed from the body, so as to become a mean and tormenting genie? Yet generally, the dead man retains the personality of the one who lived; he has the same character, the same hatreds, and the same affections. So the metamorphosis is far from being self-evident and comprehensible. True, the natives implicitly concede that point when they explain the rite by the demands of the deceased; but the question precisely is to know from whence that idea came to them. Far from our being able to regard that metamorphosis as a truism, it is as obscure as the rite itself and, hence, inadequate to account for the rite.

Finally, although one may have found the reasons for this stunning transformation, one would still have to explain why it is only temporary, for it does not last beyond mourning. Once the rites have been done, the deceased once again becomes what he was in life: an affectionate and devoted relative. He places the new capacities he gains from his new condition at the disposal of his own.<sup>34</sup> From then on, he is seen as a good genie, always ready to help those he once tormented. From whence could these successive reversals have arisen? If the bad feelings ascribed to the soul arise only from the fact that it is no longer alive, then they ought to remain invariant. And if mourning derives from such feelings, then it ought to be without end.

These mythical explanations do not translate the rite itself but the idea the individual has of it. In order to confront the reality they do translate but distort, we can put them aside. While mourning differs from other forms of the positive cult, it resembles them in one respect: It too is made of collec-

<sup>34</sup>Several examples of this belief are to be found in Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 435. Cf. Strehlow, *Aranda*, vol. I, pp. 15-16 and vol. II, p. 7.

tive rites that bring about a state of effervescence in those who take part. The intense feelings are different; the wild intensity is the same. Presumably, therefore, the explanation of the joyful rites is applicable to the sad rites, provided their terms are transposed.

When an individual dies, the family group to which he belongs feels diminished, and it comes together to react to this diminishment. A shared misfortune has the same effect as the approach of a happy event. It enlivens collective feelings, which lead individuals to seek one another out and come together. In fact, we have seen this need affirm itself sometimes with special energy—people kissing and putting their arms around one another, pressing as close together as possible. But the emotional state in which the group finds itself reflects the circumstances it is then going through. Not only do the kin most immediately affected bring their personal sorrow to the gathering, but the society exerts moral pressure on its members, and they bring their feelings into harmony with the situation. If society permitted them to remain indifferent to the blow that strikes and diminishes it, it would be proclaiming that it does not hold its rightful place in their hearts. Indeed, it would deny itself. For a family to tolerate that one of its members should die without being mourned would give witness thereby that it lacks moral unity and cohesiveness: It abdicates; it renounces its existence.

For his part, when the individual feels firmly attached to the society to which he belongs, he feels morally bound to share in its grief and its joy. To abandon it would be to break the ties that bind him to the collectivity, to give up wanting collectivity, and to contradict himself. If the Christian fasts and mortifies himself during the commemorative feasts of the Passion and the Jew on the anniversary of Jerusalem's fall, it is not to give way to sadness spontaneously felt. In those circumstances, the believer's inward state is in disproportion to the harsh abstinences to which he submits. If he is sad, it is first and foremost because he forces himself to be and disciplines himself to be; and he disciplines himself to be in order to affirm his faith. The attitude of the Australian in mourning is to be understood in the same way. If he cries and moans, it is not only to express individual sadness but also to fulfill a duty to the feeling—an obligatory feeling of which the society around him does not fail to remind him on occasion.

We know from elsewhere how human feelings intensify when they are collectively affirmed. Like joy, sadness is heightened and amplified by its reverberation from one consciousness to the next, and then it gradually expresses itself overtly as unrestrained and convulsive movement. This no longer is the joyful animation that we observed awhile ago; it is cries and shrieks of pain. Every person is pulled along by every other, and something

like a panic of sadness occurs. When the pain reaches such a pitch, it becomes suffused with a kind of anger and exasperation. One feels the need to break or destroy something. One attacks oneself or others. One strikes, wounds, or burns oneself, or one attacks someone else, in order to strike, wound, or burn him. Thus was established the mourning custom of giving oneself over to veritable orgies of torture. It seems to me probable that the vendetta and head hunting have no other origin. If every death is imputed to some magical spell and if, for that reason, it is believed that the dead person must be avenged, the reason is a felt need to find a victim at all costs on whom the collective sorrow and anger can be discharged. This victim will naturally be sought outside, for an outsider is a subject *minoris resistentiae*\*; since he is not protected by the fellow-feeling that attaches to a relative or a neighbor, nothing about him blocks and neutralizes the bad and destructive feelings aroused by the death. Probably for the same reason, a woman serves more often than a man as the passive object of the most cruel mourning rites. Because she has lower social significance, she is more readily singled out to fill the function of scapegoat.

We see that this explanation of mourning leaves ideas of soul or spirit entirely out of account. The only forces really at work are of an entirely impersonal nature; these forces are the emotions that the death of a member arouses in the group. But the primitive does not know the psychic mechanism from which all these practices arise. Thus, when he tries to account for them, he has to forge a quite different explanation for himself. All he knows is that he must painfully mortify himself. Because every obligation arouses the idea of a will that obligates, he looks around him for the source of the constraint he feels. Now there is a moral power whose reality seems to him certain and altogether apt for this role—and that is the soul set at liberty by the death. For what could be more interested than the soul in the repercussions of its own demise for the living? Therefore, we imagine that if the living inflict unnatural treatment upon themselves, it is to give in to the soul's demands. The idea of the soul must therefore have entered the mythology of mourning after the fact. Moreover, since inhuman demands are attributed to the soul, we must on those grounds suppose that it abandoned all human feeling when it left the body it formerly animated. Thus is explained the metamorphosis that

\*Less able to resist. This account of scapegoating, as a process by which society reaffirms itself in the face of loss, is closely analogous to Durkheim's 1899 account of anti-Semitism in France: "When society undergoes suffering, it feels the need to find someone whom it can hold responsible for its sickness, on whom it can avenge its misfortunes: and those against whom opinion already discriminates are naturally designated for this role. These are the pariahs who serve as expiatory victims." Quoted in Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (London, Allen Lane, 1973), p. 345.



makes a dreaded enemy out of yesterday's relative. This transformation is not the genesis of mourning but rather its sequel. It expresses the change that has occurred in the emotional state of the group. The dead man is not mourned because he is feared; he is feared because he is mourned.

This change in emotional state can only be temporary. The rites of mourning both result from and conclude it. They gradually neutralize the very causes that gave them birth. The basis of mourning is the impression of enfeeblement that is felt by the group when it loses a member. But this very impression has the effect of bringing the individuals close to one another, putting them into closer touch, and inducing in them the same state of soul. And from all this comes a sensation of renewed strength, which counteracts the original enfeeblement. People cry together because they continue to be precious to one another and because, regardless of the blow that has fallen upon it, the collectivity is not breached. To be sure, in that case they only share sad emotions in common; but to commune in sadness is still to commune, and every communion of consciousnesses increases social vitality, in whatever form it is done.

The extraordinary violence of the displays that necessarily and obligatorily express the shared sorrow is evidence that, even at this moment, society is more alive and active than ever. In fact, when social feeling suffers a painful shock, it reacts with greater force than usual. One never holds so tightly to one's family as when it has just been tested. This excess of energy all the more thoroughly erases the effects of the crippling that occurred to begin with, and in this way the sensation of cold that death everywhere brings with it is dissipated. The group feels its strength gradually coming back to it; it begins again to hope and to live. One comes out of mourning, and one comes out of it thanks to mourning itself. But since the idea people have of the soul reflects the moral state of the society, that idea must change when the state changes. While the people were in the period of dejection and anguish, they conceived of the soul as having the traits of an evil being, interested only in persecuting men. Now that they again feel confidence and security, they must concede that the soul has recovered its original nature and its original feelings of tenderness and solidarity. Thus can be explained the very different ways in which it is conceived at different periods of its existence.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup>One may ask why repeated ceremonies are necessary to bring about the relief that follows mourning. First, it is because funerals are often very long, with multiple procedures that spread out over many months. In this way, they prolong and maintain the moral disturbance caused by the death (cf. [Robert] Hertz, ["Contribution à une étude sur la] représentation collective de la mort," *AS*, vol. X [1907], pp. 48ff.). Furthermore, death is a profound change, with wide and lasting repercussions for the group. It takes time for those effects to be neutralized.

Not only do mourning rites bring into being certain of the secondary characteristics ascribed to the soul, but perhaps, as well, the idea that the soul outlives the body is not alien to them. To be in a position to understand the practices to which he subjects himself when a relative dies, man has no choice but to believe that those practices are not a matter of indifference to the deceased. The shedding of blood that is so widely practiced in mourning is actually a sacrifice to the dead man.<sup>36</sup> It is done because some part of the deceased person lives on, and since what lives on is not the body, which is obviously not moving and is decomposing, that part can only be the soul. Of course, it is impossible to say for certain what role these considerations played in the origin of the idea of life after death. But probably the influence of the cult was in this case what it is elsewhere. Rites are easier to explain when they are thought of as being addressed to personal beings; in this way, men were prompted to extend the influence of mythic personalities in religious life. So that they could account for mourning, they extended the existence of the soul beyond the tomb. Here is a further example of the way in which rites react upon beliefs.

### III

Death is not the only event that can unsettle a community. There are a good many other occasions for men to be saddened and become disquieted. And so we might anticipate that even the Australians know and conduct peculiar rites other than those of mourning. It is noteworthy, however, that only a small number of examples can be found in observers' accounts.

One rite of this sort very closely resembles those just studied. Recall that, among the Arunta, each local group ascribes exceptionally important virtues to its collection of churingas. It is a collective palladium, whose fate is linked with that of the collectivity. Thus, when enemies or white men manage to uncover one of these religious treasures, the loss is deemed a public calamity. This misfortune is the occasion of a rite that has all the characteristics of mourning. Bodies are covered with white pipe clay, and at the camp two weeks are spent in wailing and lamentation.<sup>37</sup> This is further evidence that mourning is caused not by the manner in which the soul of the dead person

<sup>36</sup>In a case reported by Grey, based on an observation by Bussel, the rite is quite like sacrifice, with the blood being poured onto the corpse itself (Grey, *Journal of Two Expeditions*, vol. II, p. 330). In other instances, there is a sort of beard offering, in which the men in mourning cut off part of their beards, which they throw on the corpse (*ibid.*, p. 335).

<sup>37</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, pp. 135-136.

is conceived but by impersonal causes, by the moral state of the group. Here, indeed, is a rite whose structure cannot be distinguished from mourning proper and yet does not depend upon any idea of spirit or evil demon.<sup>38</sup>

The distress in which society finds itself when the harvests have been insufficient is another circumstance that gives rise to ceremonies of this sort. "The natives who live in the environs of Lake Eyre," says Eylmann, "also try to conjure away the inadequacy of the food supply with secret ceremonies. But several of the ritual practices observed in this region are different from those previously discussed: They seek to act upon the religious powers or forces of nature not with symbolic dances, mimetic movements, and dazzling decorations, but with sufferings that the individuals inflict upon themselves. In the northern territories, as well, they strive to appease those powers that are ill-disposed toward men, by using tortures such as prolonged fasts, vigils, dances carried on until the dancers are exhausted, and physical suffering of all kinds."<sup>39</sup> The torments the natives undergo for this purpose sometimes leave them so worn out that they are unable to hunt for many days.<sup>40</sup>

These practices are used most of all to combat drought, since lack of water leads to general famine. They resort to violent means of remedying this evil. One of the means used is tooth extraction. Among the Kaitish, for example, an incisor is extracted from an individual and hung from a tree.<sup>41</sup> Among the Dieri, the idea of rain is closely associated with that of bloody incisions made on the skin of the thorax and arms.<sup>42</sup> Among the same people, when the drought is very severe, the grand council meets and summons the whole tribe. It is a genuinely tribal event. Women are sent forth in all directions to call the people together at a prescribed place and time. Once gathered, they are heard to groan, to scream in piercing voices about the miserable state of the land, and to ask the Mura-muras (mythical ancestors) to confer on them the power to make abundant rain fall.<sup>43</sup> In cases (very rare, however) when there has been too much, an analogous ceremony to stop the

<sup>38</sup>Of course, each churinga is considered to be connected with an ancestor. Still, lost churingas are not mourned in order to appease the spirits of the ancestors. I have shown elsewhere (pp. 121-122) that the idea of the ancestor entered into the idea of the churinga only in a secondary way, and after the fact.

<sup>39</sup>Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen*, p. 207; cf. p. 116.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>42</sup>[Alfred William] Howitt, "The Dieri [and Other Kindred Tribes of Central Australia]", *JAI*, vol. XX (1891), p. 93.

<sup>43</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, p. 394.

rain takes place. The old men then enter into a state of out-and-out frenzy,<sup>44</sup> and the cries made by the crowd are pathetic to hear.<sup>45</sup>

Spencer and Gillen recount a ceremony for us, under the name Intichiuma, that may well have the same purpose and origin as the preceding. Physical torture is used to make an animal species multiply. There is a clan among the Urabunna that has a kind of snake called *wadnungadni* as its totem. This is how the chief goes about "making sure that animal does not fail to reproduce." After decorating himself, he kneels on the ground, with his arms fully extended. A helper pinches the skin of the right arm between his fingers while the celebrant forces a pointed bone five inches long through the fold thereby formed. The left arm is treated in the same way. This self-mutilation is held to produce the desired result.<sup>46</sup> Among the Dieri, an analogous rite is used to make the wild chicken lay eggs: The celebrants pierce their scrotums.<sup>47</sup> In certain other tribes of Lake Eyre, the ear is pierced to make the yams produce.<sup>48</sup>

Partial or total famines are not the only disasters that can befall a tribe. Other events that threaten or seem to threaten the group's existence occur from time to time. This is the case, for example, of the southern lights. The Kurnai believe that it is a fire lit in the sky by the high god Mungan-ngaua. This is why, when they see the lights, they fear that fire will spread to earth and engulf them. The result is a great effervescence in the camp. The Kurnai shake the dried hand of a dead man, to which they ascribe an assortment of virtues, and they give out yells such as: "Send it back; do not let us burn." At the same time, by order of the elders, there are exchanges of wives, which always signals great excitement.<sup>49</sup> The same sexual license is reported among the Wiimbaio whenever some calamity appears imminent, and especially in times of epidemic.<sup>50</sup>

Under the influence of these ideas, mutilation and the shedding of blood are sometimes regarded as efficacious means of curing sicknesses. Among the

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 396.

<sup>45</sup>Communication of [S.] Gason, ["Of the Tribes Dieyerie, Auminie, Yandrawontha, Yarawurka, Piladapa, Lat. 31°S., Long. 138° 55' "], *JAI*, vol. XXIV (1895), p. 175.

<sup>46</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 286.

<sup>47</sup>[S.] Gason, "The Dieyerie Tribe," in [Edward Micklethwaite] Curr, *The Australian Race: Its Origin, Languages, Customs, Place of Landing in Australia, and the Routes by Which It Spread Itself over That Continent*, vol. II, Melbourne, John Ferres, 1886-1887, p. 68.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.; Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen*, p. 208.

<sup>49</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribe*, pp. 277, 430.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

Dieri, when a child has an accident, his relatives beat themselves on the head with sticks or boomerangs, until the blood streams down their faces. They believe they are relieving the child's pain thereby.<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere, people imagine they obtain the same result with an additional totemic ceremony.<sup>52</sup> These are analogous to the rite to erase the consequences of a ritual lapse, already considered.<sup>53</sup> To be sure, although in these last cases there are neither wounds nor blows nor physical sufferings of any kind, the rite does not differ in essence from the preceding ones. The point in all cases is to turn aside an evil or expiate a misdeed with extra ritual proceedings.

Such are the only piacular rites, other than rites of mourning, that I have managed to collect for Australia. In all likelihood, some must have escaped me, and we may surmise as well that others went unnoticed by the observers. Still, if only a few have been discovered up to now, the likely reason is that they do not count for much in the cult. Since the rites that express painful emotions are relatively few in primitive religions, we see how far those religions are from being daughters of apprehension and fear. No doubt, the reason is that although the Australian leads an impoverished existence compared to that of more civilized peoples, he by contrast asks so little of life that he contents himself with little. His only need is for nature to follow its normal course, for the seasons to move in regular succession, and for the rain to fall at the usual time, abundantly but not excessively. Great disturbances in the cosmic order are always unusual. Thus it was noteworthy that most of the regular piacular rites I reported above were observed in the tribes of the center, where droughts are frequent and constitute genuine public disasters. Still, it is surprising that piacular rites for the specific purpose of expiating sin appear to be almost entirely absent. Nonetheless the Australian, like any man, must commit ritual misdeeds that it would be in his interest to atone for. And so I raise the question whether the silence of the texts on this point may not be put down to inadequacies of observation.

Although the substantive evidence I have managed to call upon is sparse, it is nonetheless instructive.

When we study piacular rites in the more advanced religions, in which the religious forces are individualized, the rites seem to be closely connected

<sup>51</sup>Gason, *The Dieyerie Tribe*, vol. II, p. 69. The same procedure is used to redeem a ridiculous act. When, through clumsiness or otherwise, a person has made those near him laugh, he asks them to hit him on the head until the blood flows. Then things are restored and the person others were laughing at joins in the gaiety of those around him (*ibid.*, p. 70).

<sup>52</sup>Eylmann, *Die Eingeborenen*, pp. 212, 447.

<sup>53</sup>See above, p. 389.

with anthropomorphic ideas. If the faithful impose privations on themselves and undergo tortures, they do so to disarm the malevolence that they impute to sacred beings to whom they think they are subject. To appease the hate or anger of those beings, the faithful anticipate their demands, striking themselves so as not to be struck by them. It seems, then, that these practices could only have been born when gods and spirits were conceived of as moral persons susceptible to passions like those of humans. For this reason, Robertson Smith believed he could assign expiatory sacrifices and sacrificial offerings to a relatively recent date. According to him, the shedding of blood that is characteristic of these rites was at first merely a process of communion: Man spilled his blood on the altar to tighten the bonds between himself and his god. The rite presumably did not take on a piacular and punitive character until its original meaning had been forgotten and until the new idea people had of the sacred beings enabled them to ascribe a different function to it.<sup>54</sup>

But since piacular rites go as far back as the Australian societies, they cannot be assigned so recent an origin. Moreover, with one exception,<sup>55</sup> all those I have just mentioned are independent of any anthropomorphic idea, for they involve neither gods nor spirits. Abstinenances and bloodletting stop famines and cure sicknesses, acting on their own. The work of no spiritual being is thought to intrude between the rite and the effects it is thought to bring about. Hence it was only later that mythic personalities came onto the scene. They helped to make the ritual mechanism easier to imagine, once it was established, but they are not conditions of its existence. That mechanism was instituted for different reasons and owes its efficacy to a different cause.

It acts through the collective forces that it sets in motion. Does a misfortune threatening the collectivity seem imminent? The collectivity comes together, as it does in consequence of mourning, and a sense of disquiet naturally dominates the assembled group. As always, the effect of making these feelings shared is to intensify them. Through being affirmed, these feelings are excited and inflamed, reaching an intensity that is expressed in the equivalent intensity of the actions that express them. In the same way that people utter terrible cries upon the death of a close relative, they are caught up by the imminence of a collective misfortune and feel the need to tear and destroy. To satisfy this need, they strike and wound themselves and make their blood flow. But when emotions are as vivid as this, even if they are painful,

<sup>54</sup>[William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, lect. XI [London, A. and C. Black, 1889].

<sup>55</sup>According to Gason, this is true of the Dieri invoking the water Mura-muras in time of drought.

they are in no way depressing. Quite the contrary, they point to a state of effervescence that entails the mobilization of all our own active energy and, in addition, a further influx from outside ourselves.

That this excitation has arisen from a sad event matters little, for it is no less real and not specifically different from the one observed in joyful feasts. As a matter of fact, it sometimes manifests itself through movements of the same kind. The same frenzy takes hold of the faithful, along with the same inclination to sexual debauchery—a sure sign of great nervous overexcitement. Robertson Smith had already noticed this curious influence of the sad rites in the Semitic cults. “In difficult times,” he says, “when men’s thoughts were usually somber, they turned to the physical excitements of religion, just as, now, they take refuge in wine. Among the Semites, as a general rule, when worship began with wailing and lamentation—as in the mourning of Adonis or in the great expiatory rites that became common in later times—a sudden revolution created an explosion of gaiety and rejoicing to follow the gloomy service with which the ceremony had begun.”<sup>56</sup> In short, while the religious ceremonies start out from a disquieting or saddening fact, they retain their power to enliven the emotional state of the group and the individuals.

Simply by being collective, religious ceremonies raise the vital tone. When one feels life in oneself—in the form of painful anger or joyful enthusiasm—one does not believe in death; one is reassured, one takes greater courage, and, subjectively, everything happens as if the rite really had set aside the danger that was feared. This is how curative or preventive virtues came to be ascribed to the movements that the rite is made of: the cries uttered, the blood shed, the wounds inflicted upon oneself or others. And since these various torments necessarily cause suffering, in the end, suffering in itself is regarded as the means of conjuring away evil and curing sickness.<sup>57</sup> Later, when most of the religious forces had taken the form of personified spirits,\* the efficacy of these practices was explained by imagining their purpose to be propitiation of a malevolent or angry god. But these ideas reflect only the rite and the feelings it arouses; they are an interpretation of it, not its determining cause.

A ritual lapse works no differently. It, too, is a menace for the collectivity. It strikes at the moral existence of the collectivity because it strikes at the

\* *Personnalités spirituelles.*

<sup>56</sup>Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 262.

<sup>57</sup>It is possible, by the way, that the belief in the morally uplifting virtues of suffering (see above, p. 317) played some role in this. Since pain sanctifies and since it raises the religious level of the faithful, it can also uplift the faithful when they have fallen below the norm.

beliefs of the collectivity. But let the anger caused by a ritual misdeed be expressed openly and energetically, and the evil it caused is counteracted. If that anger is strongly felt by all, the reason is that the infraction committed is an exception, while the shared faith is still intact. Hence the moral unity of the group is not in danger. The pain inflicted as expiation is but a manifestation of this public anger and physical proof of its unanimity. In this way, the pain really does have the redeeming powers that people impute to it. Basically, the feeling at the root of the properly expiatory rites is no different in kind from the one we have found at the root of other piacular rites. It is a sort of angry sorrow, which tends to express itself through destructive acts. At times, this pain is relieved to the detriment of the very one who feels it; at times, it is at the expense of an outside third party. But the psychic mechanism is basically the same in both cases.<sup>58</sup>

#### IV

One of the greatest services Robertson Smith rendered to the science of religions is to have called attention to the ambiguity of the idea of the sacred.

Religious forces are of two kinds. Some are benevolent, guardians of physical and moral order, as well as dispensers of life, health, and all the qualities that men value. This is true of the totemic principle, which is spread out over the whole species, of the mythical ancestor, of the animal-protector, of civilizing heroes, and of tutelary gods in all their kinds and degrees. Whether they are thought of as distinct personalities or as diffused energies makes little difference. In both forms, they play the same role and affect the consciousness of the faithful in the same manner. They inspire a respect that is full of love and gratitude. The persons and things that are ordinarily in contact with them participate in the same feelings and the same quality. They are sacred persons and things. So, too, are the places consecrated to the cult, the objects used in the regular rites, the priests, the ascetics, and so on. On the other hand, there are evil and impure powers, bringers of disorder, causes of death and sickness, instigators of sacrilege. The only feelings man has for them is a fear that usually has a component of horror. Such are the forces on which and through which the sorcerer acts: those that come from corpses and from menstrual blood, those that unleash every profanation of holy [*saintes*] things, and so on. The spirits of the dead and the evil genies of all kinds are its personified forms.

Between these two categories of forces and beings, there is the sharpest possible contrast, up to and including the most radical antagonism. The good

<sup>58</sup>Cf. what I have said about expiation in my *Division du travail social*, 3d ed., Paris, F. Alcan, 1902, pp. 64ff.



and wholesome forces push far away from themselves those other forces, which negate and contradict them. Besides, the first are forbidden to the second. Any contact between them is considered the worst of profanations. This is the archetype of those prohibitions between sacred things of different kinds, whose existence I have mentioned along the way.<sup>59</sup> Since women during menstruation are impure, and especially so at the first appearance of the menses, they are rigorously sequestered at that time, and men must have no contact with them.<sup>60</sup> The bull roarers and the churingas are never in contact with a dead person.<sup>61</sup> A sacrilegious person is cut off from the society of the faithful and not allowed to take part in the cult. The whole of religious life gravitates around two opposite poles, then, their opposition being the same as that between the pure and the impure, the saint and the sacrilegious person, the divine and the diabolical.

But although opposite to one another, these two aspects of religious life are at the same time closely akin. First, both have the same relation to profane beings. They must abstain from all contact with impure things and with very holy [*saintes*] things. The former are no less forbidden than the latter, and they, too, are taken out of circulation, which is to say that they are also sacred [*sacrés*]. To be sure, the two do not provoke identical feelings. Disgust and horror are one thing and respect another. Nonetheless, for actions to be the same in both cases, the feelings expressed must not be different in kind. In fact, there actually is a certain horror in religious respect, especially when it is very intense; and the fear inspired by malignant powers is not without a certain reverential quality. Indeed, the shades of difference between these two attitudes are sometimes so elusive that it is not always easy to say in just which state of mind the faithful are. Among certain Semitic peoples, pork was forbidden, but one did not always know with certainty if it was forbidden as an impure thing or as a holy [*sainte*] thing.<sup>62</sup> And the same point can be applied to a very large number of dietary restrictions.

There is more: An impure thing or an evil power often becomes a holy thing or a tutelary power—and vice versa—without changing in nature, but

<sup>59</sup>See pp. 304–306 above.

<sup>60</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 460; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 601; Roth, [*Superstition, Magic and Medicine*], *North Queensland Ethnography*, Bull. 5 [Brisbane, G. A. Vaughn, 1903], p. 24. There is no need to multiply references in support of such a well-known fact.

<sup>61</sup>However, Spencer and Gillen cite a case in which churingas are placed under the head of the dead person (Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 156). As they acknowledge, however, this is unique and abnormal (*ibid.*, p. 157), and it is strenuously denied by Strehlow (*Aranda*, vol. II, p. 79).

<sup>62</sup>Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 153, cf. p. 446, the additional note titled "Holiness, Uncleaness and Taboo."

simply through a change in external circumstances. We have seen that the soul of the dead person, at first a dreaded principle, is transformed into a protective genie when the mourning is over. Similarly the corpse, which at first inspires only terror and distance, is later treated as a venerated relic. Funeral anthropophagy, widely practiced in the Australian societies, is evidence of this transformation.<sup>63</sup> The totemic animal is archetypically the holy being, but for him who wrongfully consumes its flesh, it is a principle of death. The person guilty of sacrilege is, generally speaking, only a profane person who has been infected by a benevolent religious force. Changing its nature when it changes its habitat, this force pollutes rather than sanctifies.<sup>64</sup> The blood that comes from the genital organs of a woman, though it is obviously as impure as that of the menses, is often used as a remedy against sickness.<sup>65</sup> The victim immolated in expiatory sacrifices is saturated with impurity, because the sins to be expiated have been made to converge upon it. However, once it is slaughtered, its flesh and blood are put to the most pious uses.<sup>66</sup>

Inversely, although communion is a religious procedure whose function is ordinarily consecration, it sometimes has the same effects as a sacrilege. Individuals who have communed together are, in certain cases, forced to flee one another, like carriers of plague. It is as though they have become sources of dangerous contamination for one another. The sacred bond that joins them separates them at the same time. Communion of this sort are common in Australia. One of the most typical has been observed among the Narrinyeri and neighboring tribes. When a child comes into the world, its parents carefully preserve its umbilical cord, which is thought to contain some part of the child's soul. Two individuals who exchange umbilical cords preserved in this way commune by the very fact of this exchange; it is as though they exchanged souls. But by the same token, they are forbidden to touch one another, to speak to one another, and even to see one another. It is as though they were objects of horror for one another.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup>Howitt, *Native Tribes*, pp. 448–450; Brough Smyth, *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. I, pp. 118, 120; Dawson, *The Australian Aborigines*, p. 67; Eyre, *Journals of Expedition*, vol. II, p. 257; [Walter Edmund] Roth, "Burial Ceremonies," p. 367.

<sup>64</sup>See pp. 324–325 above.

<sup>65</sup>Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 464; Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, p. 599.

<sup>66</sup>For example, among the Israelites, the altar is purified with the blood of the expiatory victim (Lev. 4: 5ff.); the flesh is burned, and the ashes are used to make a purifying water (Num.: 19.)

<sup>67</sup>Taplin, "The Narrinyeri Tribe," in [James Dominick Woods, *The Native Tribes of South Australia*, Adelaide, E. S. Wigg, 1879], pp. 32–34. When the two individuals who have exchanged their umbilical cords belong to different tribes, they are used as agents of intertribal commerce. In this case, the exchange of cords takes place shortly after their births and through the intermediary of their respective parents.

So the pure and the impure are not two separate genera but two varieties of the same genus that includes all sacred things. There are two sorts of sacred, lucky and unlucky; and not only is there no radical discontinuity between the two opposite forms, but the same object can pass from one to the other without changing its nature. The impure is made from the pure, and vice versa. The possibility of such transformations constitutes the ambiguity of the sacred.

But while Robertson Smith had a keen sense of this ambiguity, he never accounted for it explicitly. He confined himself to pointing out that since all religious forces are intense and contagious, in whatever direction their influence is exercised, the wise thing is to approach them with respectful precautions. It seemed to him that the family resemblance they all have could be accounted for in this way, despite the contrasts that otherwise distinguish them. But first of all, that only shifted the question. Still to be shown was how the powers of evil come to have the intensity and contagiousness of the others. Put differently, how does it happen that these powers are of a religious nature? Second, the energy and volatility common to both do not enable us to understand how, despite the conflict between them, they can transform themselves into one another or replace one another in their respective functions, or how the pure can contaminate while the impure sometimes sanctifies.<sup>68</sup>

The explanation of the piacular rites that I have just proposed enables us to answer this twofold question.

We have seen that the evil powers actually result from and symbolize these rites. When society is going through events that sadden, distress, or anger it, it pushes its members to give witness to their sadness, distress, or anger through expressive actions. It demands crying, lamenting, and wounding oneself and others as a matter of duty. It does so because those collective demonstrations, as well as the moral communion they simultaneously bear witness to and reinforce, restore to the group the energy that the events

<sup>68</sup>It is true that [William Robertson] Smith does not accept the reality of these substitutions and transformations. According to him, the expiatory victim could purify only because it was itself in no way impure. From the beginning, it was a holy thing; it was intended to reestablish, through communion, the ties of kinship that united the worshipper to his god, after a ritual lapse had loosened or broken them. For that operation, they chose an exceptionally holy animal, so that communion would be more efficacious and might remove the effects of the wrong more completely. Only when they had ceased to understand the meaning of the rite was the sacrosanct animal considered impure (*Religion of the Semites*, pp. 347ff.). But it is inadmissible that such universal beliefs and practices as those that we find at the basis of expiatory sacrifice should result from a mere error of interpretation. In fact, it is beyond doubt that the impurity of the sin was loaded onto the expiatory victim. Moreover, we have just seen that these transformations from pure to impure, or vice versa, are found in the simplest societies we know.

threatened to take away, and thus enables it to recover its equilibrium. It is this experience that man is interpreting when he imagines evil beings outside him whose hostility, whether inherent or transitory, can be disarmed only through human suffering. So these beings are nothing other than collective states objectified; they are society itself seen in one of its aspects. But we also know that the beneficent powers are not made any differently; they too result from and express collective life; they too represent society, but society captured in a very different posture—that is, at the moment when it confidently affirms itself and zealously presses things into the service of the ends it is pursuing. Since these two kinds of forces have a common origin, it is not surprising that, even though moving in opposite directions, they should have the same nature, that they should be equally intense and contagious—and hence, prohibited and sacred.

From precisely this fact, we can understand how they are transformed into one another. Since they reflect the emotional state in which the group finds itself, a change in that state is sufficient to make the forces themselves change direction. When the mourning ends, the household of the deceased has been calmed by the mourning itself; it gathers new confidence; the individuals are relieved of the painful pressure that was exerted upon them; they feel more at ease. It therefore seems to them that the spirit of the deceased has set aside its hostile feelings in order to become a benevolent protector. The other transmutations, examples of which I have cited, are to be explained in the same way. What makes a thing sacred is, as I have shown, the collective feeling of which it is the object. If, in violation of the prohibitions that isolate it, it comes in contact with a profane person, this same feeling will spread contagiously to that person and mark him with a special quality. However, when it arrives at that, it finds itself in a very different state from the one in which it was at the outset. Having been shocked and angered by the profanation entailed by this wrongful, unnatural extension, it becomes aggressive and inclined toward destructive violence; it is inclined to seek revenge for the trespass it has endured. For this reason, the infected subject is as though invaded by a virulent and noxious force, threatening to all that comes near him; thereafter, he inspires nothing but distance and repugnance, as though he was marked with a taint or stain. And yet the cause of this stain is the very psychic state that in other circumstances consecrated and sanctified. But let the anger thus aroused be satisfied by an expiatory rite, and it subsides, relieved. The offended feeling is propitiated and returns to its initial state. Thus, it again acts as it acted at first. Instead of contaminating, it sanctifies. Because it goes on infecting the object to which it has become attached, that object cannot become profane and religiously indifferent again. But the direction of

the religious force that appears to occupy it has been inverted. From being impure it has become pure and an instrument of purification.

In summary, the two poles of religious life correspond to the two opposite states through which all social life passes. There is the same contrast between the lucky and the unlucky sacred as between the states of collective euphoria and dysphoria. But because both are equally collective, the mythological constructions that symbolize them are in their very essence closely related. While the feelings placed in common vary from extreme dejection to extreme high-spiritedness, from painful anger to ecstatic enthusiasm, the result in all cases is communion among individual consciousnesses and mutual calming. While the fundamental process is always the same, different circumstances color it differently. In the end, then, it is the unity and diversity of social life that creates at the same time the unity and the diversity of sacred beings and things.

This ambiguity is not peculiar to the idea of the sacred alone. Something of this same quality is to be found in all the rites studied. Of course, it was necessary to distinguish them. Treating them as one and the same would have been to misunderstand the multiple aspects of religious life. But however different they may be, there is no discontinuity between them. Quite the contrary, they are overlapping and even interchangeable. I have already shown that rites of offering and communion, mimetic rites, and commemorative rites often perform the same functions. One might think that the negative cult is more clearly separated from the positive cult, yet we have seen that the negative cult can nonetheless bring about positive effects identical to those of the positive cult. The same results are obtained through fasts, abstinences, and self-mutilation as through communions, offerings, and commemorations. Conversely, offerings and sacrifices imply privations and renunciations of all kinds. The continuity between ascetic and piacular rites is even more apparent. Both are made of sufferings, accepted or endured, to which similar efficacy is ascribed. Thus, the practices no more fall into two separate genera than the beliefs do. However complex the outward manifestations of religious life may be, its inner essence is simple, and one and the same. Everywhere it fulfills the same need and derives from the same state of mind. In all its forms, its object is to lift man above himself and to make him live a higher life than he would if he obeyed only his individual impulses. The beliefs express this life in terms of representations; the rites organize and regulate its functioning.

# CONCLUSION

I said at the beginning of this book that the religion whose study I was undertaking contained within itself the most characteristic elements of religious life. The truth of that proposition can now be tested. However simple the system I have studied may be, I have nonetheless found within it all the great ideas and all the principal forms of ritual conduct on which even the most advanced religions are based: the distinction between sacred and profane things; the ideas of soul, spirit, mythical personality, national and even international divinity; a negative cult with the ascetic practices that are its extreme form; rites of sacrifice and communion; mimetic, commemorative, and piacular rites. Nothing essential is absent. Thus I have reason to be confident that the results achieved are not specific to totemism but can help us understand what religion in general is.

Some will object that a single religion, whatever its geographic spread, is a narrow basis for such an induction. It is by no means my intent to ignore what an expanded test can add to the persuasiveness of a theory. But it is no less true that when a law has been proved by a single well-made experiment, this proof is universally valid. If a scientist managed to intercept the secret of life in only a single case, the truths thus obtained would be applicable to all living things, including the most advanced, even if this case was the simplest protoplasmic being imaginable. Accordingly if, in the very humble societies just studied, I have managed to capture some of the elements that comprise the most fundamental religious ideas, there is no reason not to extend the most general results of this research to other religions. In fact, it is inconceivable that the same effect could be sometimes due now to one cause, now to another, according to the circumstances, unless fundamentally the two causes were but one. A single idea cannot express one reality here and a different one there unless this duality is merely apparent. If, among certain peoples, the ideas "sacred," "soul," and "gods" can be explained sociologically, then scientifically we must presume that the same explanation is valid in principle for all the peoples among whom the same ideas are found with essentially the same characteristics. Assuming that I am not mistaken, then, at least some of my conclusions can legitimately be generalized. The time has come to draw these out. And an induction of this sort, based on a well-defined experiment, is less reckless than so many cursory generalizations that, in their striving to reach the essence of religion in a single stroke without

grounding themselves in the analysis of any particular religion, are at great risk of floating away into the void.

## I

Most often, the theorists who have set out to express religion in rational terms have regarded it as being, first and foremost, a system of ideas that correspond to a definite object. That object has been conceived in different ways—nature, the infinite, the unknowable, the ideal, and so forth—but these differences are of little importance. In every case, the representations—that is, the beliefs—were considered the essential element of religion. For their part, rites appeared from this standpoint to be no more than an external, contingent, and physical translation of those inward states that alone were deemed to have intrinsic value. This notion is so widespread that most of the time debates on the topic of religion turn around and about on the question of whether religion can or cannot be reconciled with science—that is, whether there is room alongside scientific knowledge for another form of thought held to be specifically religious.

But the believers—the men who, living a religious life, have a direct sense of what constitutes religion—object that, in terms of their day-to-day experience, this way of seeing does not ring true. Indeed, they sense that the true function of religion is not to make us think, enrich our knowledge, or add representations of a different sort and source to those we owe to science. Its true function is to make us act and to help us live. The believer who has communed with his god is not simply a man who sees new truths that the unbeliever knows not; he is a man who *is stronger*.<sup>\*</sup> Within himself, he feels more strength to endure the trials of existence or to overcome them. He is as though lifted above the human miseries, because he is lifted above his human condition. He believes he is delivered from evil—whatever the form in which he conceives of evil. The first article of any faith is belief in salvation by faith.

But it is hard to see how a mere idea could have that power. In fact, an idea is but one element of ourselves. How could it confer on us powers that are superior to those given us in our natural makeup? As rich in emotive power as an idea may be, it cannot add anything to our natural vitality; it can only release emotive forces that are already within us, neither creating nor increasing them. From the fact that we imagine an object as worthy of being loved and sought after, it does not follow that we should feel stronger. Energies greater than those at our disposal must come from the object, and, more

<sup>\*</sup> *Qui peut davantage*. Literally "who is capable of more." Durkheim italicized *peut*.

than that, we must have some means of making them enter into us and blend into our inner life. To achieve this, it is not enough that we think about them; it is indispensable that we place ourselves under their influence, that we turn ourselves in the direction from which we can best feel that influence. In short, we must act; and so we must repeat the necessary acts as often as is necessary to renew their effects. From this standpoint, it becomes apparent that the set of regularly repeated actions that make up the cult regains all its importance. In fact, anyone who has truly practiced a religion knows very well that it is the cult that stimulates the feelings of joy, inner peace, serenity, and enthusiasm that, for the faithful, stand as experimental proof of their beliefs. The cult is not merely a system of signs by which the faith is outwardly expressed; it is the sum total of means by which that faith is created and recreated periodically. Whether the cult consists of physical operations or mental ones, it is always the cult that is efficacious.

This entire study rests on the postulate that the unanimous feeling of believers down the ages cannot be mere illusion. Therefore, like a recent apologist of faith,<sup>1</sup> I accept that religious belief rests on a definite experience, whose demonstrative value is, in a sense, not inferior to that of scientific experiments, though it is different. I too think "that a tree is known by its fruits,"<sup>2</sup> and that its fertility is the best proof of what its roots are worth. But merely because there exists a "religious experience," if you will, that is grounded in some manner (is there, by the way, any experience that is not?), it by no means follows that the reality which grounds it should conform objectively with the idea the believers have of it. The very fact that the way in which this reality has been conceived has varied infinitely in different times is enough to prove that none of these conceptions expresses it adequately. If the scientist sets it down as axiomatic that the sensations of heat and light that men have correspond to some objective cause, he does not thereby conclude that this cause is the same as it appears to the senses. Likewise, even if the feelings the faithful have are not imaginary, they still do not constitute privileged intuitions; there is no reason whatever to think that they inform us better about the nature of their object than ordinary sensations do about the nature of bodies and their properties. To discover what that object consists of, then, we must apply to those sensations an analysis similar to the one that has replaced the senses' representation of the world with a scientific and conceptual one.

This is precisely what I have tried to do. We have seen that this reality—

<sup>1</sup>William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* [London, Longmans, 1902].

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. (p. 19 of the French translation).



which mythologies have represented in so many different forms, but which is the objective, universal, and eternal cause of those *sui generis* sensations of which religious experience is made—is society. I have shown what moral forces it develops and how it awakens that feeling of support, safety, and protective guidance which binds the man of faith to his cult. It is this reality that makes him rise above himself. Indeed, this is the reality that makes him, for what makes man is that set of intellectual goods which is civilization, and civilization is the work of society. In this way is explained the preeminent role of the cult in all religions, whatever they are. This is so because society cannot make its influence felt unless it is in action, and it is in action only if the individuals who comprise it are assembled and acting in common. It is through common action that society becomes conscious of and affirms itself; society is above all an active cooperation. As I have shown, even collective ideas and feelings are possible only through the overt movements that symbolize them.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is action that dominates religious life, for the very reason that society is its source.

To all the reasons adduced to justify this conception, a final one can be added that emerges from this book as a whole. Along the way, I have established that the fundamental categories of thought, and thus science itself, have religious origins. The same has been shown to be true of magic, and thus of the various techniques derived from magic. Besides, it has long been known that, until a relatively advanced moment in evolution, the rules of morality and law were not distinct from ritual prescriptions. In short, then, we can say that nearly all the great social institutions were born in religion.<sup>4</sup> For the principal features of collective life to have begun as none other than various features of religious life, it is evident that religious life must necessarily have been the eminent form and, as it were, the epitome of collective life. If religion gave birth to all that is essential in society, that is so because the idea of society is the soul of religion.

Thus religious forces are human forces, moral forces. Probably because collective feelings become conscious of themselves only by settling upon external objects, those very forces could not organize themselves without taking some of their traits from things. In this way, they took on a kind of

<sup>3</sup>See above, pp. 231ff.

<sup>4</sup>Only one form of social activity has not as yet been explicitly linked to religion: economic activity. Nevertheless, the techniques that derive from magic turn out, by this very fact, to have indirectly religious origins. Furthermore, economic value is a sort of power or efficacy, and we know the religious origins of the idea of power. Since mana can be conferred by wealth, wealth itself has some. From this we see that the idea of economic value and that of religious value cannot be unrelated; but the nature of these relationships has not yet been studied.

physical nature; they came to mingle as such with the life of the physical world, and through them it was thought possible to explain events in that world. But when they are considered only from this standpoint and in this role, we see only what is most superficial about them. In reality, the essential elements out of which they are made are borrowed from consciousness. Ordinarily, they do not seem to have a human character except when they are thought of in human form,<sup>5</sup> but even the most impersonal and most anonymous are nothing other than objectified feelings.

Only by seeing religions in this way does it become possible to detect their real meaning. If we rely on appearances, the rites often seem to be purely manual operations—anointings, purifications, meals. To consecrate a thing, one places it in contact with a source of religious energy, just as today a body is placed in contact with a source of heat or electricity in order to heat or electrify it. The procedures used in the two cases are not essentially different. Understood in this way, religious technique seems to be a kind of mystical mechanics. But these physical operations are but the outer envelope in which mental operations lie hidden. In the end, the point is not to exert a kind of physical constraint upon blind and, more than that, imaginary forces but to reach, fortify, and discipline consciousnesses. The lower religions have sometimes been called materialistic. That term is incorrect. All religions, even the crudest, are in a sense spiritualistic. The powers they bring into play are, above all, spiritual, and their primary function is to act upon moral life. In this way, we understand that what was done in the name of religion cannot have been done in vain, for it is necessarily the society of men, it is humanity, that has reaped the fruits.

It may be asked, Exactly what society is it that in this way becomes the substrate of religious life? Is it the real society, such as it exists and functions before our eyes, with the moral and juridical organization that it has toiled to fashion for itself over the course of history? But that society is full of flaws and imperfections. In that society, good rubs shoulders with evil, injustice is ever on the throne, and truth is continually darkened by error. How could a being so crudely made inspire the feelings of love, ardent enthusiasm, and willing self-sacrifice that all the religions demand of their faithful? Those perfect beings that are the gods cannot have taken their traits from such a mediocre, sometimes even base, reality.

Would it not be instead the perfect society, in which justice and truth reigned, and from which evil in all its forms was uprooted? No one disputes

<sup>5</sup>It is for this reason that Frazer and even Preuss set the impersonal religious forces outside religion, or at most at its threshold, in order to relate them to magic.

that this perfect society has a close relationship to religious sentiment, for religions are said to aim at realizing it. However, this society is not an empirical fact, well defined and observable; it is a fancy, a dream with which men have lulled their miseries but have never experienced in reality. It is a mere idea that expresses in consciousness our more or less obscure aspirations toward the good, the beautiful, and the ideal. These aspirations have their roots in us; since they come from the very depths of our being, nothing outside us can account for them. Furthermore, in and of themselves, they are already religious; hence, far from being able to explain religion, the ideal society presupposes it.<sup>6</sup>

But to see only the idealistic side of religion is to simplify arbitrarily. In its own way, religion is realistic. There is no physical or moral ugliness, no vice, and no evil that has not been deified. There have been gods of theft and trickery, lust and war, sickness and death. As uplifted as its idea of divinity is, Christianity itself was obliged to make a place in its mythology for the spirit of evil. Satan is an essential component of the Christian machinery; yet, even if he is an impure being, he is not a profane being. The anti-god is a god—lower and subordinate, it is true, yet invested with broad powers; he is even the object of rites, at the very least negative ones. Far from ignoring and disregarding the real society, religion is its image, reflecting all its features, even the most vulgar and repellent. Everything is to be found in it, and if we most often see good triumphing over evil, life over death, and the forces of light over the forces of darkness, this is because it is no different in reality. If the relationship between these forces was reversed, life would be impossible, whereas in fact, life maintains itself and even tends to develop.

But it is quite true that even if the mythologies and theologies allow a clear glimpse of the reality, the reality we find in them has been enlarged, transformed, and idealized. The most primitive religions are no different in this respect from the most modern and the most refined. We have seen, for example, how the Arunta place at the beginning of time a mythical society whose organization exactly replicates the one that still exists today. It is made up of the same clans and phratries, it is subject to the same marriage rules, and it practices the same rites. But the personages that comprise it are ideal beings endowed with capacities to which mere mortals cannot lay claim. Belonging to animality and humanity at the same time, their nature is not only higher but also different. The evil powers undergo a similar metamorphosis

<sup>6</sup>[Emile] Boutroux, *Science et religion [dans la philosophie contemporaine]*, Paris, E. Flammarion, 1907], pp. 206–207.

in that religion. It is as though evil itself undergoes refinement and idealization. The question that arises is where this idealization comes from.

One proposed answer is that man has a natural capacity to idealize, that is, to replace the real world with a different one to which he travels in thought. But such an answer changes the terms of the problem, neither solving nor even advancing it. This persistent idealization is a fundamental feature of religions. So to explain religions in terms of an innate capacity to idealize is simply to replace one word with its equivalent; it is like saying that man created religion because he has a religious nature. Yet the animal knows only one world: the world it perceives through experience, internal as well as external. Man alone has the capacity to conceive of the ideal and add it to the real. Where, then, does this remarkable distinction come from? Before taking it to be a primary fact or a mysterious virtue that eludes science, one should first have made sure that this remarkable distinction does not arise from conditions that can be determined empirically.

My proposed explanation of religion has the specific advantage of providing an answer to this question, since what defines the sacred is that the sacred is added to the real. And since the ideal is defined in the same way, we cannot explain the one without explaining the other. We have seen, in fact, that if collective life awakens religious thought when it rises to a certain intensity, that is so because it brings about a state of effervescence that alters the conditions of psychic activity. The vital energies become hyper-excited, the passions more intense, the sensations more powerful; there are indeed some that are produced only at this moment. Man does not recognize himself; he feels somehow transformed and in consequence transforms his surroundings. To account for the very particular impressions he receives, he imputes to the things with which he is most directly in contact properties that they do not have, exceptional powers and virtues that the objects of ordinary experience do not possess. In short, upon the real world where profane life is lived, he superimposes another that, in a sense, exists only in his thought, but one to which he ascribes a higher kind of dignity than he ascribes to the real world of profane life. In two respects, then, this other world is an ideal one.

Thus the formation of an ideal is by no means an irreducible datum that eludes science. It rests on conditions that can be uncovered through observation. It is a natural product of social life. If society is to be able to become conscious of itself and keep the sense it has of itself at the required intensity, it must assemble and concentrate. This concentration brings about an uplifting of moral life that is expressed by a set of ideal conceptions in which the new life thus awakened is depicted. These ideal conceptions correspond to

the onrush of psychic forces added at that moment to those we have at our disposal for the everyday tasks of life. A society can neither create nor recreate itself without creating some kind of ideal by the same stroke. This creation is not a sort of optional extra step by which society, being already made, merely adds finishing touches; it is the act by which society makes itself, and remakes itself, periodically. Thus, when we set the ideal society in opposition to the real society, like two antagonists supposedly leading us in opposite directions, we are reifying and opposing abstractions. The ideal society is not outside the real one but is part of it. Far from our being divided between them as though between two poles that repel one another, we cannot hold to the one without holding to the other. A society is not constituted simply by the mass of individuals who comprise it, the ground they occupy, the things they use, or the movements they make, but above all by the idea it has of itself. And there is no doubt that society sometimes hesitates over the manner in which it must conceive itself. It feels pulled in all directions. When such conflicts break out, they are not between the ideal and the reality but between different ideals, between the ideal of yesterday and that of today, between the ideal that has the authority of tradition and one that is only coming into being. Studying how ideals come to evolve certainly has its place, but no matter how this problem is solved, the fact remains that the whole of it unfolds in the world of the ideal.

Therefore the collective ideal that religion expresses is far from being due to some vague capacity innate to the individual; rather, it is in the school of collective life that the individual has learned to form ideals. It is by assimilating the ideals worked out by society that the individual is able to conceive of the ideal. It is society that, by drawing him into its sphere of action, has given him the need to raise himself above the world of experience, while at the same time furnishing him the means of imagining another. It is society that built this new world while building itself, because it is society that the new world expresses. There is nothing mysterious about the faculty of idealization, then, whether in the individual or in the group. This faculty is not a sort of luxury, which man could do without, but a condition of his existence. If he had not acquired it, he would not be a social being, which is to say that he would not be man. To be sure, collective ideals tend to become individualized as they become incarnate in individuals. Each person understands them in his own way and gives them an individual imprint, some elements being taken out and others being added. As the individual personality develops and becomes an autonomous source of action, the personal ideal diverges from the social one. But if we want to understand that aptitude for living outside the real, which is seemingly so remarkable, all we need to do is relate it to the social conditions on which it rests.

But the last thing to do is to see this theory of religion as merely a refurbishment of historical materialism. That would be a total misunderstanding of my thought. In pointing out an essentially social thing in religion, I in no way mean to say that religion simply translates the material forms and immediate vital necessities of society into another language. I do indeed take it to be obvious that social life depends on and bears the mark of its material base, just as the mental life of the individual depends on the brain and indeed on the whole body. But collective consciousness is something other than a mere epiphenomenon of its morphological base, just as individual consciousness is something other than a mere product of the nervous system. If collective consciousness is to appear, a *sui generis* synthesis of individual consciousnesses must occur. The product of this synthesis is a whole world of feelings, ideas, and images that follow their own laws once they are born. They mutually attract one another, repel one another, fuse together, subdivide, and proliferate; and none of these combinations is directly commanded and necessitated by the state of the underlying reality. Indeed, the life thus unleashed enjoys such great independence that it sometimes plays about in forms that have no aim or utility of any kind, but only for the pleasure of affirming itself. I have shown that precisely this is often true of ritual activity and mythological thought.<sup>7</sup>

But if religion has social causes, how can the individual cult and the universalistic character of certain religions be explained? If it is born *in foro externo*,\* how was it able to pass into the inner core of the individual and become ever more deeply implanted in him? If it is the work of definite and particular societies, how could it become detached enough from them to be conceived of as the common holding of all humanity?

Since, in the course of our study, we came upon the first seeds of individual religion and religious cosmopolitanism and saw how they were formed, we possess the most general elements of an answer to that twofold question.

I have shown that the religious force animating the clan becomes individualized by incarnating itself in individual consciousnesses. Secondary sacred beings are formed in this way, each individual having his own that is made in his own image, part of his intimate life, and at one with his fate. They are the soul, the individual totem, the protecting ancestor, and so forth.

\*In the external world.

<sup>7</sup>See above, pp. 382ff. Cf. my article on the same question: "Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives," *RMM*, vol. VI, 1898 [pp. 273ff.].

These beings are the objects of rites that the worshipper can conduct on his own, apart from any group, so it is actually a primitive form of the individual cult. Of course, it is still only a very undeveloped cult, but that is because the cult expressing the individual personality could not be very well developed, given that the individual personality is at that stage still marked very slightly, with little value attributed to it. As individuals became more differentiated and the value of the person grew, the corresponding cult itself took on a larger role in religious life as a whole, at the same time more completely sealing itself off from the outside.

The existence of individual cults does not therefore imply anything that contradicts or complicates a sociological explanation of religion. The religious forces they address are merely collective forces in individualized forms. Even where religion seems to be entirely within the individual, the living source that feeds it is to be found in society. We can now judge the worth of the radical individualism that is intent on making religion out to be a purely individual thing: It misconceives the fundamental conditions of religious life. And if that radical individualism has remained in the state of unrealized theoretical aspiration up to now, that is because it is unrealizable in fact. A philosophy can very well be worked out in the silence of inward meditation, but not a faith. A faith above all is warmth, life, enthusiasm, enhancement of all mental activity, uplift of the individual above himself. Except by reaching outside himself, how could the individual add to the energies he possesses? How could he transcend himself by his own strength? The only hearth at which we can warm ourselves morally is the hearth made by the company of our fellow men; the only moral forces with which we can nourish our own and increase them are those we get from others. Let us even grant the existence of beings more or less like those the mythologies depict for us. If they are to have the useful influence over souls that is their *raison d'être*, we must believe in them. The beliefs are at work only when they are shared. We may well keep them going for a time through personal effort alone, but they are neither born nor obtained in this way, and it is doubtful that they can be preserved under those conditions. In fact, the man who has a genuine faith feels an irrepressible need to spread it. To do so, he comes out of his isolation, he approaches others, he seeks to convince them, and it is the ardor of the convictions he brings about that in turn reinforces his own. That ardor would speedily dissipate if left alone.

What is true of religious individualism is true of religious universalism. Far from being exclusively the trait of a few very great religions, we have found it in the Australian system—not at its base, to be sure, but at its pinnacle. Bunjil, Daramulun, and Baiame are not mere tribal gods, since each is

recognized by a number of different tribes. Their cult is in a sense international. So this conception is quite close to the one found in the most modern theologies. As a result, and for that very reason, certain writers have felt duty bound to deny its authenticity, even though its authenticity cannot be denied.

But I have been able to show how this conception was formed.

Tribes that neighbor one another and are of the same civilization cannot help but have ongoing relationships with one another. All kinds of circumstances provide the occasion for contact. Apart from business, which is still rudimentary, there are marriages; international marriages are very common in Australia. In the course of these contacts, men naturally become conscious of the moral kinship that unites them. They have the same social organization, the same division into phratries, clans, and marriage classes; they conduct the same or similar initiation rites. The effect of mutual borrowings or agreements is to consolidate the spontaneous similarities. The gods to which such obviously identical institutions were attached could hardly remain distinct in people's minds. Everything brought them together; and in consequence, even supposing that each tribe had worked out its own notion of them independently they must as a matter of course have had a tendency to amalgamate. Furthermore, the likelihood is that the gods were first conceived in these intertribal assemblies, for they are gods of initiation, first and foremost, and various tribes are usually represented at the initiation ceremonies. Thus if sacred beings unconnected with any territorially defined society were formed, it is not because they had an extrasocial origin. Rather, it is because above these territorial groupings are others with more fluid boundaries. These other groupings do not have fixed frontiers but include a great many more or less neighboring and related tribes. The very special social life that emerges tends to spread over an area without clear limits. Quite naturally, the corresponding mythological personages are of the same character; their sphere of influence is not definite; they hover above the individual tribes and above the land. These are the great international gods.

Nothing in this situation is peculiar to Australian societies. There is no people, and no State, that is not engaged with another more or less undelimited society that includes all peoples and all States\* with which it is directly or indirectly in contact; there is no national life that is not under the sway of an international collective life. The more we advance in history, the larger and the more important these international groupings become. In this way, we see how, in some cases, the universalistic tendency could develop to

\*Durkheim capitalized "Church" and "State."



the point of affecting not only the highest ideas of the religious system but also the very principles on which it rests.

## II

Thus there is something eternal in religion that is destined to outlive the succession of particular symbols in which religious thought has clothed itself. There can be no society that does not experience the need at regular intervals to maintain and strengthen the collective feelings and ideas that provide its coherence and its distinct individuality. This moral remaking can be achieved only through meetings, assemblies, and congregations in which the individuals, pressing close to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments. Such is the origin of ceremonies that, by their object, by their results, and by the techniques used, are not different in kind from ceremonies that are specifically religious. What basic difference is there between Christians' celebrating the principal dates of Christ's life, Jews' celebrating the exodus from Egypt or the promulgation of the Decalogue, and a citizens' meeting commemorating the advent of a new moral charter or some other great event of national life?

If today we have some difficulty imagining what the feasts and ceremonies of the future will be, it is because we are going through a period of transition and moral mediocrity. The great things of the past that excited our fathers no longer arouse the same zeal among us, either because they have passed so completely into common custom that we lose awareness of them or because they no longer suit our aspirations. Meanwhile, no replacement for them has yet been created. We are no longer electrified by those principles in whose name Christianity exhorted the masters to treat their slaves humanely; and besides, Christianity's idea of human equality and fraternity seems to us today to leave too much room for unjust inequalities. Its pity for the downcast seems to us too platonic. We would like one that is more vigorous but do not yet see clearly what it should be or how it might be realized in fact.

In short, the former gods are growing old or dying, and others have not been born. This is what voided Comte's attempt to organize a religion using old historical memories, artificially revived. It is life itself, and not a dead past, that can produce a living cult. But that state of uncertainty and confused anxiety cannot last forever. A day will come when our societies once again will know hours of creative effervescence during which new ideals will again spring forth and new formulas emerge to guide humanity for a time. And

when those hours have been lived through, men will spontaneously feel the need to relive them in thought from time to time—that is, to preserve their memory by means of celebrations that regularly recreate their fruits. We have already seen how the [French] Revolution instituted a whole cycle of celebrations in order to keep the principles that inspired it eternally young. If that institution quickly perished, it is because the revolutionary faith lasted only briefly, and because disappointments and discouragements quickly replaced the first moment of enthusiasm. But although that work miscarried, it helps us to imagine what might have come to be under other conditions; and everything leads us to believe that the work will sooner or later be taken up again. There are no immortal gospels, and there is no reason to believe that humanity is incapable of conceiving new ones in the future. As to knowing what the symbols will be in which the new faith will come to express itself, whether they will resemble those of the past, whether they will better suit the reality to be expressed—that is a question that exceeds human faculties of prediction and that, moreover, is beside the point.

But feasts and rites—in a word, the cult—are not the whole of religion. Religion is not only a system of practices but also a system of ideas whose object is to express the world; even the humblest have their own cosmologies, as we have seen. No matter how these two elements of religious life may be related, they are nonetheless quite different. One is turned toward action, which it elicits and regulates; the other toward thought, which it enriches and organizes. Since they do not rest on the same conditions, then, there is reason to ask whether the ideas correspond to needs as universal and as permanent as the practices do.

When we impute specific traits to religious thought and believe its function is to express, by its own methods, a whole aspect of the real that eludes both ordinary knowledge and science, we naturally refuse to grant that the speculative role of religion could ever be overthrown. But it does not seem to me that analysis of the facts has demonstrated this specificity of religion. The religion we have just studied is one of those in which the symbols used are the most unsettling to reason. Everything about it seems full of mystery. At first glance, those beings that simultaneously participate in the most disparate kingdoms, multiply without ceasing to be one, and break up without diminishing, seem to belong to an entirely different world from the one in which we live. Some have even gone so far as to say that the thought that built it was totally ignorant of the laws of logic. Never, perhaps, has the contrast between reason and faith been so pronounced. If ever there was a moment in history when the difference between them must have stood out plainly, then that truly was the moment.

But I have noted, contrary to such appearances, that the realities to which religious speculation was applied then are the same ones that would later serve as objects of scientists' reflection. Those realities are nature, man, and society. The mystery that appears to surround them is entirely superficial and fades upon closer scrutiny. To have them appear as they are, it is enough to pull aside the veil with which the mythological imagination covered them. Religion strives to translate those realities into an intelligible language that does not differ in nature from that used by science. Both attempt to connect things to one another, establish internal relations between those things, classify them, and systematize them. We have even seen that the essential notions of scientific logic are of religious origin. Of course, science reworks those notions in order to use them. It distills out all sorts of extraneous elements and generally brings to all its efforts a critical spirit that is unknown in religion; it surrounds itself with precautions to "avoid haste and bias" and to keep passions, prejudices, and all subjective influences at bay. But these improvements in method are not enough to differentiate science from religion. In this regard, both pursue the same goal; scientific thought is only a more perfected form of religious thought. Hence it seems natural that religion should lose ground as science becomes better at performing its task.

There is no doubt, in fact, that this regression has taken place over the course of history. Although the offspring of religion, science tends to replace religion in everything that involves the cognitive and intellectual functions. Christianity has by now definitively sanctioned that replacement, in the realm of physical phenomena. Regarding matter as a profane thing par excellence, Christianity has easily abandoned knowledge to a discipline that is alien to it, *tradidit mundum hominum disputationi*.\* So it is that the sciences of nature have, with relative ease, succeeded in establishing their authority and in having that authority acknowledged. But Christianity could not let the world of souls out of its grip as easily, for it is above all over souls that the god of the Christians wishes to rule. This is why the idea of subjecting psychic life to science long amounted to a kind of profanation; even today, that idea is still repugnant to many. Today, experimental and comparative psychology has been created and must be reckoned with. But the world of religious and moral life still remains forbidden. The great majority of men continue to believe that there is an order of things that the intellect can enter only by very special routes. Hence the strong resistance one encounters whenever one attempts to treat religious and moral phenomena scientifically. Yet these efforts

\*It abandoned the world to the disputes of men.

persist despite opposition, and that very persistence makes it foreseeable that this last barrier will give way in the end, and that science will establish itself as mistress, even in this preserve.

This is what the conflict of science and religion is about. People often have a mistaken idea of it.\* Science is said to deny religion in principle. But religion exists; it is a system of given facts; in short, it is a reality. How could science deny a reality? Furthermore, insofar as religion is action and insofar as it is a means of making men live, science cannot possibly take its place. Although science expresses life, it does not create life, and science can very well seek to explain faith but by that very fact presupposes faith. Hence there is conflict on only a limited point. Of the two functions originally performed by religion, there is one, only one, that tends more and more to escape it, and that is the speculative function. What science disputes in religion is not its right to exist but its right to dogmatize about the nature of things, its pretensions to special expertise for explaining man and the world. In fact, religion does not know itself. It knows neither what it is made of nor what needs it responds to. Far from being able to tell science what to do, religion is itself an object for science! And on the other hand, since apart from a reality that eludes scientific reflection, religious speculation has no special object of its own, that religion obviously cannot play the same role in the future as it did in the past.

However, religion seems destined to transform itself rather than disappear.

I have said that there is something eternal in religion: the cult and the faith. But men can neither conduct ceremonies for which they can see no rationale, nor accept a faith that they in no way understand. To spread or simply maintain religion, one must justify it, which is to say one must devise a theory of it. A theory of this sort must assuredly rest on the various sciences, as soon as they come into existence: social sciences first, since religious faith has its origins in society; psychology next, since society is a synthesis of human consciousnesses; sciences of nature finally, since man and society are linked to the universe and can be abstracted from it only artificially. But as important as these borrowings from the established sciences may be, they are in no way sufficient; faith is above all a spur to action, whereas science, no matter how advanced, always remains at a distance from action. Science is fragmentary and incomplete; it advances but slowly and is never finished; but life—that cannot wait. Theories whose calling is to make people live and make them act, must therefore rush ahead of science and complete it prema-

\*This sentence is missing from Swain.

turely. They are possible only if the demands of practicality and vital necessities, such as we feel without distinctly conceiving them, push thought beyond what science permits us to affirm. In this way, even the most rational and secularized religions cannot and can never do without a particular kind of speculation which, although having the same objects as science itself, still cannot be properly scientific. The obscure intuitions of sense and sensibility often take the place of logical reasons.

Thus, from one point of view, this speculation resembles the speculation we encounter in the religions of the past, while from another, it differs from them. While exercising the right to go beyond science, it must begin by knowing and drawing inspiration from science. As soon as the authority of science is established, science must be reckoned with; under pressure of need, one can go beyond science, but it is from science that one must start out. One can affirm nothing that science denies, deny nothing that science affirms, and establish nothing that does not directly or indirectly rest on principles taken from science. From then on, faith\* no longer holds the same sway as in the past over the system of representations that can continue to be called religious. There rises a power before religion that, even though religion's offspring, from then on applies its own critique and its own testing to religion. And everything points to the prospect that this testing will become ever more extensive and effective, without any possibility of assigning a limit to its future influence.

### III

If the fundamental notions of science are of religious origin, how could religion have engendered them? It is not obvious at first glance what the points of contact between logic and religion might be. Indeed, since the reality that religious thought expresses is society, the question can be posed in terms that bring out the difficulty more clearly, as follows: What could have made social life such an important source of logical life? Nothing predisposed society for this role, it would seem, since it is obvious that men did not come together for the purpose of satisfying speculative needs.

Some will think it reckless of me to broach a problem of such complexity here. For the treatment it deserves to be possible, the sociological conditions of knowledge would have to be better known than they are. We can only begin to discern a few of those conditions. However, the question is so

\*The first edition says *la foi*—"faith"; the second says *la loi*—"law."

important and so directly implied by everything that has gone before that I must make an effort not to leave it without an answer. Perhaps, moreover, it may be possible to set forth even now a few general principles of a kind that may at least shed light on the solution.

The basic material of logical thought is concepts. To try to discover how society could have played a role in the genesis of logical thought therefore amounts to asking how it can have taken part in the formation of concepts.

If we see the concept only as a general idea, as is most usually the case, the problem seems insoluble. By his own means, the individual can indeed compare his perceptions or images and sift out what they have in common; in other words, he can generalize. So it is not easy to see why generalization should be possible only in and through society. But, first of all, it is inadmissible that logical thought should be characterized exclusively by the wider scope of the representations that constitute it. If there is nothing logical about the particular ideas, why would the general ones be any different? The general exists only in the particular; it is the particular, simplified and stripped down. The general, then, cannot have virtues and privileges that the particular does not have. Inversely, if conceptual thought can be applied to genus, species, and variety, however small, why could it not extend to the individual, that is, to the limit toward which the idea tends in proportion as its scope narrows? As a matter of fact, there are a good many concepts that have individual objects. In every kind of religion, the gods are individualities distinct from one another; they are nevertheless conceived, not perceived. Each people imagines its historical or legendary heroes in a certain fashion, which is historically variable, and these representations are conceptual. Finally, each of us has a certain notion of the individuals with whom he is in contact—their character, their appearance, and the distinctive traits of their physical and moral temperaments. Such notions are true concepts. No doubt, they are in general rather crudely formed; but even among scientific concepts, are there many that are perfectly adequate to their objects? In this regard, our own concepts and those of science differ only in degree.

Therefore, the concept must be defined by other traits. The following properties distinguish it from tangible representations of any sort—sensations, perceptions, or images.

Sense representations are in perpetual flux; they come and go like the ripples of a stream, not staying the same even as long as they last. Each is linked with the exact moment in which it occurs. We are never assured of retrieving a perception in the same way we felt it the first time; for even if the thing perceived is unchanged, we ourselves are no longer the same. The concept, on the other hand, is somehow outside time and change; it is shielded

from all such disturbance; one might say that it is in a different region of the mind, a region that is calmer and more serene. The concept does not move on its own by an internal, spontaneous development; quite the contrary, it resists change. It is a way of thinking that at any given moment in time is fixed and crystallized.<sup>8</sup> To the extent that it is what it has to be, it is unchangeable. If it does change, change does not come about because of its nature but because we have discovered some imperfection in it, because it needs to be rectified. The system of concepts with which we think in everyday life is the one the vocabulary of our mother tongue expresses, for each word translates a concept. Language is fixed; it changes but slowly, and, hence, the same is true of the conceptual organization it translates. The scientist finds himself in the same position vis-à-vis the special terminology used by the science to which he is committed, and consequently vis-à-vis the special system of concepts to which that terminology corresponds. He may innovate, of course, but his innovations always do a certain violence to established ways of thinking.

At the same time as being relatively unchangeable, a concept is universal, or at least universalizable. A concept is not my concept; it is common to me and other men or at least can be communicated to them. It is impossible for me to make a sensation pass from my consciousness into someone else's; it is closely dependent on my body and personality and cannot be detached from them. All I can do is invite another person to set himself before the same object as I and open himself to its influence. By contrast, conversation and intellectual dealings among men consist in an exchange of concepts. The concept is, in essence, an impersonal representation. By means of it, human intelligences communicate.<sup>9</sup>

Defined in that way, the nature of the concept bespeaks its origins. It is common to all because it is the work of the community. It does not bear the imprint of any individual intellect, since it is fashioned by a single intellect in which all the others meet, and to which they come, as it were, for nourishment. If it has greater stability than sensations or images, that is so because collective representations are more stable than individual ones; for while the

<sup>8</sup>William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, I [New York, Macmillan, 1890], p. 464.

<sup>9</sup>This universality of the concept must not be confused with its generality. The two are very different things. What I call universality is the property the concept has of being communicated to a number of minds and indeed to all minds, in principle. That communicability is altogether independent of its scope. A concept that applies only to a single object, one whose scope is therefore minimal, can be universal in the sense that it is the same for all minds: The concept of a deity is of this sort.

individual is sensitive to even slight changes in his internal or external environment, only quite weighty events can succeed in changing the mental equilibrium of society. Whenever we are in the presence of a *type*<sup>10</sup> of thought or action that presses uniformly on individual intellects or wills, that pressure on the individual reveals the intervention of the collectivity. Further, I said before that the concepts with which we routinely think are those deposited in the vocabulary. It is beyond doubt that speech, and hence the system of concepts it translates, is the product of a collective elaboration. What it expresses is the manner in which society as a whole conceives the objects of experience. The notions corresponding to the various elements of language are therefore collective representations.

The very content of these notions testifies in the same way. Indeed, there are scarcely any words, even among those we most commonly use, whose meaning does not to some degree go beyond the limits of our personal experience. Often a term expresses things we have never perceived and experiences we have never had or never witnessed. Even when we know certain of the objects to which the term refers, we know them only as particular examples that serve to illustrate the idea but that would never have been enough to form it by themselves. There is a whole science condensed in words then, a science that is more than individual; and it so far surpasses me that I cannot even make all the results my own. Who of us knows all the words of the language he speaks and the full meaning of each word?

This point enables me to define the sense in which I say that concepts are collective representations. If they are common to an entire social group, it is not because they are a simple average of the corresponding individual representations; if they were that, they would be of poorer intellectual content than individual representations, whereas they are in fact replete with knowledge surpassing that of the average individual. Concepts are not abstract things that have reality only in particular circumstances. They are representations just as concrete as any the individual can make of his own environment, for they correspond to the way in which the special being that is society thinks about the things of its own experience. If, in fact, concepts most often are general ideas, if they express categories and classes rather than partic-

<sup>10</sup>Some will object that, in the individual, ways of acting or thinking often become fixed and crystallized as habits that resist change, through the effect of repetition alone. But habit is only a tendency to repeat an action or an idea automatically whenever the same circumstances reactivate it; habit does not imply that the idea or action is constituted in the state of exemplary types, proposed or imposed on the mind or will. It is only when a type of this sort is preestablished—that is, when a rule or norm is instituted—that the workings of society can and must be presumed.



ular objects, that is because individual and variable characteristics of beings are rarely of interest to society. Because of its very scope, society can hardly be affected by any but their most general and lasting properties. Hence it is this general aspect that bears society's attention. It is in the nature of society most often to see things in large masses and in the form they take most generally. However, that generality is not indispensable; and, in any case, even when these representations have the generic character that is most usual for them, they are the work of society and are enriched by its experience.

This, furthermore, is what makes conceptual thought valuable to us. If the concepts were merely general ideas, they would not greatly enrich knowledge, for as I have already said, the general contains nothing more than the particular. But if they are collective representations, first and foremost, they add to what our personal experience can teach us all the wisdom and science that the collectivity has amassed over centuries. To think with concepts is not merely to see the real in its most general characteristics but to turn upon sensation a beam that lights, penetrates, and transforms it. To conceptualize a thing is to apprehend its essential elements better and to place it in the group to which it belongs. Each civilization has its own ordered system of concepts, which characterizes it. Before this system of ideas, the individual intellect is in the same situation as the *voûs* of Plato before the world of Ideas. He strives to assimilate them, for he needs them in order to deal with his fellow men, but this assimilation is always incomplete. Each of us sees them in his own way. Some escape us completely, remaining beyond our range of vision, while others are glimpsed in only some of their aspects. There are some, and indeed many, that we distort by thinking them. Since they are by nature collective, they cannot become individualized without being added to, modified, and consequently distorted. This is why we have so much difficulty understanding one another, and why, indeed often, we lie to one another unintentionally. This happens because we all use the same words without giving them the same meaning.

We can now begin to see society's share in the origin of logical thought. Logical thought is possible only when man has managed to go beyond the fleeting representations he owes to sense experience and in the end to conceive a whole world of stable ideals, the common ground of intelligences. To think logically, in fact, is always, in some measure, to think impersonally; it is also to think *sub specie aeternitatis*.\* Impersonality and stability: Such are the two characteristics of truth. Logical life obviously presupposes that man knows, at least confusedly, that there is a truth distinct from sense appear-

\*Under the aspect of eternity.

ances. But how could he have arrived at any such idea? People proceed most often as though logical life must have appeared spontaneously, as soon as man opened his eyes upon the world. But there is nothing in direct experience to suggest it; indeed, everything opposes it. Thus, children and animals have not even a clue of it. History shows, furthermore, that it took centuries to emerge and take shape. In our Western world, only with the great thinkers of Greece did logical life for the first time become clearly conscious of itself and of the consequences it implies. And when the discovery came, it provoked wonderment, which Plato expressed in magnificent language. But even if it was only then that the idea was expressed in philosophical formulas, it necessarily existed before then as a vague awareness. Philosophers sought to clarify this awareness; they did not create it. To have been able to reflect upon and analyze it, they must have been given it, and the question is where this awareness came from, that is, on what experience it was based. The answer is collective experience. It is in the form of collective thought that impersonal thought revealed itself to humanity for the first time, and by what other route that revelation could have come about is hard to see.

Solely because society exists, there also exists beyond sensations and images a whole system of representations that possess marvelous properties. By means of them, men understand one another, and minds gain access to one another. They have a kind of force and moral authority by virtue of which they impose themselves upon individual minds. From then on, the individual realizes, at least dimly, that above his private representations there is a world of type-ideas according to which he has to regulate his own; he glimpses a whole intellectual world in which he participates but which is greater than he. This is a first intuition of the realm of truth. As soon as he became aware of that higher intellectuality, he set about scrutinizing its nature, trying to find out how these preeminent representations came by their prerogatives. And to the extent that he thought he had discovered their causes, he undertook to put those causes to work himself and, by himself, to draw the conclusions they lead to; that is, he gave himself the right to make concepts. In this way, the faculty of conceptualization individualized itself. But to understand the origins of that faculty, it must be linked to the social conditions on which it depends.

Some will object that I am presenting the concept in only one of its aspects—that its role is to ensure not only agreement among minds but also, and even more, their agreement with the nature of things. A concept would seem not to fulfill its *raison d'être* unless it was true—that is, objective—and its impersonality to be only a consequence of its objectivity. It is in things conceived as adequately as they can be that minds should communicate. I do not deny that conceptual evolution moves partly in this direction. The con-

cept that is at first held to be true because it is collective tends not to become collective unless it is held to be true: We demand its credentials before giving it credence. But first, we must not lose sight of the fact that, even today, the great majority of the concepts that we use are not methodically constructed; we come by them from language, that is, from common experience, and without subjecting them to any prior critique. Concepts that are scientifically wrought and criticized are always in a very small minority. Second, there are only differences of degree between those concepts and the ones that draw all their authority only from the fact of being collective. A collective representation, because it is collective, already presents assurances of objectivity. Not without reason has it been able to generalize and maintain itself with such persistence. If it was in disagreement with the nature of things, it would not have succeeded in acquiring broad and prolonged dominion over minds. Fundamentally, what makes scientific concepts inspire confidence is that they can be tested methodically. A collective representation necessarily undergoes a test that is repeated indefinitely. The men who adhere to a collective representation verify it through their own experience. Thus it cannot be wholly inadequate to its object. Certainly it may explain that object with imperfect symbols, but scientific symbols are themselves never more than approximate. The method I follow in the study of religious phenomena is based on exactly this principle. I regard it as axiomatic that, strange though religious beliefs may sometimes be in appearance, they contain their own truth, which must be uncovered.<sup>11</sup>

Inversely, even when constructed in accordance with all the rules of science, concepts are far from taking their authority from their objective value alone. To be believed, it is not enough that they be true. If they are not in harmony with other beliefs and other opinions—in short, with the whole set of collective representations—they will be denied; minds will be closed to them; as a result, they will be and yet not be. If bearing the seal of science is usually enough today to gain a sort of privileged credibility, that is because we have faith in science. But that faith is not essentially different from religious faith. The value we attribute to science depends, in the last analysis, upon the idea we collectively have of its nature and role in life, which is to say that it expresses a state of opinion. The reason is that everything in social life rests on opinion, including science itself. To be sure, we can make opinion an object of study and create a science of it; that is what sociology principally consists in. Still the science of opinion does not create opinion, but

<sup>11</sup>From the very fact that a representation has a social origin, we see how far it is from being without objective value.

can only clarify it and make it more conscious of itself. In this way, it is true, science can lead opinion to change, but science remains the product of opinion even at the moment it seems to rule opinion; for as I have shown, science draws the strength it takes to act upon opinion from opinion itself.<sup>12</sup>

To say that concepts express the manner in which society conceives of things is also to say that conceptual thought is contemporaneous with humanity. Therefore, I refuse to see them as the product of more or less modern culture. A man who did not think with concepts would not be a man, for he would not be a social being. Limited to individual perceptions alone, he would not be distinct from an animal. It has been possible to uphold the contrary thesis only because the concept has been defined by features that are not fundamental to it. The concept has been identified with the general idea<sup>13</sup>—and with the clearly delimited and circumscribed general idea.<sup>14</sup> In that case, the lower societies could appear to be ignorant of the concept properly so-called, for they have only undeveloped processes of generalization, and the notions they use are generally not well defined. Yet most of our present concepts also lack clear definition; we can barely force ourselves to define them except in debate, and when we are operating as scientists. Besides, we have seen that conceptualizing is not the same as generalizing. To think conceptually is not merely to isolate and group the features common to a certain number of objects. It is also to subsume the variable under the permanent and the individual under the social. And since logical thought begins with the concept, it follows that logical thought has always existed; there has been no historical period when men lived in chronic confusion and contradiction. Certainly, the different features of logic in different historical periods cannot be overemphasized; logic evolves as societies themselves evolve. But however real, the differences should not cause us to miss the similarities, which are no less fundamental.

#### IV

We can now take up a final question, which was set out in the Introduction<sup>15</sup> and has remained more or less implicit throughout this book. We have seen

<sup>12</sup>Cf. above, p. 210.

<sup>13</sup>[Lucien] Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* [Paris, F. Alcan, 1910], pp. 131–138.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 446.

<sup>15</sup>See above, p. 12.

that at least certain of the categories are social things. The question is where they got this trait.

No doubt, since they are themselves concepts, we easily understand that they are the work of the collectivity. Indeed, no concepts display the distinguishing marks of a collective representation to the same degree. Indeed, their stability and impersonality are such that they have often been taken to be absolutely universal and immutable. Besides, since they express the fundamental conditions of understanding between minds, it seems obvious that they could only have been fashioned by society.

Yet the problem is more complex, insofar as the categories are concerned, for they are social in another sense and, as it were, to a higher degree. Not only do they come from society, but the very things they express are social. It is not only that they are instituted by society but also that their content is various aspects of the social being. The category of genus was at first indistinct from the concept of human group; the category of time has the rhythm of social life as its basis; the space society occupies provided the raw material for the category of space; collective force was the prototype for the concept of effective force, an essential element in the category of causality. Nevertheless, application to the social realm is not the only function of the categories; they extend to reality as a whole. Why is it, then, that the models on which they were built have been borrowed from society?

The answer is that these are preeminent concepts that have a preponderant role in knowledge. Indeed, the function of the categories is to govern and contain the other concepts. They form the permanent framework of mental life. But to encompass such an object, they must be modeled on a reality of equally wide scope.

Doubtless the relations they express exist, implicitly, in individual consciousnesses. The individual lives in time and, as I have said, has a certain sense of temporal orientation. He is at a definite point in space, and it has been possible to hold, with good reason, that all sensations have a spatial aspect.<sup>16</sup> He has a sense of similarity. Similar representations attract one another and come together within him, and the new representation formed by their coming together has a certain generic quality. We also have the sensation of a certain regularity in the order of succession in phenomena; even the animal is not incapable of that. But all these relationships are personal to the individual who is involved with them, and hence the notion he can gain from them can in no case stretch beyond his narrow horizon. The generic images

<sup>16</sup>James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. I, p. 134.

that form in my consciousness through the coming together of similar images represent only those objects that I have perceived directly; nothing is there to give me the idea of a class, that is, a framework able to encompass the *whole* group of all possible objects that fulfill the same criterion. I would still need to have the idea of group beforehand, an idea that the mere unfolding of our inner life cannot be sufficient to arouse in us. Above all, there is no individual experience, no matter how broad or prolonged, that could make us even suspect the existence of a whole genus embracing the universality of beings, and in which the other genera would be only species coordinated among, or subordinated to, one another. This notion of the *whole*, which lies at the basis of the classifications I have cited, cannot come to us from the individual himself, who is only a part of the whole and never comes in contact with more than an infinitesimal part of reality. And yet there is perhaps no more fundamental category. Since the role of the categories is to encompass all the other concepts, the category par excellence would indeed seem to be the very concept of *totality*. The theorists of knowledge usually postulate totality as if it is self-evident, but in fact it goes infinitely beyond the content of each individual consciousness, taken separately.

For the same reasons, the space I know through my senses, where I am at the center and where everything is arranged in relation to me, could not be the space as a whole, which contains all the individual spaces and in which, moreover, those individual spaces are coordinated in relation to impersonal reference points common to all individuals. Similarly, the concrete duration that I feel passing within and with me could never give me the idea of time as a whole. The first expresses only the rhythm of my individual life; the second must correspond to the rhythm of a life that is not that of any particular individual, but one in which all participate.<sup>17</sup> In the same way, finally, the regularities that I can perceive in the way my sensations follow one another may very well have value for me; they explain why I tend to wait for the second when the first of two phenomena whose constant conjunction I have experienced is given to me. But that state of personal expectancy cannot be assimilated to the conception of a universal order of succession that imposes itself on all minds and all events.

Since the world expressed by the whole system of concepts is the world society conceives of, only society can provide us with the most general no-

<sup>17</sup>Space and time are often spoken of as if they were only concrete extension and duration, such as individual consciousness can experience them, but impoverished through abstraction. In reality, they are representations of an entirely different kind—constructed out of different elements, following a very different plan, and with ends in view that are different as well.

tions in terms of which that world must be conceived. Only a subject that encompasses every individual subject has the capacity to encompass such an object. Since the universe exists only insofar as it is thought of and since it is thought of in its totality only by society, it takes its place within society; it becomes an element of society's inner life, and thus is itself the total genus outside which nothing exists. The concept of totality is but the concept of society in abstract form. It is the whole that includes all things, the supreme class that contains all other classes. Such is the underlying principle on which rest those primitive classifications that situated and classified beings of all the kingdoms, in the same right as men.<sup>18</sup> But if the world is in the society, the space society occupies merges with space as a whole. As we have seen, each thing does indeed have its assigned place in social space. But what brings out the extent to which that total space differs from those concrete expanses that our senses cause us to perceive is the fact that localization is wholly ideal and in no way resembles what it might be if it was dictated to us by sense experience.<sup>19</sup> For the same reason, the rhythm of collective life governs and contains the various rhythms of all the elementary lives of which it is the result; consequently, the time that expresses it governs and contains all the individual times. It is time as a whole.

For a long time, the world's history was only a different aspect of society's history. The one begins with the other; the periods of the world are determined by the periods of the society. Measuring that impersonal and global duration and setting reference points in relation to which it is divided and organized are society's movements of concentration or dispersal—or, more generally, the periodic need for collective renewal. If those critical moments are most often attached to some physical phenomenon, such as the regular reappearance of a certain star or the alternation of the seasons, it is because objective signs are needed to make that essentially social organization tangible for all. Similarly, the causal relation becomes independent of any individual consciousness from the moment it is collectively established by the group; it hovers above all the minds and all the individual events. It is a law having impersonal validity. I have shown that the law of causality seems to have been born in just this way.

There is another reason why the constituent elements of the categories must have been taken from social life: The relationships they express could

<sup>18</sup>In all probability, the concepts of totality, society, and deity are at bottom merely different aspects of the same notion.

<sup>19</sup>See "Classifications primitives" [Emile Durkheim, "De Quelques formes primitives de classification," *AS*, vol. VI, 1903], pp. 40ff.

not become conscious relationships except in and through society. Even if, in a sense, they are immanent in the life of the individual, the individual had neither reason nor means to grasp them, think about them, make them explicit, and build them up into distinct notions. To orient his individual self in space and to know at what times to satisfy various physical needs, he had no need for a conceptual representation of time or space, once and for all. Many animals know how to find their way back to the paths leading to places familiar to them; they return there at the right time yet without their having any category at all; sensations are enough to guide them automatically. These would be sufficient for man as well if his movements had to satisfy individual needs alone. In order to recognize that one thing resembles others with which we are already acquainted, we need not arrange them in genera and species. The way in which similar images call one another forth and merge are enough to create the feeling of resemblance. The impression of *déjà vu*, of something already experienced, implies no classification. In order to differentiate between those things we must seek after and those we must flee, we have no need to join the effects of both to their causes with a logical link, if individual convenience alone is at stake. Purely empirical sequences, strong connections between concrete representations, are equally sure guides to the will. Not only does the animal have no others, but our own individual practice quite often presupposes nothing more. The wise man is one who has a very clear sense of what he must do but one that he would usually be unable to translate into a law.

It is otherwise with society. Society is possible only if the individuals and things that make it up are divided among different groups, which is to say genera,\* and if those groups themselves are classified in relation to one another. Thus, society presupposes a conscious organization of itself that is nothing other than a classification. That organization of society is naturally passed on to the space it occupies. To forestall conflict, a definite portion of space must be assigned to each individual group. In other words, the space must be divided, differentiated, and oriented, and these divisions and orientations must be known to all. In addition, every call to a feast, hunt, or military expedition implies that dates are fixed and agreed upon and, therefore, that a common time is established that everyone conceives in the same way.

\*Here and later in the paragraph (as well as twice previously in this chapter), Durkheim shifts to the word *classe*. Since the English term "class" can imply economic differentiation, which would move the argument out of its present context, I have used the term "genus" throughout. Nonetheless, what the economic sense of "class" would add or subtract should be kept in mind—for example, in the end of the last sentence in this paragraph.



Finally, the collaboration of several in pursuit of a common goal is possible only if there is agreement on the relation between that goal and the means that make its achievement possible—that is, if a single causal relation is accepted by all who are working together in the same enterprise. It is not surprising, then, that social time, social space, social genera [*classes*], and collective causality should be the basis of the corresponding categories, since it is in their social forms that they were first conceived with any degree of clarity by human consciousness.

To summarize, society is by no means the illogical or alogical, inconsistent, and changeable being that people too often like to imagine. Quite the contrary, the collective consciousness is the highest form of psychic life, for it is a consciousness of consciousnesses. Being outside and above individual and local contingencies, collective consciousness sees things only in their permanent and fundamental aspect,\* which it crystallizes in ideas that can be communicated. At the same time as it sees from above, it sees far ahead; at every moment, it embraces all known reality; that is why it alone can furnish the intellect with frameworks that are applicable to the totality of beings and that enable us to build concepts about them. It does not create these frameworks artificially but finds them within itself, merely becoming conscious of them. They express ways of being that are met with at all levels of the real but that appear with full clarity only at the pinnacle, because the extreme complexity of the psychic life that unfolds there requires a more highly developed consciousness. Therefore, to attribute social origins to logical thought is not to denigrate it, diminish its worth, or reduce it to no more than a system of artificial combinations—but is, quite the contrary, to relate logical thought to a cause that naturally implies it. Assuredly, this is not to say that notions worked out in that way could be directly adequate to their objects. If society is something universal as compared to the individual, it is still an individuality, having its own form and idiosyncrasies; it is a particular subject and, consequently, one that particularizes what it thinks of. So even collective representations contain subjective elements, and if they are to become closer to things, they must be gradually refined. But crude as these representations might have been at first, it remains true that with them came the seed of a new mode of thinking, one to which the individual could never have lifted himself on his own. The way was open to stable, impersonal, ordered thought, which had only to develop its own special nature from then on.

\*Note the similarity between this formulation about *conscience collective* as “a permanent and fundamental” aspect of society and a similar one about religion as a “fundamental and permanent aspect of humanity” in the Introduction (above, p. 1).

Moreover, the factors that have brought about this development seem to be no different in kind from those that brought it forth originally. If logical thought tends more and more to jettison the subjective and personal elements that were launched with it, the reason is not that extrasocial factors have entered in but far more that a new kind of social life gradually developed: international life, whose effect even then was to universalize religious beliefs. As that international life broadens, so does the collective horizon; society no longer appears as the whole, *par excellence*, and becomes part of a whole that is more vast, with frontiers that are indefinite and capable of rolling back indefinitely. As a result, things can no longer fit within the social frames where they were originally classified; they must be organized with principles of their own; logical organization thus differentiates itself from social organization and becomes autonomous. This, it seems, is how the bond that at first joined thought to defined collective entities becomes more and more detached and how, consequently, it becomes ever more impersonal and universalizes.\* Thought that is truly and peculiarly human is not a primitive given, therefore, but a product of history; it is an ideal limit to which we come ever closer but in all probability will never attain.

Thus, the sort of antimony that has so often been accepted, between science on one hand and religion and morality on the other, is far from the case. In reality, these different modes of human activity derive from one and the same source. This Kant well understood, and therefore he considered speculative reason and practical reason to be two different aspects of the same faculty. According to him, what joins them is that both are oriented toward the universal. To think rationally is to think according to the laws that are self-evident to all reasonable beings; to act morally is to act according to maxims that can be extended without contradiction to all wills. In other words, both science and morality imply that the individual is capable of lifting himself above his own point of view and participating in an impersonal life. And, indeed, herein we undoubtedly have a trait that is common to all the higher forms of thought and action. But what Kantianism does not explain is where the sort of contradiction that man thus embodies comes from. Why must he do violence to himself in order to transcend his individual nature; and inversely, why must impersonal law weaken as it becomes incarnate in individuals? Will it be said that there are two antagonistic worlds in which we participate equally: the world of matter and sense, on the one hand, and on the other, that of pure and impersonal reason? But that is to repeat the ques-

\*This sentence was omitted from the Swain translation but is in both French versions of *Formes*.

tion in terms that are barely different: for the point precisely is to know why we must\* lead those two lives concurrently. Since the two worlds seem to contradict one another, why do they not remain separate from one another, and what makes it necessary for them to interpenetrate, despite their antagonism? The hypothesis of the Fall, with all its attendant difficulties, is the only explanation of that singular necessity that has ever been offered—and it need not be recited here.

On the other hand, the mystery dissolves once we have acknowledged that impersonal reason is but collective thought by another name. Collective thought is possible only through the coming together of individuals; hence it presupposes the individuals, and they in turn presuppose it, because they cannot sustain themselves except by coming together. The realm of impersonal aims and truths cannot be realized except through the collaboration of individual wills and sensibilities;† the reasons they participate and the reasons they collaborate are the same. In short, there is something impersonal in us because there is something social in us, and since social life embraces both representations and practices, that impersonality extends quite naturally to ideas as well as to actions.

Some will be astonished, perhaps, to see me connecting the highest forms of the human mind with society. The cause seems quite humble as compared to the value we attribute to the effect. So great is the distance between the world of the senses and appetites on the one hand, and the world of reason and morality on the other, that it seems the second could have been added to the first only by an act of creation. But to attribute to society this dominant role in the origin of our nature is not to deny that creation. Society does indeed have at its disposal a creative power that no observable being can match. Every creation, unless it is a mystical procedure that escapes science and intellect, is in fact the product of a synthesis. If the syntheses of particular representations that occur within each individual consciousness are already, in and of themselves, productive of novelties, how much more effective must societies be—these vast syntheses of entire consciousnesses! A society is the most powerful collection of physical and moral forces that we can observe in nature. Such riches of various materials, so highly concentrated, are to be found nowhere else. It is not surprising, then, that a higher life develops out of them, a life that acts on the elements from which it is made, thereby raising them to a higher form of life and transforming them.

\*The second edition says *Il nous fait* instead of *il nous faut*, surely a typographical error.

†The phrase "and sensibilities" does not appear in Swain.

Thus, it seems the vocation of sociology is to open a new way to the science of man. Until now, we stood before these alternatives: either to explain the higher and specific faculties of man by relating them to lower forms of being—reason to sense, mind to matter—which amounted to denying their specificity; or to connect them with some reality above experience that we postulated but whose existence no observation can establish. What placed the mind in that difficulty is that the individual was taken to be *finis naturae*.<sup>\*</sup> It seemed there was nothing beyond him, at least nothing that science might discover. But a new way of explaining man becomes possible as soon as we recognize that above the individual there is society, and that society is a system of active forces—not a nominal being, and not a creation of the mind. To preserve man's distinctive attributes, it is no longer necessary to place them outside experience. Before drawing that extreme conclusion, at any rate, it is best to find out whether that which is in the individual but surpasses him may not come to him from that supraindividual, yet concretely experienced, reality that is society. To be sure, it cannot be said at this moment how far these explanations can be extended and if they can lay every problem to rest. Equally, however, it is impossible to mark in advance a limit beyond which they cannot go. What must be done is to try out the hypothesis and test it against the facts as methodically as possible. This is what I have tried to do.

<sup>\*</sup>The culmination of nature.

# INDEX

- Abstinences, 303–15. *See also* Prohibitions  
Agni, 29, 70–71, 83*n*39  
Alatunja, 333, 335, 338–39, 341, 356  
Alcheringa, 250, 251, 253, 255, 256, 257,  
272, 277, 281, 283, 285, 287, 294, 339,  
358, 378, 380  
Altjira, 258, 262*n*110, 289, 289*n*72,  
295–96  
Altjirangamitjina, 250, 257–58, 260, 277  
Ambiguity: of representative rites, 387–91;  
of sacredness, 412–17  
American Indians: and animals as cosmic  
deities, 64; clans of, 85–86, 93, 94,  
109–10, 109*nn*47–48, 110; classification  
among, 145; individual totemism in,  
158, 158*n*2, 159, 160*n*18, 162, 163–64,  
165, 175–76, 182*n*38; initiation rites of,  
44; and kinship between man and  
totemic animal, 135–36,  
135–36*nn*32–35; orenda of Iroquois,  
195–96, 200, 205–206; and pain, 317;  
and reincarnation, 261, 264–65; space  
conceived of, as circle by, 11; totemic  
emblems of, 112–17, 125; and totemic  
principle, 194–96, 201; totemism of, 87,  
93–95, 100*n*3, 101, 109–11; wakan of,  
194–95, 198, 203, 205, 327  
Ancestor cult, 49–52, 57, 59, 60–61,  
170–73  
Ancestors: and churinga, 122, 122*n*126,  
256–57; civilizing heroes as, 286–88; and  
conception, 253–59, 253*n*59, 255*n*70,  
277; dramatic depictions of, 378,  
378*nn*10–12; high gods as, 299; mythol-  
ogy on, 175–76; as origin of clans, 252,  
279–80; protective relationship to per-  
sons, 277–78; and reincarnation,  
249–61, 268, 277–78; relationship be-  
tween individual soul, individual totem,  
and, 280–84, 283*n*30; relationship of,  
to things, 278–79; souls of, 250–52;  
as totem, 103–104, 258, 293–94; to-  
tem transmitted from, 105, 105*n*27,  
105*n*29, 163; and totemic emblem,  
176  
Anderson, Benedict, xxxiii  
Animal societies, 370*n*29  
Animals: civilization lacking among, 370,  
370*n*29; compared with humans, 50–51,  
62; humans as participants in animal na-  
ture, 65; mental faculties of, 50–51,  
62, 438, 444; primitive's view of, 172; as  
sacred beings, 64–65; soul in form of,  
263–65, 265*n*121; tattooing of, 116*n*89.  
*See also* Individual totem; Totem;  
Totemic animal  
Animism: and anthropomorphism, 61–65,  
237; conditions of, 47–51; critique of,  
xlvi, 52–67, 84–85, 226; definition of,  
45–46; and dreaming, 47, 48, 53–56;  
and force, 368; and mentality of chil-  
dren, 63; naturism compared with,  
45–46, 70, 84; and reduction of religion  
to system of hallucinations, 65–67; and  
soul, 47–48, 52–56, 68; Spencer on,  
46–47, 50–52, 66*n*42; and spirit, 48–50,  
57–61, 68; and transformation of cult of  
spirits into cult of nature, 50–52, 61–65;  
Tylor on, lvii, 46–50, 46*n*3, 65; univer-  
sal animism of Leibniz, 24  
Anje-a, 260–61, 294  
Anjir, 261, 294  
*Année sociologique*, xxii, 44*n*68  
Anthropological school, 91  
Anthropomorphism, 61–65, 237, 410  
Antisemitism, lxxviii84, 404*n*

- Apriorism, 12–16, 14*n*16, 17*n*22, 18, 370, 372  
 Aquinas, Thomas, xxxviii  
 Aristotle, 8  
 Aron, Raymond, xx–xxi, xxxi, lxviii63  
 Art, origin of, 385–86  
 Arumburinga, 278  
 Arúnkulta, 199–200  
 Asceticism, 37, 314–21  
 Association of ideas, 361  
 Atnatu, 287, 287*n*55, 288, 295  
 Augustine, St., xxvii  
 Australia: early documentation of totemism in, 87–90, 88*n*16, 89*nn*20–21; methodological reasons for basing study on totemism in, 90–93; phases of societies in, 216–18. *See also* Totemism; and headings beginning with Totemic  
 Authority, 209–11, 210–11*n*6, 224
- Bachofen, Johann, 6, 6*n*  
 Baiame, 289, 292, 295, 297, 298, 309, 315, 316, 427  
 Barclay, Craig, lxviii87  
 Barth, Auguste, 28, 31  
 Basedow, H., 263  
 Beliefs, 34–38. *See also* Faith  
 Bellah, Robert, lxv*n*54  
 Bergaigne, Abel, 32–33, 32*n*38  
 Berger, Peter, lxviii85  
 Bewitchment, 361  
 Bible, xxiv, xxvii, xxxviii, xlv, xlvi–xlviii, 32, 32*n*33, 32*n*34, 32*n*38, 341, 346*n*48  
 Blood: atonement for bloodshed, 389; and churinga, 125; and expiatory rites, 410; fecundating virtues of, 348–49; as life-principle, 334–36; menstrual blood, 412, 413; mother's drinking of blood of circumcision, 137*n*41; and nurtunja, 136; offerings of, 327*n*25, 346*n*48; part versus whole of, 231; prohibitions on, 137, 307; ritual shedding of, 137, 307, 317, 317*n*71, 334–36, 346*n*48, 347*n*52, 348–49, 358, 358*n*13, 388, 391, 397–400, 406–11, 406*n*36, 409*n*51; sacredness of, 125, 136–37, 137*n*41, 188, 307; shedding of, as communion, 410; shedding of, in mourning, 397–400, 406, 406*n*36; as symbol, 228–29; totemic essence in, 262; of women, 138*n*50; from women's genital organs, 414  
 Boas, Franz, 87, 147*n*24, 175, 178, 182*n*38  
 Body: interdependence and assimilation between soul and, 245–47, 274; localization of soul in, xxvii, 1, 53, 245–46, 246*nn*22–23, 260, 262; sacredness of parts of, 136–38; soul separated from, at death, 48, 49, 245; soul/body dualism, xxvii, 245, 265–67, 274  
 Brahma, 31  
 Brahmanism, 28, 31  
 Bréal, Michel, 69, 74  
 Bridgmann, 142  
 Brinton, Daniel Garrison, 61  
 Buddha, 29–30, 30*n*26, 30*nn*26–28  
 Buddhism, 28–31, 35, 316  
 Bunjil, 289–92, 290*n*83, 295–97, 309, 315, 427  
 Bureau of American Ethnology, 86  
 Burial rites, 49, 117, 150, 185–86. *See also* Death; Funeral rites; Mourning  
 Burnouf, Eugène, 28, 29–30, 29*n*19, 29*n*22
- Casimir, St., relics of, xxv, xlv, lxix*n*100  
 Categorical imperative, 305  
 Categories of understanding, 8–18, 8*n*, 17*n*22, 372, 421, 440–44  
 Category, notion of, 146  
 Causality: and collective consciousness, 443; and force, 368–70, 441; and mimetic rites, 363, 367, 371; principle of, 367–73; and science, 373, 373*n*30; social origin of, 367–68; sociological theory of, 372  
 Charcot, Jean-Martin, liii  
 Children, 63, 125, 243*n*4, 246*n*22, 409, 414, 438  
 Christianity: and anthropomorphic god, 64; Catholic Church, 43; devil in, 40; divinity in, 30, 39, 64, 76*n*26, 193; and equality, 429; and faith, 365; and folklore, 34; individual practices within, 43; magical elements in, 40; and missionaries' influence, 248, 248*n*44; Müller on, 76*n*26; mystery in, 23; and pain, 320; plurality of sacred things in, 38–39;

- Protestantism, 41; and Satan, 423; and science, 36n45, 431; and seasonal feasts, 353; and tattoos, 233-34
- Church: centrality of, in religion, 41-43; exclusion of, from individual religious, 43; as imagined community, 42; and individual cults, 43-44
- Churinga, 115, 118-22, 119n103, 125, 132-33, 137, 140, 183, 200n41, 229, 250, 254, 256-59, 268, 269, 281, 287, 307, 311, 312, 323, 406, 407, 413, 413n61
- Circumcision, 115n, 120, 137n41, 286, 287, 297, 319
- Civilizing heroes, 286-88, 287n48, 287nn54-55, 288n60, 295, 297
- Clans: of American Indians, 85-86, 93, 94, 109-10, 109nn47-48, 110; ancestors as origin of, 252, 279-80; classification of things by, 141-45; coherence of, as improbable, lxviii66; definition of, 100, 100n2, 155; and phratry organization, 105, 107, 107n40, 142; similarity among, 428; as simplest form of social organization, 169; totem as name of, 100-101; and totemic principle, 207-208, 223; and totemism, 85-86, 93, 94; Tylor on, 171n8
- Classification: among American Indians, 145; by clan, phratry, and class, 141-45; dichotomous organization of, 146-47, 147nn22-23; differences between resemblance and idea of genus, 146-49, 147-48nn24-26; and hierarchical order, 149; modeled on social organization, 145-46, 149; religious meaning of, 149-57; and society, 444-45; and the whole, 442, 443. *See also* Cosmology
- Clement, E., 359
- Codrington, Robert Henry, 56, 59, 64, 196-97, 206, 327
- Collective consciousness: and causality, 443; and exploration of culture, lvi; and Holy Ark, xlviii; and impersonal reason, 445; and moral powers, 224; as more than epiphenomenon of morphological base, 426; and Mount Sinai, xlvii; normative and cognitive aspects of, li; as not separate from individuals, xlii-xliii; and religion, 239; and representative rites, 379; and sacredness, xliii, xlv, xlvii, xlviii-xlix, 268-69; and symbols, 232-34
- Collective representations, xviii, xix, xxvi, lvi, 15, 228, 230, 273, 349-50, 436-37, 439, 439n11, 445
- Collective thought, 447
- Collective totem, 162-66, 162n33, 178-82
- Collins, David, 114
- Command, bases of, 209-11
- Communion, 341-44, 347, 389-90, 410, 414
- Comparative method, proper use of, 90-92
- Comte, Auguste, xxxii, xxxix, xl, xli, lxiii27, lxvn53, lxviii80, 206, 429
- Conception: and animal form of soul, 264; Australian theories of, 253-59, 253n55, 253n59, 255n68, 255n70, 261, 277; sexual intercourse as insufficient for, 253, 253n55; and souls, 250; and totem, 263
- Conceptual totemism, 183-84
- Concepts, 434-40, 435n9, 441
- Conscience collective*, xl-xliii, xlvii, xlviii-xlix, li, lvi, 445n. *See also* Collective consciousness
- Consciousness. *See* Collective consciousness; Individual consciousness
- Consciousness of consciousnesses, 445
- Consecration, 323, 325
- Contagiousness: causes of, 325-29; of feelings associated with symbol, 221-22; of magic forces, 328n105, 361; of religious forces, 238-39n60, 327-29, 415; of sacredness, 224, 281, 322-29; and scientific explanation, 327, 329; of taboos, 326n100; of totemic principle, 224
- Contrariety, law of, 361n20
- Copernicus, I
- Corpses. *See* Death
- Corroboree, 217, 357, 387, 387n32
- Coser, Lewis A., xxxi
- Cosmology: and classification by clan, phratry, and class, 141-45; modeled on social organization, 145-46, 149; and morality, I-li; morality and history tied to, 379; religious meaning of classifications, 149-57; of totemism, 141-57. *See also* Classification

- Creation myths, 290–91, 290n83  
 Creation science, l–li  
 Crusades, 213  
 Cult: definition of, 59–60, 420, 430; individual forms of, 426–27; international forms of, 428; meanings and connotations of, lvi, lxxi–lxxiin125; periodicity of, 60. *See also* Ancestor cult; Dead, cult of  
 Curie, Marie and Pierre, xli  
 Curr, Edward Micklethwaite, 143  
 Cushing, Frank Hamilton, 11, 86n8, 87
- Dall, 87  
 Daramulun, 289, 292, 295, 296, 297, 309, 315, 323, 427  
 Darwin, Charles, 237n  
 Dawson, James, 248, 248n44, 324  
 De Coulanges, Fustel, 46n2  
 Dead, cult of, 59, 60–61, 62, 76n26  
 Death: belief in life after, 270–72; hair of man cut at, 138; honor of dead with mana, 59, 61; Müller on, 75, 75n24; prohibitions surrounding, 309–10, 324, 393, 395, 413; responsibility for, 263–64; sacredness of dead person, 307, 323; as separation of soul and body, 48, 49, 245; soul after, 48–49, 57, 59, 246–50, 252–53, 264–65, 265n121, 276–77; of totem as threat to individual, 160, 168; totemic emblem on corpse before burial, 117; transformation of soul into spirit through, 48–49, 57, 59. *See also* Burial practices; Funeral rites; Mourning  
 Delusions. *See* Hallucinations; Illusion  
 Demons, 34, 40, 423  
 Descartes, René, xxvii, lxixn98  
 Determinism, 24–25  
 Deuteronomy, book of, xxvii, 32, 32n38  
 Dietary restrictions, 32, 78n31, 108–109, 127–31, 140, 151–52, 152n42, 160, 221, 306n7, 307–308, 307n16, 315, 338, 413  
 Divinity. *See* God  
 Domination, 370  
 Dorsey, James Owen, 87, 194–95, 194n10  
 Double. *See* Soul  
 Douglas, Mary, lxx–lxxvin63  
 Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, lx
- Dramatic performances, 376–80, 383–84  
 Dreaming, lxviiiin84, 47, 48, 53–56, 56n20, 57n22, 65, 150, 258, 261, 270–71  
 Dreyfus Affair, lxviiiin84  
 Drought, 407–408  
 Duality: of body and soul, xxvii, 245, 265–67, 274; of human nature, 15–16, 50, 52–53, 134–36, 224n34  
 Dueling, 397
- Eating, as profane, 311, 331n42. *See also* Dietary restrictions  
 Ecclesiastes, book of, xxiv  
 Economic activity, 421n4  
 Effervescence: collective, xli–xlii, xliv–xlv, 218–20, 228, 424; in funeral rites, 398, 399; mental effervescence, 238; and mourning, 397–98, 399, 403; of Nazis, lxixn88; and piacular rite, 397–99, 403, 411; and representative rites, 385, 386–87  
*Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim). *See* *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Durkheim)  
 Elementary versus elemental, lix–lxi  
 Ellington, Duke, xxiii–xxiv  
 Emblem, 231–35. *See also* Totemic emblem  
 Empedocles, xxvii, lxiiiin33  
 Empiricism, 12–18, 12–13n15, 370, 372  
 Equation of religion and society. *See* God/society equation  
 Ertnatulunga, 119–21, 120n, 281, 281n21, 312  
 Essential, meanings of, lvi–lvii, lxxiin128. *See also* specific ethnographers  
 Ethnography, xxxii, 5–6, 8, 27, 27n12, 85, 101  
 Evans-Pritchard, E. E., li  
 Evil, 284–86, 285n40, 402, 404–406, 412–17, 419, 423–24  
 Evolution, l–li, 236–37  
 Excrement, sacredness of, 230n43, 334, 336  
 Exodus, book of, xxxviii, xliv, xlvi–xlviii, 346n48  
 Expiatory rites, 131n18, 151, 409, 410, 411–12, 414



- Eylmann, Richard, 244n9, 389n72, 407
- Fables, 80n36. *See also* Folklore; Mythology
- Fagan, Garth, xxiii
- Faith, 364–66, 379, 419–20, 427, 432, 433
- Family. *See* Clans
- Famines, 407–408
- Fertility rites, 354–60
- Festivals, 386–87
- Fetishism, 35–36, 161n26, 176–77
- Filloux, J. C., lxivn52
- Fire rituals, 219–20
- First fruits, sacredness of, 342, 343
- Fison, Lorimer, 86, 111, 116, 141–43
- Flag, as symbol, 228, 229, 231
- Fletcher, Alice C., 175, 178, 195n11, 197, 201, 327
- Folklore, 34, 39, 42, 305n5. *See also* Mythology
- Food restrictions. *See* Dietary restrictions
- Force: and causality, 368–70; collective force as prototype for effective force, 441; concept of, xl–xlii, l, 191–92; and domination, 370; magic forces, 328n105; mobility of religious forces, 327–28; physical contrasted with moral or collective force, 192–93, 369; priority of impersonal force over mythical personalities, 201–205; religious force as prototype of force in general, 205–206; religious forces as external to their substrates, 326–29; social origin of, 369; of society that raise individual above himself, 211–16, 214n; and soul, 370
- Ford, Harrison, xlviii
- Foreskin, 138, 138n49
- Formalism, religious, 33
- Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Durkheim): critique on, xxxiii; English translation of title of, lix–lxi; goals for, and approaches to retranslating, xxii–xxiv, li–lxi; reaction to, as scandal, xx–xxi; rhetorical mode of, xxi–xxii, liv; second edition of, lxxin115; Swain's translation of, xviii, xxxiii, li–liv, lvii, lix, lxi, lxi9n98, 211n; “we” used in, lviii, lxxiin130
- Foucault, Michel, xxiii, xxix, lxxiin25
- Frazer, Sir James G., 21, 27, 58n24, 86–88, 90–92, 102n14, 109n46, 129n10, 132n22, 158n2, 160n18, 161n26, 162n33, 163n35, 166n54, 167, 175, 177–78, 182–87, 189, 193n5, 204n56, 283–84, 361, 366, 422n5
- French Revolution, xlii, 213, 215–16, 430
- Freud, Sigmund, xlviii, liii, lxxn103, lxx–lxxiin113–114, lxxin122
- Functionalism, xxxii
- Funeral rites, 39n49, 48, 58, 59, 225, 243n4, 246, 305, 395, 397–99, 405n35, 414. *See also* Burial rites; Death; Mourning
- Games, origin of, 385
- Gane, Michael, lviii
- Gason, 259
- Gayandi, 295, 297
- Generic image, 442
- Genital mutilation, 115, 115n, 137, 137n41, 286, 297, 319 *See also* Circumcision; Subincision
- Genus, idea of, 147–49, 148n26, 441, 442, 444
- Ghosts, versus spirits, 277
- Gillen, Francis James, 27n12, 88–90, 102n13, 103, 105, 118, 121, 122, 123n133, 128–29, 131n14, 134, 135, 153, 182, 185, 186, 199, 200n41, 218–20, 247, 248n36, 252, 253, 254, 255n70, 268, 280, 281, 285, 288n60, 289, 311, 330, 333, 335n16, 337n25, 356–57, 374, 376, 381, 382n20, 383, 387, 388, 393, 394, 398, 408
- God/gods: anthropomorphic god, 64–65; authority of, 211; of Christianity, 30, 39, 64, 76n26, 193; as common noun in naturism, 70–71; deification of cosmic phenomena, 83; dependence of, on humans, 345, 349–51; distribution of nature among various gods, 155; divinity connected with agency, 83n39; God/society equation, xxxv–xxxviii, 351; Greek and Roman gods and goddesses, 64–65, 71, 79, 80n35, 202, 208; high gods,

- God/gods: (*cont.*) 288–99, 309, 315, 408, 427–28; jealous and terrible gods, 225–26; Lang on high gods, 188, 189*n*62; in mythology, 79–80, 79–80*nn*33–35; orenda of Iroquois, 195–96; physical and moral force of, 192–93; Pickering on God's separateness, *lxviii*71; reduction of, *xxxv*–*xxxvi*, *lxvi*–*lxviii*69; religion as defined in relation to idea of, 27–33; religions without gods, 28–31; rites without gods in deistic religions, 32–33; sacrifice to create bond between humans and, 344; Samoan gods, 193–94; as symbolic expression of society, 351; of totemism, 191, 208; wakan of Sioux, 194–95, 198–98
- Gouldner, Alvin, *xxxii*
- Grey, George, 85, 111, 200
- Grief. *See* Mourning; Piacular rites
- Grimm brothers, 68
- Gruppe, Otto, 69
- Habits, 436*n*10
- Hair, 137–38, 138*n*49, 307, 347*n*52, 394–95, 397, 398
- Hall, Stuart, *lxiii*25
- Hallucinations, 226, 228–30, 351–52
- Hamelin, Octave, 8*n*4, 10
- Hartland, Edwin Sidney, 87*n*14, 293*n*100
- Hazing, 318*n*74
- Hearne, Samuel, 112
- Hebrews, 32, 353. *See also* Judaism
- Heckewelder, John Gottlieb Ernestus, 164
- Heroes, civilizing, 286–88, 287*n*48, 287*nn*54–55, 288*n*60, 295, 297
- Hewitt, N. J. B., 201
- Hierarchy, 149
- High gods, 288–99, 293*n*100, 309, 315, 408, 427–28
- Hill Tout, Charles, 87, 165, 166, 175–77, 178, 179*n*32, 180–81
- Hindu sacrifice, 389–90
- Historical materialism, 426
- History, 376, 379, 380, 382, 397, 443
- Holy Ark, *xliv*, *xlvi*, 121
- Homeopathic magic, 361
- Howitt, Alfred William, 56, 86, 89–90, 102, 107*n*40, 111, 116, 142–44, 144*n*11, 154, 187, 262, 296, 323*n*89, 396
- Hubert, Henri, *lxxiii*131, 41, 203–204, 361*n*20, 366–67, 389
- Hugo, Victor, *liv*
- Human reason. *See* Reason
- Humans: compared with animal nature, 50–51, 62; as culmination of nature, 448; duality of, 15–16, 50, 52–53, 134–36, 224*n*34; gods' dependence on, 345, 349–51; invalidity of inference from animals and children, 62–63; kinship with totemic animal, 133–36, 135*n*31, 135*n*33, 136*nn*34–35, 139–40, 139*n*55, 224, 224*n*32, 307–308, 362, 391; as participants in animal nature, 65; sacredness of, 133–34, 133*n*24, 136–40, 138*n*50. *See also* Men; Old men; Uninitiated men; Women
- Hurston, Zora Neale, *xxiv*
- Husserl, Edmund, *xviii*
- Idealization, 229–30, 422–25
- Illness, 49, 408–409, 414
- Illusion, 51–52, 83. *See also* Delusions; Hallucinations
- Imagined communities, *xxxii*–*xxxiii*, *xlv*, 42
- Imitation. *See* Mimetic rites
- Immortality, *xxix*, 270–72. *See also* Soul
- Indians. *See* American Indians
- Individual consciousness, 224, 231–32, 252, 266, 426
- Individual totem: acquisition of, 163–66, 163*n*37, 164*n*40, 165*nn*46–47, 166*n*54; as alter ego, 160, 161, 282; bonds between individual and, 159–63; characteristics of, 282, 426–27; compared with collective totem, 162–66; Frazer on, 162, 177–78, 178*n*30; name of, 158–59; as personal emblem, 159; relationship between ancestral spirit, soul, and, 280–284, 283*n*30, 284*n*31; totemism derived from, 174–82
- Individualism, *li*, 426–27
- Individuation, 273–75, 275*n*128, 283
- Indo-European languages. *See* Language

- Initiation rites, 37, 44, 116–17, 117*n*95, 137, 138*n*50, 163–65, 256–57, 286, 291–92, 297, 307, 311, 314–15, 317–19, 318*n*74, 389*n*40
- Intelligence. *See* Thought
- Intichiuma: failures of, 365; first phase of, 331–37, 345–46; as mimetic rite, 355–57, 364; as representative or commemorative rite, 374, 375–78, 381, 387–89; ritual eating of totemic plant of animal during, 338–44, 340*n*36; as sacrifice, 346–47, 364; seasonal nature of, 353; second phase of, 338–44, 340*n*36; Strehlow on, 337*n*25, 340*n*36; well-being of totemic animal or plant during, 331–37, 345–46. *See also* Sacrifice
- Intoxicating liquors, 228
- Jainism, 31
- James, William, lxviii–lxix*n*87, 420
- Jay, Nancy, lix, lxviii77
- Jevons, Frank Byron, 25, 26, 46*n*3, 57*n*22, 173–74, 174*n*17, 326*n*100
- Jews. *See* Judaism
- Joan of Arc, 213
- Jones, Robert Alun, lxxix117
- Jovis, 71
- Judaism, xx, xxix, xxx, xxxi, xlv, lxiii*n*21, 32, 33, 352, 353, 429
- Kant, Immanuel, xviii, xxix, xxxii, 8*n*, 273, 305, 446
- Kaplan, Mordecai, lxiii*n*21
- Karween, 296, 297
- Kempe, Rev. H., 119*n*103
- Kern, Hendrick, 29, 30*n*26
- Kerr, John, lxxv54
- Khomeini, Ruhollah, xxv, xlv–xlv
- Kind, idea of, 147–49, 148*n*26, 441
- Kings, book of, 346*n*48
- Kinship: in clan, 100, 100*n*2; man/totemic animal kinship, 133–36, 135*n*31, 135*n*33, 136*n*34–35, 139–40, 139*n*55, 224, 224*n*32, 307–308, 362, 391; matriliney versus patriarchy, 6, 6*n*; sacrifice and creation of artificial kinship, 341, 344
- Knowledge, theory of: and apriorism versus empiricism, 12–18, 12–15*n*15–18, 17*n*22; and categories of understanding, 8–18, 8*n*, 17*n*22, 372, 421, 440–44; fundamental notions in, 8–12, 8*n*; origins of, in religion, 8; and society, 15–16, 447–48
- Krause, Avrel, 87, 113, 261
- Ku Klux Klan, xlii
- Kuhn, Adalbert, 69, 70
- Kushner, Harold, lxiii*n*21
- LaCapra, Dominick, xxxvii
- Lalande, André, 237*n*
- Lang, Andrew, 46*n*1, 56–57*n*21, 61, 106, 186–89, 186–87*n*52–53, 292–93, 292–93*n*99–100
- Language: and collective representations, 436; conceptual organization of, 435; Indo-European languages, 73–76; metaphors in, 51, 74; Müller on, 72–76; and mythology, 75, 78; and natural phenomena, 74–75; and naturism, 72–75; sacred language, 310; and speech prohibitions, 309–10, 311*n*45, 324, 393, 395, 395*n*8; and thought, 73
- Laughing Boy totem, 383
- Laws of nature, 24
- Legends, 79*n*33. *See also* Folklore; Mythology
- Leibniz, G. W., xxix, 24, 273
- Leonhardi, 263*n*112
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, li, lxviii78, lxiii*n*130
- Leviticus, book of, xxvii, 32, 32*n*34, 346*n*48
- Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien, 9*n*, 236*n*58, 269*n*125, 365*n*24
- Lithuania, xxv, xlv, lxix*n*100
- Local totemism, 182–86, 184*n*43
- Logical norms, versus moral norms, 17, 17*n*20
- Logical thought, 433–40, 445–46
- Lombroso, Césaire, 234
- Long, John, 85, 101*n*7
- Looking, prohibitions against, 308–309
- Lukes, Steven, xxvi, xxxiii, xlv, liii, lxiii13, lxviii87

- Magic: and asceticism, 316n69; compared with religion, lxiiin16, 39–42, 200, 204, 285–86, 304–305, 361, 366–67, 366n26, 421; contagiousness and, 328n105, 361; definition of, 39–40; faith in, 366; homeopathic magic, 361; origins of, 366; prohibitions in, 304–305; and spirits, 284–86, 286n47; sympathetic magic, 360–61, 366; totemism as, xx
- Malinowski, Bronislaw, li
- Mana: and dead, 59, 61; definition of, xxxix, xl, 59, 215n14; as force, 327; and gods, 203; and men of influence, 215; Lang on, 188; and magic, 204; rites addressed to, 203; and soul, 268–70, 299;
- as totemic principle, 196–200, 206; and wealth, 421n4. *See also* Totemic principle
- Mangarkunjerkunja, 287, 287n54, 294–95
- Mannhardt, Wilhelm, 34, 68n1, 87
- Marrett, R. R., 203, 203n49, 204n57
- Marriage classes, 107–108, 108n43, 108–109nn45–46, 152n42, 253–54, 254n60, 255n68, 428
- Marsalis, Wynton, xxiii
- Marx, Karl, xix, lxviii65
- Maternal totem, 104, 131, 131n14, 163, 185–86, 258, 262n110
- Mathews, Robert Hamilton, 143–44, 144n11, 163n37, 167, 182n39, 260
- Matriliny, 6, 6n
- Maudsley, 230n41
- Mauss, Marcel, lxixn88, lxxiiin131, 41, 203–204, 361n20, 366–67, 389
- McLennan, John Ferguson, 6, 6n, 85, 87
- Medicine bag, 160n18
- Men: ascetic practices before and after marriage, 316–17n69; battles between women and, 168, 168n62; creation of, 290, 290n83; lack of respect for senile old men, 245; old men and choice of individual totem, 165; old men exempted from prohibitions against eating totemic animal, 128, 129, 139, 307, 307n16; picaresque rites and old men, 408; sacredness of, compared with women, 138–39; sacredness of old men, 129, 139, 244, 245, 307n16; sexual totems of, 167–68, 167n56, 296; uninitiated men, 132–33, 138, 139, 288, 312, 384
- Menstrual blood, 412, 413
- Mentality. *See* Thought
- Meštrović, Stjepan G., lxviii25, lxxixn114, lxxixn122
- Metaphors, 51, 74
- Mexico, 204
- Mimetic rites: anthropological explanation of, 361–62; and bewitchment, 361; and causality, 363, 367, 371; definition of, 355; effects on participants, 363–64; examples of, 355–60; failures not the rule, 365; and faith, 364–66; Intichiuma as, 355–57, 364; moral efficacy of, 363–65; physical efficacy of, 365–66; as primitive form of totemic cult, 391; and principle of *like produces like*, 360–61, 371; reasons for imitation of plant or animal, 362–63
- Mindeleff, 87
- Minkani, 336
- Miracles, 25
- Modeh, xxix
- Monasticism, 37
- Moral authority, 209–11, 210–11n6, 224
- Morality, xlviiii, lv–lvi, 17, 17n20, 34, 270, 362
- Morgan, Lewis Henry, 6, 6n, 86, 87
- Mortuary rites. *See* Burial rites; Death; Funeral rites; Mourning
- Moses, xlvi–xlvii
- Mount Sinai, xlvi–xlviii
- Mourning: anger expressed during, 397, 404; bloodshedding during, 397–400, 406, 406n36; as collective expression of emotion, 400–401, 403; and double transformation of deceased, 402–405; dueling during, 397; and effervescence, 397–98, 399, 403; examples of, 393–99; explanation of, 400–406; prohibitions during, 309–10, 324, 393, 394, 395n8; sadness expressed during, 393–97; self-mutilation in, 394–99, 402, 404; and soul of dead, 252, 404–406, 414; and women, 393, 395–96, 395n8, 398–99, 404. *See also* Burial rites; Death; Funeral rites
- Muk-Kurnai, 260, 277

- Müller, Max, 23, 46n3, 69–76, 78–79, 82n38, 83n39
- Mullian, 296
- Mungan-ngaua, 289, 295, 408
- Mura-mura, 259–60, 277, 287, 289, 294, 336, 407
- Mutilation. *See* Self-mutilation
- Mystery, in definition of religion, 22–26
- Mythology: of allied totems, 153n51; of ancestors, 175–76; contradiction in, 12, 12n13; creation myths, 290–91, 290n83; and eating of totemic animal, 128–29, 129n9; fables compared with, 80n36; formation of international mythology, 298, 298n131; gods in, 79–80, 79–80nn33–35; on kinship between man and totemic animal, 134–36, 134n28, 135–36nn31–34, 187; and language, 75, 78; legends compared with, 79n33; Müller on, 69n5, 70, 75, 78, 79; as not historical evidence, 129; on origin of clan, 252; and poetry, 386; priority of impersonal force over mythical personalities, 201–205; religion compared with, 79; scholars on, 68–70; vampire myth, 244n9. *See also* Folklore
- Nakedness, 310, 332
- Namatuna, 254, 255, 255n66
- Name: of dead person, 309–10, 324; of individual and individual totem, 158–59; sacredness of, 309; totem as, 100–11, 186–88
- Natural order of things, 24–26
- Nature: as animate, 57n22; disasters in, 407–408; distribution of, among various gods, 155; man's relationship with, 81–83; savage's admiration of, 81; and society, 17–18; totemism derived from cult of nature, 173–74; transformation of cult of spirits into cult of nature, 50–52, 61–65
- Naturism: animism compared with, 45–46, 70, 84; critique of, xlvi, lxviii74, 76–83, 84–85, 226; definition of, 45–46; and language, 72–76; Müller on, 69–76, 78–79; and mythology distinguished from religion, 78–81; as original form of religious life, 71–72; principles of, 70–76; and sacred/profane dichotomy, 81–83; scholars interested in, 68–70; and soul, 75–76; Spencer on, 51
- Nazis, xlii, lxixn88
- Negative rites: and asceticism, 314–21; and contagiousness of the sacred, 322–25; definition of, 303–304, 306; positive effects of, 313–21, 417; purpose of, 330; as system of abstinences, 303–13. *See also* Prohibitions
- Nisbet, Robert, xxxiii
- Norms, 17, 17n20
- North America. *See* American Indians
- Nuralie, 289, 296, 297
- Nurtunja, 123–25, 123n131, 124–25n140, 132, 133, 136
- Obedience, bases, 209–11
- Ochre, red, 137
- Offerings: in Bible, 346n48; of Intichiuma, 331–37, 345–46; in piacular sacrifices, 347n53
- Oknanikilla, 250, 250n49
- Old men: and ability to see souls, 244; and choice of individual token, 165; exempted from prohibitions against eating totemic animal, 128, 129, 139, 307, 307n16; lack of respect for, at senility, 245; and piacular rites, 408; sacredness of, 129, 139, 244, 245, 307n16
- Oldenberg, Hermann, 28, 31
- Opinion, 210, 439–40
- Order. *See* Natural order of things
- Orenda, 195–96, 200, 205–206
- Oruncha, 285, 285n40
- Oxley, 113–14
- Pain, religious role of, 317–21, 317nn70–71, 318n74, 411, 411n57. *See also* Asceticism; Self-mutilation
- Pallyan, 290n83, 296, 297
- Palmer, Edward, 142
- Parker, Mrs., 178n29, 282, 298, 316
- Parsons, Talcott, lxvnn55–56, lxixn93
- Pascal, Blaise, 23

- Paschal meal, 343
- Paternal totem, 104–105, 131, 131n14, 163
- Paul, St., 292n99
- Pearce, Frank, lxiii25
- Pensée collective*. See Collective thought
- Personal totem. See Individual totem
- Personality, 272–75, 272n127, 275n128
- Philosophy, 4, 8, 206, 438
- Phratries, 105–107, 107n30, 110–11, 111nn52–53, 130, 130nn12–13, 142–47, 147nn22–23, 381, 428
- Piacular rites: and ambiguity of the sacred, 415–17; and anger, 397, 404, 412; bloodshedding during, 397–400, 406–10, 406n36, 409n51; as collective expression of emotion, 400–401, 403, 410–12, 416–17; definition of, 392–93; dueling during, 397; and effervescence, 397–98, 399, 403, 411; efficacy of, 415–17; explanation of, 400–406; and loss of *churinga*, 406–407; mourning, 393–406; and natural disasters, 407–408; offerings in, 347n53; prohibitions in, 393; and ritual misdeed, 411–12; self-mutilation in, 394–99, 402, 404, 407–10, 409n51; and sickness, 408–409; and southern lights, 408. See also Mourning
- Picasso, Pablo, xxii
- Pickering, W. S. F., xxvi, xxxi, xxxiii, lii, lxiii15, lxviii71, lxixn98
- Pikler, Julius, 187n53, 208n2
- Plants, as sacred beings, 64. See also Totemic plants
- Plato, 437
- Poetry, and religion, 386
- Positive rites: definition of, 330; feelings associated with, 392; Intichiuma as example of, 330–48; mimetic rites, 355–67; periodicity of, 350, 353–54; representative or commemorative rites, 374–91; sacrifice, 340–54; as sacrilege, 342–43
- “Positive science.” See *Science positive*
- Powell, John Wesley, 86n8, 162–63
- Power, social origin of, 370
- Preanimism, 203, 204n57, 269
- Preuss, Konrad Theodor, 27n12, 204, 204n57, 269n125, 317, 317nn70–71, 422n5
- Primitive: and admiration of nature, 81; and animals, 172; dreams of, 55–56, 56n20; mentality of, xxxi, 47, 49–51, 55, 62, 177–78, 193, 198, 236–41, 326, 328–29; missionaries’ influence on, 248, 248n44; and soul, 52–53; as term, 1n1. See also Savage
- Primitive religion: objections to study of, 1–2; rationale for study of, 1–8, 5n2. See also Totemism
- Procopius of Gaza, 233
- Procreation. See Conception
- Profane: cycle of, in Australian societies, 220–21; eating as, 311, 311n42; matter as, 431; prohibitions against sacred life mingling with, 310–13, 311n45, 312n47; women as, 138, 308, 308n18, 384. See also Sacred/profane dichotomy
- Prohibitions: and antagonisms between sacred and profane, 306–13, 321–22, 324–25; of contact, 132, 132n22, 306–10; and contagiousness of sacred, 322–25; dietary restrictions, 32, 78n31, 108–109, 127–31, 140, 151–52, 152n42, 160, 221, 306n7, 307–308, 307n16, 315, 338, 413; against eating or killing totemic animal/plant, 127–32, 131nn16–18, 140, 151–52, 152n42, 160, 160n18, 221, 307–308, 307n16, 338; in folklore, 305n5; as logically entailed by notion of sacred, 321–22; against looking, 308–309; magic versus religious prohibitions, 304–305; during mourning, 393, 395, 395n8; old men exempted from, 128, 129, 139; positive influences of, 313–15; against profane life mingling with sacred life, 310–13, 311n45, 312n47; and property right, 312n47; between sacred things of different kinds, 305–306, 413; on sexual contact, 308n18; on speech, 309–10, 311n45; on totemic emblem, 132–33; types of, 306–11; for uninitiated men, 132–33, 138, 288, 312; for women, 32, 125, 132, 137, 138, 288, 308, 309, 393, 395, 395n8; on work, 311–12
- Property rights, 140, 312n47

- Psychology, *xlvi*, *liii*, *lxviii*–*lxixn*87, *lxxn*103, *lxx*–*lxxin*113–114, *lxxin*122, 69, 69*n*, 431–32
- Putiaputia, 287, 287*n*48, 294
- Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *xlvi*
- Rainmaking, 358–59, 358*n*13
- Ratapa, 253–54, 253*n*59, 255, 255*n*68, 259, 263
- Ratzel, Friedrich, 230*n*41
- Reason, *xlix*–*li*, *lxviii*79, 13–17, 273, 446
- Red ochre, 137
- Redding, *lii*, *lxii*15, *lxixn*98
- Reincarnation: among American Indians, 261, 264–65; in Australian societies, 249–61, 268, 277–78; facts supporting, 262–65; and perpetuation of group, 271–72
- Religion: all religions as true, 2–3; and art, 385–86; centrality of Church in, 41–43; compared with magic, *lxii*16, 39–42, 200, 204, 285–86, 304–305, 361, 366–67, 366*n*26, 421; contagiousness of religious forces, 238–39*n*60, 327–29, 415; defined by supernatural and mysterious, 22–26; defined in relation to idea of God, 27–33; definition of, *xxxiv*, 33–34, 38–39, 44, 44*n*68; and economic activity, 421*n*4; eternal nature of, 429–30, 432–33; feelings released by, 419–20; function of, 227, 419; as hygienic technique, 78*n*31; idealization of, 229–31, 422–25; and individual cults, 43–44, 426–27; Müller on, 23, 70, 79; mythology distinguished from, 78–81; needs fulfilled by, *xviii*; not defined by mythical personalities, gods, or spirits, 202–203; as not originating in fear, 225–26, 409; origins of, 7–8, 7*n*3, 45–46, 220, 225–26; and part as equal to whole, 230–31; philosophers on, 4; and poetry, 386; prohibitions in, 304–25; recreational aspect of, 385–87; rites without gods in deistic religions, 32–33; as rooted in “the real,” *xvii*–*xviii*, *xxviii*, *xxxvii*, 226–28; and science, *xxv*, *xxx*, *xxxvii*, *xli*, *xlix*–*li*, 8, 12*n*13, 25, 36*n*45, 77–78, 83, 240–41, 419, 421, 430–33, 446; in seemingly nonreligious life, *xlix*–*li*; social aspects of, *xix*–*xx*, *xlvi*, 9, 238–39, 238–39*n*60, 351–54, 421–29; speculative role of, 430–31, 433; study of, through primitive religion, 1–8; Taylor on, 27; universalism in, 427–28, 446; without gods, 28–31. *See also* Brahminism; Buddhism; Christianity; God/gods; Judaism; Primitive religion; Science of religions; Totemism
- Religious beliefs. *See* Beliefs
- Religious formalism, 33
- Religious individualism, 426–27
- Religious rites. *See* Rites
- Religious universalism, 427–28, 446
- Representations, 349–50, 349*n*55, 438. *See also* Collective representations
- Representative or commemorative rites: ambiguity of, 387–91; Arunta and Wararamunga compared, 375–80, 388–89; definition of, 374–75; dramatic performances in, 376–80, 383–84; and effervescence, 385, 386–87; and festival, 386–87; Intichiuma as, 374, 375–78, 381, 387–89; nonutilitarian functions of, 380–87; and periodic reaffirmation of society, 390; as recreation and aesthetic expression, 383–87; utilitarian interpretation of, 375–80; Wollunqua in, 380–83
- Réville, Albert, 27, 61, 64, 85*n*2
- Richard, Gaston, *lxiii*15
- Riggs, Stephen Return, 195
- Rites: as addressed to definite personalities, 79; arguments against utilitarian view of, 382, 384; automatic effects of, 32–33; compared with moral practices, 34; cult compared with, 60; definition of, 34, 38; function of, 422; interchangeability of, 390; as myths in action, 79; necessary cyclicality of, *xlii*; in preanimist religion, 203; as recreation and aesthetic expression, 383–87; and religious formalism, 33; separate from deities, 202; without gods, 32–33. *See also* Burial rites; Expiatory rites; Funeral rites; Initiation rites; Mimetic rites; Negative rites; Piacular rites; Positive rites;

- Rites (*cont.*) Representative or commemorative rites; Sacrifice
- Roche, Maurice, lviii
- Roth, Walter Edmund, 258, 279
- Rules of Sociological Method, The* (Durkheim), lviii, lxin4, lxxin121
- Ryan, Judith, lxiiin24, lxxvn54
- Sabatier, Auguste, 43n65
- Sacrament, 127
- Sacred objects and beings, xlii, 58–61, 65.  
*See also* God/gods; Totem; Totemic animal; Totemic plant; specific objects, such as Churinga; Nurtunja; Waninga
- Sacred/profane dichotomy: absolute heterogeneity between, 36, 37, 58; and beliefs, 34–38; characteristics of sacred versus profane, 35–39; inversions of, 413–15; and naturism, 81–83; overview of, xliii–xlix; passage from profane to sacred, 36–37; prohibitions concerning, 305–13, 321–22, 324–325
- Sacredness: ambiguity of, 412–17; of blood, 125, 136–37, 137n41, 188, 307; and collective consciousness, xliii, xlv, xlvii, xlviii–xlix, 268–69; contagiousness of, 224, 281, 322–29; creation of, xlv–xlvi, 208–16, 312–13, 312n47, 328, 349–50; of dead person, 307, 323; of hair, 137–38, 307; of humans, 133–34, 133n24, 136–40; as ideal, 424; of Khomeini, xlv; levels of, 306n7; localization of, 134, 137–39; of men, 138–39; of Mount Sinai, xlvi–xlviii; as not physical, xlv, xlvii; of old men, 129, 139, 244, 245, 307n16; pure and impure forms of, 306, 412–17; and sacred/profane dichotomy, xliii–xlix; of totemic animal, 127–33; of totemic emblems, 118–25, 133; translation of terms corresponding to, lxix–lxxn101; of women as less than men, 138, 138n50, 243, 243n3. *See also* Blood; Soul
- Sacrifice: ambiguity of, 389–90; and artificial kinship among humans, 341, 344; Bergaigne on, 32–33, 32n38; in Bible, 341; and circle in which sacrifice moves, 350–51; and communion, 341–44, 347; definition of, 343; food offerings to ancestors, 49; and gods' dependence on humans, 345, 349–51; Hindu sacrifice, 389–90; as hygienic technique, 78n31; Intichiuma as, 346–47, 364; and kinship between humans and gods, 344; offerings of, 345–54; periodicity of, 350, 353–54; seeming contradictions in, 344–45, 348–49; Smith on, 340–41, 343–45, 350, 351, 357; and soul, 341–42; and suffering, 320; theory of, 347–48; and transformation, 37n46; in Vedic religion, 32–33, 35; without deities, 32–33
- Sacrilege, 304–305, 342–43, 414
- Sadness. *See* Mourning; Piacular rites
- Salvation by faith, 419
- Samoa, 193–94, 193n5
- Samuel, book of, 32, 32n33
- Savage: and admiration of nature, 81; and animals, 172; dreams of, 47; as term, 47n6, 91. *See also* Primitive
- Say, 198
- Scapegoating, 404, 404n
- Schmidt, Wilhelm, 46n1, 293n100
- Scholasticism, 23n5
- Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe, 101, 111
- Schulze, Rev. Louis, 185, 255, 330, 357
- Schutz, Alfred, xviii
- Schwartz, Friedrich, 69
- Science: authority of, 210; and causality, 373, 373n30; concepts in, 434, 439; and contagiousness, 327, 329; as discipline applying to reality, 66–67; and duality of human nature, 224n34; and faith, 365; and magic, 366; and notion of necessary order, 26; of opinion, 439–40; profane character of, 36n45; and religion, xxv, xxx, xxxvii, xli, xlix–li, 8, 12n13, 25, 36n45, 77–78, 83, 240–41, 419, 421, 430–33, 446; and single well-made experiment, 249, 418–19
- Science of religions, 66–67, 91, 91n33
- Science positive*, xxiv–xxv, xxvi, xxxv–xxxvi, lxiiin27, 1, 1n, 26
- Secular. *See* Profane
- Self-mutilation, 394–99, 402, 404, 407–11, 409n



- Sense perceptions, 82*n*38, 275, 434–35, 438, 444
- Sexual communism, 62, 62*n*35
- Sexual intercourse: as insufficient for procreation, 253, 253*n*55; prohibitions on, 308*n*18; and sexual license, 219, 387*nn*32–33, 408, 411
- Sexual totem, 166–68, 167*nn*56–57, 296
- Shestov, Lev, 1
- Sickness, 49, 408–409, 414
- Simplifying case, logic/methodology of, xxxii, xxxviii–xl, lx–lxi, lxviii*nn*83–84, 1, 4–8
- Sin, xxix, 409
- Single well-made experiment, 249, 418–19
- Smith, William Robertson, lxviii65, 42*n*62, 61, 86–87, 340–41, 343–45, 347*n*52, 348, 350, 351, 357, 410–12, 415
- Smyth, Brough, 396
- Society: and asceticism, 321; authority of, 16–17, 209–11, 210–11*n*6, 224, 266; and categories of understanding, 442–44; classification in, 444–45; as consciousness of consciousnesses, 445; and duality of human nature, 15–17; as force raising individual above himself, 211–16, 214*n*13; and fusion of objects and ideas, 238–39; God/society equation, xxxv–xxxviii, 351; as highest form of human mind, 447–48; ideal society, 422–23, 425; and imperative norms, 266; individuals in, 252; and logical thought, 433–40; mourning and affirmation of, 403, 405, 416; and nature, 17–18; nature of, 266; periodic reaffirmation of, 350–54, 390; phases of Australian societies, 216–18; and power, 370; as reality *sui generis*, 15; and religion, xix–xx, xlvi, 9, 238–39, 238–39*n*60, 351–54, 427–29; sacredness created by, 208–16; and soul, 274–75, 275*n*128
- Sociology, 1, 2, 448
- Socrates, li
- Soul: analysis of notion of, in Australian societies, 242–48; animal form of, 263–65, 265*n*121; of animate and inanimate things, 49–50; animist theory of, 47–48, 52–56, 65, 68; and belief in life after death, 270–72; body/soul dualism, xxvii, 245, 265–67, 274; of children, 243*n*4; after death, 48–49, 57, 59, 246–50, 264–65, 265*n*121, 276–77, 414; Descartes on, xxvii; as double, xxviii, 47–48, 52–54, 57, 58, 65, 283–84, 284*n*31; and dreaming, 53–56, 57*n*22, 65, 270–71; dual individual and collective aspect of, 267–69; Durkheim on, xxvi–xxxii; exchange of, 414; as explanation of perpetuation of group, 271–72; facts supporting origin of, 262–65; and force, 370; hiding of, for safety, 177–78, 178*n*30; immortality of, xxix, 270–72; and individual cults, 43; individuation of, 283; interdependence and assimilation between body and, 245–47, 274; Jewish view of, xxx; localization of, xxvii, 1, 53, 245–46, 246*nn*22–23, 260, 262; and mana, 268–70, 299; mobility of, 245, 327–28; and mourning, 252, 404–406, 414; and naturism, 75–76; origin of idea of, 249–59; parts of, 231; and personality, 272–75, 272*n*127; and positive rites, 353; pregnancy as result of soul entering woman's body, 250; primitive's idea of, 52–53; as principle of explanation, 50; and reincarnation, 249–61, 268; relationship between ancestral spirit, individual totem, and, 280–84, 283*n*30, 284*n*31; relationship of, to body's life, 57–58; residences of, after death, 247–48, 248*n*36; and sacrifice, 341–42; separation from body at death, 48, 49, 245; and sin, xxix; and society, 274–75, 275*n*128; Spencer and Gillen on, 249–52, 257*n*78; spirit distinguished from, 48, 63–64, 276–84; and stars, 235*n*55; Strehlow on, 252–59, 257*n*78; totemic nature of, 249–59, 262–65; traits of, 243–44, 244*n*9; as transformation of impersonal power and force, 204; transformation of spirit into, through death, 48–49, 57, 59, 276–77; Tylor on, xxvi–xxvii, 47–48, 52–56, 65; and vampire myth, 244*n*9; women's lack of, 243, 243*n*3; Wundt on, 172*n*12. *See also* Sacredness
- Southern lights, 408

- Space, 8, 8*n*, 10–12, 11*n*8, 82, 441, 442, 442*n*17, 444
- Speech, prohibitions on, 309–10, 311*n*45, 324, 393, 395, 395*n*8
- Spencer, Sir Baldwin, 27*n*12, 58*n*23, 88–90, 102*n*13, 103, 105, 118, 121, 122, 122*n*127, 123*n*133, 128–29, 131*n*14, 134, 135, 153, 182, 185, 186, 199, 200*n*41, 218–20, 247, 248*n*36, 252, 253, 254, 255*n*70, 257*n*78, 268, 280, 281, 285, 288*n*60, 289, 311, 330, 333, 335*n*16, 337*n*25, 374, 376, 381, 382*n*20, 383, 387, 388, 393, 394, 398, 408
- Spencer, Herbert, xx, xxviii, 12–13*n*15, 43*n*65, 46–47, 50–52, 62–63, 66*n*42
- Spielberg, Stephen, xlviii
- Spirits: of ancestors, 277–80; and animism, 48–50, 57–61, 63–64, 68; and civilizing heroes, 286–88; evil spirits, 284–86, 285*n*40; ghosts versus, 277; and magic, 284–86, 286*n*47; of natural phenomena, 63–64; relationship between ancestral spirit, individual soul, and individual totem, 280–84; Roman and Greek beliefs on, 278, 281*n*, 283; soul distinguished from, 48, 63–64, 276–84; Spencer on, 66*n*42; and transformation of cult of spirits into cult of nature, 50–52, 61–65; as transformation of impersonal power and force, 204; transformation of soul to, through death, 48–49, 57, 59, 276–77; Tylor on, 27
- Split-totems, 102*n*14
- Stanner, W. E. H., xliii, xlv
- Steinthal, Hymann, 69
- Stevenson, Mrs., 87
- Strehlow, Carl, 89, 102–104, 105*n*27, 118, 119*n*103, 120*n*108, 121–22, 132*n*22, 153, 185, 199–200, 236, 248, 252–59, 263, 268, 272, 279, 281, 282, 285*n*40, 289, 330, 337*n*25, 346, 347*n*51, 357, 374–75, 378*n*10, 378*n*12, 380*n*15, 388
- Subincision, 115, 115*n*, 137, 137*n*, 286, 297, 319
- Subtotem, 152–54, 224
- Suffering: and mourning, 394–99; religious role of, 317–21, 317*n*70–71, 318*n*74, 411, 411*n*57. *See also* Asceticism; Self-mutilation
- Suicide (Durkheim), xxii, lxi–lxiii4
- Suicide, religious, 37
- Supernatural: in definition of religion, 22–26; and mana, 206. *See also* God/gods; Spirits
- Swain, Joseph Ward, xviii, xxxiii, li–liv, lvii, lix, lxi, lxix*n*98, 211*n*
- Swanton, John Reed, 87, 145*n*17, 147*n*22, 175
- Symbols, 221–23, 232–34
- Sympathetic magic, 360–61, 366
- Taboos, 188, 304, 326*n*100. *See also* Prohibitions
- Taplin, George, 260
- Tarlow, 359–60
- Tattooing, 116–17, 116*n*89, 116–17*nn*92–93, 132, 159, 233–34
- Technology, 93–94
- Ten Commandments, xxxviii
- Thalaualla, 376, 377
- Thomas, Northcote Whitridge, 147*n*23, 235*n*54
- Thomas, W. I., xxxvi, xlv
- Thought: of animals, 50–51, 62, 438, 444; of children, 63, 438; collective thought, 447; and language, 73; logical thought, 433–40, 445–46; of primitive, xxxi, 47, 49–51, 55, 62, 177–78, 193, 198, 236–41, 326, 328–29
- Time, 8, 8*n*, 9–10, 10*n*6, 18*n*23, 82, 311, 353–54, 441, 442, 442*n*17, 444
- Tindalo, 59
- Tjurunga. *See* Churingas
- Tools, 18*n*24
- Tooth extraction, 115, 165, 286, 319, 323, 407
- Totally, concept of, 442, 443
- Totem: acquiring of, 104–105; allied totem, 153–54, 153*n*51; of American Indians, 109–11, 109–10*nn*47–48, 111*nn*52–53, 112–13; ancestor transmission of, 105, 105*n*27, 105*n*29, 163; collective totem, 162–66, 178–82; conceptional totemism, 183–84; cosmic phenomena not seen as, 83, 235;

- and cosmological system, 142–45, 147, 147*nn*24–25, 149–56; definition of, 101*n*7, 191, 208; as emblem, 111–26, 221–25; etymology of term, 111–12; first use of term, 85; and high gods, 295–98; individual totem, 158–66, 174–82, 282–84, 426–27; local totemism, 182–86, 184*n*43; of marriage class, 107–108, 108–109*nn*45–46; maternal totem, 104, 131, 131*n*14, 163, 185–86, 258, 262*n*110; as name, 100–11, 186–88; nature of objects serving as, 101–104, 102*nn*13–16, 103*n*18, 103*n*20, 104*n*22; paternal totem, 104–105, 131, 131*n*14, 163 of phratries, 105–107; phratry versus clan totems, 107; property rights in, 140; sexual totem, 166–68, 296; soul's totemic nature, 249–59, 262–65; spelling of, 101*n*7; split-totems, 102*n*14; subtotem, 152–54, 224
- Totemic animal: compared with totemic emblem, 132–33; Intichiuma for well-being of, 331–37, 345–46; man's kinship with, 133–36, 135*n*31, 135*n*33, 136*nn*34–35, 139–40, 139*n*55, 224, 224*n*32, 307–308, 362, 391; obligatory eating of, 128–30, 152*n*42; old men exempted from dietary restrictions on, 128, 129, 139, 307, 307*n*16; origin of, 234–36; prohibitions against contact with, 132, 132*n*22; prohibitions against eating, 127–31, 140, 151–52, 152*n*42, 160, 221, 307–308, 307*n*16; prohibitions against killing, 131–32, 131*nn*16–18, 140, 160, 160*n*18, 221; restrictions on amount eaten, 128, 128*n*4, 130; ritual eating of, in Intichiuma, 338–44, 340*n*36; sacredness of, 127–33
- Totemic centers, 236, 250
- Totemic costumes, 115–16, 132, 159
- Totemic emblem: on ancestors, 176; on bodies, 114–17; on churingas, 118–22, 125; conventional nature of, 125–26, 126*n*150; feelings aroused by, 221–23; origin of, 234–36; prohibitions concern-
- ing, 132–33; sacredness of, 118–25, 133; on things, 112–14
- Totemic object, xli
- Totemic plant, 127–29, 131, 133, 140, 151, 235–36, 307–308, 307*n*16, 331–46, 340*n*36
- Totemic principle: Arúnkulta as, 199–200; and clan, 207–208, 223; contagiousness of, 224; description of, 190–91; essence of, 223–25; and idea of force, 191–93; localization of, 224, 230; mana as, 196–200, 206; orenda as, 195–96, 200, 205–206; origin of notion of, 207–41; and primitive's mentality, 236–41; priority of impersonal force over mythical personalities, 201–205; in Samoa, 193–94; secular aspect of, 205–206; simultaneously physical and moral character of, 191–92; ubiquity of, 191; wakan as, 194–95, 197–98, 203, 205
- Totemic representations, xli–xlii
- Totemism: clan associated with, 155; coherence of, 298–99; collective totem, 162–66, 178–82; conceptional totemism, 183–84; as confederated religion, 155–57, 199; as containing all elements of religion, 418–19; cosmological system of, 141–57; critique of theories of origin of, 169–89; derived from ancestor cult, 170–73; derived from cult of nature, 173–74; derived from individual totemism, 174–82; as embryonic Christianity, xx; essence of, 223–26, 238; ethnographies on, xxxii; and high gods, 295–98; history of question of, 85–90; individual totem, 158–66, 174–82; local totemism, 182–86, 184*n*43; as magic, xx; man's kinship with totemic animal, 133–36; man's sacredness, 136–40; methodological reasons for basing study on Australian totemism, 90–93; as not zoolatry, 139–40, 173; and origin of notion of totemic principle, 207–41; rarity of expiatory rites in, 409; as religion based on Durkheim's definition, xviii–xxii; sexual totem, 166–68; as simplifying case, xxxii, xxxviii–xl; totem as emblem, 111–26; totem as name, 100–11; and totem as name only,

- Totemism (*cont.*) 186–88; totemic animals and plants, 127–33; totemic principle and idea of force, 190–206; as tribal religion, 155–57, 299. *See also* American Indians; and headings beginning with Totem and Totemic
- Transformism, 236–37, 237*n*
- Tregear, F., 268
- Tribe, 155–57, 156–57*n*61, 168, 297–99, 299
- Tundun, 287, 287*n*55, 295, 297
- Tylor, Edward Burnett, xxvi–xxviii, lvii, 27, 46–50, 52–56, 65, 86*n*10, 162–63, 170–73, 292, 361
- Type-ideas, 436, 438
- Umbana, 355–56
- Umbilical cord, 414, 414*n*67
- Understanding. *See* categories of understanding
- Uninitiated men, 132–33, 138, 139, 288, 312, 384
- Universal animism, 24
- Universal determinism, 24
- Universalism, religious, 427–28, 446
- Urine, 312*n*47
- Urpmilchima, 397–98
- Usener, Hermann Karl, 46*n*3
- Vampire myth, 244*n*9
- Varuna, 29
- Vedas, 69, 70, 71, 75
- Vedic religion, 32–33, 35
- Wadnungadni, 408
- Wakan, 188, 194–95, 194*n*10, 197–98, 203, 205, 327
- Wananga, 123–25, 132
- Weber, Max, xxxi
- White Cockatoo, 357
- Whole, notion of, 442, 443
- Wife exchange, 219, 408
- Wilkin, Albertus Christian Kruijt, 170–73
- Will, 273, 369
- Witchetty Grub, 332–33, 338–39, 355–56
- Witurna, 287, 287*n*55
- Wollunqua, 219, 280, 309, 380–83, 380*n*16, 381*nn*17–18, 382*n*20
- Women: battles between men and, 168, 168*n*62; blood from genital organs of, 414; blood of, 138*n*50; conception and pregnancy of, 183–84, 250, 253–59, 255*n*68, 255*n*70, 261, 263, 264, 277, 278; creation of, 290*n*83; dreams of pregnant women, 261; Durkheim's view of, lix; exclusion of, from representative rites, 384; food for, 308; funeral rite of, 398–99; and initiation rites, 138*n*50, 319; lack of soul of, 243, 243*n*3; menstrual blood of, 412, 413; mother's drinking of blood of circumcision, 137*n*41; and mourning, 393, 395–96, 395*n*8, 398–99, 404; old women and choice of individual totem, 164–65; and peculiar rites other than mourning, 407; as profane, 138, 138*n*50, 243, 243*n*3, 308, 308*n*18, 384; prohibitions for, 32, 125, 132, 137, 138, 288, 308, 309, 393, 395, 395*n*8; scapegoating of, 404; sexual totems of, 167–168, 167*n*56, 296; wife exchange, 219, 408
- Work, prohibitions on, 311–12
- Wundt, Wilhelm, lxxviii87, 69*n*, 172*n* 12
- Zeus, 71, 79, 80*n*35, 202, 20

# The Elementary Forms of Religious Life

“. . . [T]he argument of *Formes* is markedly personal in both rhetorical style and scientific substance; and it reveals a man who was far more than the hard-nosed opponent of the second-rate and the sentimental in social science, although he was that too. . . *Formes* is like a virtuoso performance that builds upon but leaps beyond the technical limits of the artist's discipline, beyond the safe striving merely to hit the correct notes, into felt reality of elemental truth. To read it is to witness such a performance. The illuminations are public, the performance, personal.”

—*from the Introduction by Karen E. Fields*

“Karen Fields has given us a splendid new translation of the greatest work of sociology ever written, one we will not be embarrassed to assign to our students. In addition she has written a brilliant and profound introduction. The publication of this translation is an occasion for general celebration, for a veritable ‘collective effervescence.’”

—ROBERT N. BELLAH

co-author of *Habits of the Heart*, and  
editor of *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*

“This superb new translation finally allows non-French speaking American readers fully to appreciate Durkheim's genius. It is a labor of love for which all scholars must be grateful.”

—LEWIS A. COSER

ISBN 0-02-907936-5



9 780029 079362

09953450

SOCIOLOGY