

INTRODUCTION

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY saw in primitive religions two peculiarities which separated them as a block from the great religions of the world. One was that they were inspired by fear, the other that they were inextricably confused with defilement and hygiene. Almost any missionary's or traveller's account of a primitive religion talks about the fear, terror or dread in which its adherents live. The source is traced to beliefs in horrible disasters which overtake those who inadvertently cross some forbidden line or develop some impure condition. And as fear inhibits reason it can be held accountable for other peculiarities in primitive thought, notably the idea of defilement. As Ricoeur sums it up:

*'La souillure elle-même est à peine une
représentation et celle-ci est noyée dans une
peur spécifique qui bouche la réflexion; avec
la souillure nous entrons au règne de la Terreur.'*

(p. 31)

But anthropologists who have ventured further into these primitive cultures find little trace of fear. Evans-Pritchard's study of witchcraft was made among the people who struck him as the most happy and carefree of the Sudan, the Azande. The feelings of an Azande man, on finding that he has been bewitched, are not terror, but hearty indignation as one of us might feel on finding himself the victim of embezzlement.

The Nuer, a deeply religious people, as the same authority points out, regard their God as a familiar friend. Audrey Richards, witnessing the girls' initiation rites of the Bemba,

Introduction

noted the casual, relaxed attitude of the performers. And so the tale goes on. The anthropologist sets out expecting to see rituals performed with reverence, so say the least. He finds himself in the role of the agnostic sightseer in St. Peter's, shocked at the disrespectful clatter of the adults and the children playing Roman shovehalfpenny on the floor stones. So primitive religious fear, together with the idea that it blocks the functioning of the mind, seems to be a false trail for understanding these religions.

Hygiene, by contrast, turns out to be an excellent route, so long as we can follow it with some self-knowledge. As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder. If we shun dirt, it is not because of craven fear, still less dread or holy terror. Nor do our ideas about disease account for the range of our behaviour in cleaning or avoiding dirt. Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment.

I am personally rather tolerant of disorder. But I always remember how unrelaxed I felt in a particular bathroom which was kept spotlessly clean in so far as the removal of grime and grease was concerned. It had been installed in an old house in a space created by the simple expedient of setting a door at each end of a corridor between two staircases. The decor remained unchanged: the engraved portrait of Vinogradoff, the books, the gardening tools, the row of gumboots. It all made good sense as the scene of a back corridor, but as a bathroom—the impression destroyed repose. I, who rarely feel the need to impose an idea on external reality, at least began to understand the activities of more sensitive friends. In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea. There is nothing fearful or unreasoning in our dirt-avoidance: it is a creative movement, an attempt to relate form to function, to make unity of experience. If this is so with our separating, tidying and purifying, we should interpret primitive purification and prophylaxis in the same light.

In this book I have tried to show that rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience. So far from being aberrations from the central project of religion, they are positive contributions to atonement. By their means, symbolic patterns are

Introduction

worked out and publicly displayed. Within these patterns disparate elements are related and disparate experience is given meaning.

Pollution ideas work in the life of society at two levels, one largely instrumental, one expressive. At the first level, the more obvious one, we find people trying to influence one another's behaviour. Beliefs reinforce social pressures: all the powers of the universe are called in to guarantee an old man's dying wish, a mother's dignity, the rights of the weak and innocent. Political power is usually held precariously and primitive rulers are no exception. So we find their legitimate pretensions backed by beliefs in extraordinary powers emanating from their persons, from the insignia of their office or from words they can utter. Similarly the ideal order of society is guarded by dangers which threaten transgressors. These danger-beliefs are as much threats which one man uses to coerce another as dangers which he himself fears to incur by his own lapses from righteousness. They are a strong language of mutual exhortation. At this level the laws of nature are dragged in to sanction the moral code: this kind of disease is caused by adultery, that by incest; this meteorological disaster is the effect of political disloyalty, that the effect of impiety. The whole universe is harnessed to men's attempts to force one another into good citizenship. Thus we find that certain moral values are upheld and certain social rules defined by beliefs in dangerous contagion, as when the glance or touch of an adulterer is held to bring illness to his neighbours or his children.

It is not difficult to see how pollution beliefs can be used in a dialogue of claims and counter-claims to status. But as we examine pollution beliefs we find that the kind of contacts which are thought dangerous also carry a symbolic load. This is a more interesting level at which pollution ideas relate to social life. I believe that some pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order. For example, there are beliefs that each sex is a danger to the other through contact with sexual fluids. According to other beliefs only one sex is endangered by contact with the other, usually males from females, but sometimes the reverse. Such patterns of sexual danger can be seen to express symmetry or hierarchy. It is implausible to interpret them as expressing something about the actual relation of the sexes. I suggest that many ideas about sexual dangers are

better interpreted as symbols of the relation between parts of society, as mirroring designs of hierarchy or symmetry which apply in the larger social system. What goes for sex pollution also goes for bodily pollution. The two sexes can serve as a model for the collaboration and distinctiveness of social units. So also can the processes of ingestion portray political absorption. Sometimes bodily orifices seem to represent points of entry or exit to social units, or bodily perfection can symbolise an ideal theocracy.

Each primitive culture is a universe to itself. Following Franz Steiner's advice in *Taboo*, I start interpreting rules of uncleanness by placing them in the full context of the range of dangers possible in any given universe. Everything that can happen to a man in the way of disaster should be catalogued according to the active principles involved in the universe of his particular culture. Sometimes words trigger off cataclysms, sometimes acts, sometimes physical conditions. Some dangers are great and others small. We cannot start to compare primitive religions until we know the range of powers and dangers they recognise. Primitive society is an energised structure in the centre of its universe. Powers shoot out from its strong points, powers to prosper and dangerous powers to retaliate against attack. But the society does not exist in a neutral, uncharged vacuum. It is subject to external pressures; that which is not with it, part of it and subject to its laws, is potentially against it. In describing these pressures on boundaries and margins I admit to having made society sound more systematic than it really is. But just such an expressive over-systematising is necessary for interpreting the beliefs in question. For I believe that ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created. In this sense I am not afraid of the charge of having made the social structure seem over-rigid.

But in another sense I do not wish to suggest that the primitive cultures in which these ideas of contagion flourish are rigid, hide-bound and stagnant. No one knows how old are the ideas of purity and impurity in any non-literate culture: to members they must seem timeless and unchanging. But there is every reason to believe that they are sensitive to change. The same

impulse to impose order which brings them into existence can be supposed to be continually modifying or enriching them. This is a very important point. For when I argue that the reaction to dirt is continuous with other reactions to ambiguity or anomaly, I am not reviving the nineteenth century hypothesis of fear in another guise. Ideas about contagion can certainly be traced to reaction to anomaly. But they are more than the disquiet of a laboratory rat who suddenly finds one of his familiar exits from the maze is blocked. And they are more than the discomfort of the aquarium stickleback faced with an anomalous member of his species. The initial recognition of anomaly leads to anxiety and from there to suppression or avoidance; so far, so good. But we must look for a more energetic organising principle to do justice to the elaborate cosmologies which pollution symbols reveal.

The native of any culture naturally thinks of himself as receiving passively his ideas of power and danger in the universe, discounting any minor modifications he himself may have contributed. In the same way we think of ourselves as passively receiving our native language and discount our responsibility for shifts it undergoes in our life time. The anthropologist falls into the same trap if he thinks of a culture he is studying as a long established pattern of values. In this sense I emphatically deny that a proliferation of ideas about purity and contagion implies a rigid mental outlook or rigid social institutions. The contrary may be true.

It may seem that in a culture which is richly organised by ideas of contagion and purification the individual is in the grip of iron-hard categories of thought which are heavily safeguarded by rules of avoidance and by punishments. It may seem impossible for such a person to shake his own thought free of the protected habit-grooves of his culture. How can he turn round upon his own thought-process and contemplate its limitations? And yet if he cannot do this, how can his religion be compared with the great religions of the world?

The more we know about primitive religions the more clearly it appears that in their symbolic structures there is scope for meditation on the great mysteries of religion and philosophy. Reflection on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death. Wherever ideas of dirt are highly structured their analysis

Introduction

discloses a play upon such profound themes. This is why an understanding of rules of purity is a sound entry to comparative religion. The Pauline antithesis of blood and water, nature and grace, freedom and necessity, or the Old Testament idea of Godhead can be illuminated by Polynesian or Central African treatment of closely related themes.

Purity and Danger

a person when he finds his own convictions at variance with those of friends, either wavers or tries to convince the friends of their error. Attributing danger is one way of putting a subject above dispute. It also helps to enforce conformity, as we shall show below in a chapter on morals (Chapter 8).

Fifth, ambiguous symbols can be used in ritual for the same ends as they are used in poetry and mythology, to enrich meaning or to call attention to other levels of existence. We shall see in the last chapter how ritual, by using symbols of anomaly, can incorporate evil and death along with life and goodness, into a single, grand, unifying pattern.

To conclude, if uncleanness is matter out of place, we must approach it through order. Uncleanness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained. To recognise this is the first step towards insight into pollution. It involves us in no clear-cut distinction between sacred and secular. The same principle applies throughout. Furthermore, it involves no special distinction between primitives and moderns: we are all subject to the same rules. But in the primitive culture the rule of patterning works with greater force and more total comprehensiveness. With the moderns it applies to disjointed, separate areas of existence.

3

The Abominations of Leviticus

DEFILEMENT is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas. Hence any piecemeal interpretation of the pollution rules of another culture is bound to fail. For the only way in which pollution ideas make sense is in reference to a total structure of thought whose key-stone, boundaries, margins and internal lines are held in relation by rituals of separation.

To illustrate this I take a hoary old puzzle from biblical scholarship, the abominations of Leviticus, and particularly the dietary rules. Why should the camel, the hare and the rock badger be unclean? Why should some locusts, but not all, be unclean? Why should the frog be clean and the mouse and the hippopotamus unclean? What have chameleons, moles and crocodiles got in common that they should be listed together (Levi. xi, 27)?

To help follow the argument I first quote the relevant versions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy using the text of the New Revised Standard Translation.

Deut. xiv

3. You shall not eat any abominable things. 4. These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5. the hart, the gazelle, the roe-buck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain-sheep. 6. Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven

in two, and chews the cud, among the animals you may eat. 7. Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: The camel, the hare and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof, are unclean for you. 8. And the swine, because it parts the hoof

Purity and Danger

but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. 9. Of all that are in the waters you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat. 10. And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you. 11. You may eat all clean birds. 12. But these are the ones which you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey. 13. the buzzard, the kite, after their kinds; 14. every raven after its kind; 15. the ostrich, the night hawk, the sea gull, the hawk, after their kinds; 16. the little owl and the great owl, the water hen 17. and the pelican, the carrion vulture and the cormorant, 18. the stork, the heron, after their kinds; the hoopoe and the bat. 19. And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. 20. All clean winged things you may eat.

Lev. xi

2. These are the living things which you may eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. 3. Whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud, among the animals you may eat. 4. Nevertheless among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: The camel, because it

chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 5. And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 6. And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. 7. And the swine, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. 8. Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean to you. 9. These you may eat of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. 10. But anything in the seas or the rivers that has not fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and of the living creatures that are in the waters, is an abomination to you. 11. They shall remain an abomination to you; of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall have in abomination. 12. Everything in the waters that has not fins and scales is an abomination to you. 13. And these you shall have in abomination among the birds, they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the ossifrage, the osprey, 14. the kite, the falcon according to its kind, 15. every raven according to its kind, 16. the

The Abominations of Leviticus

ostrich and the night hawk, the sea gull, the hawk according to its kind, 17. the owl, the cormorant, the ibis, 18. the water hen, the pelican, the vulture, 19. the stork, the heron according to its kind, the hoopoe and the bat. 20. All winged insects that go upon all fours are an abomination to you. 21. Yet among the winged insects that go on all fours you may eat those which have legs above their feet, with which to leap upon the earth. 22. Of them you may eat: the locust according to its kind, the bald locust according to its kind, the cricket according to its kind, and the grasshopper according to its kind. 23. But all other winged insects which have four feet are an abomination to you. 24. And by these you shall become unclean; whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, 25. and whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. 26. Every animal which parts the hoof but is not cloven-footed or does not chew the cud is unclean to you: everyone who touches them shall be

unclean. 27. And all that go on their paws, among the animals that go on all fours, are unclean to you; whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening, 28. and he who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean to you. 29. And these are unclean to you among the swarming things that swarm upon the earth; the weasel, the mouse, the great lizard according to its kind, 30. the gecko, the land crocodile, the lizard, the sand lizard and the chameleon. 31. These are unclean to you among all that swarm; whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. 32. And anything upon which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean. 41. Every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth is an abomination; it shall not be eaten. 42. Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, all the swarming things that swarm upon the earth, you shall not eat; for they are an abomination.

All the interpretations given so far fall into one of two groups: either the rules are meaningless, arbitrary because their intent is disciplinary and not doctrinal, or they are allegories of virtues and vices. Adopting the view that religious prescriptions are largely devoid of symbolism, Maimonides said:

Purity and Danger

'The Law that sacrifices should be brought is evidently of great use . . . but we cannot say why one offering should be a lamb whilst another is a ram, and why a fixed number of these should be brought. Those who trouble themselves to find a cause for any of these detailed rules are in my eyes devoid of sense . . .'

As a mediaeval doctor of medicine, Maimonides was also disposed to believe that the dietary rules had a sound physiological basis, but we have already dismissed in the second chapter the medical approach to symbolism. For a modern version of the view that the dietary rules are not symbolic, but ethical, disciplinary, see Epstein's English notes to the Babylonian Talmud and also his popular history of Judaism (1959, p. 24):

'Both sets of laws have one common aim . . . Holiness. While the positive precepts have been ordained for the cultivation of virtue, and for the promotion of those finer qualities which distinguish the truly religious and ethical being, the negative precepts are defined to combat vice and suppress other evil tendencies and instincts which stand athwart man's striving towards holiness. . . . The negative religious laws are likewise assigned educational aims and purposes. Foremost among these is the prohibition of eating the flesh of certain animals classed as 'unclean'. This law has nothing totemic about it. It is expressly associated in Scripture with the ideal of holiness. Its real object is to train the Israelite in self-control as the indispensable first step for the attainment of holiness.'

According to Professor Stein's *The Dietary Laws in Rabbinic and Patristic Literature*, the ethical interpretation goes back to the time of Alexander the Great and the Hellenic influence on Jewish culture. The first century A.D. letters of Aristea teaches that not only are the Mosaic rules a valuable discipline which 'prevents the Jews from thoughtless action and injustice', but they also coincide with what natural reason would dictate for achieving the good life. So the Hellenic influence allows the medical and ethical interpretations to run together. Philo held that Moses' principle of selection was precisely to choose the most delicious meats:

'The lawgiver sternly forbade all animals of land, sea or air whose flesh is the finest and fattest, like that of pigs and scaleless fish, knowing that they set a trap for the most slavish of senses, the taste, and that they produced gluttony',

The Abominations of Leviticus

(and here we are led straight into the medical interpretation)

'an evil dangerous to both soul and body, for gluttony begets indigestion, which is the source of all illnesses and infirmities'.

In another stream of interpretation, following the tradition of Robertson Smith and Frazer, the Anglo-Saxon Old Testament scholars have tended to say simply that the rules are arbitrary because they are irrational. For example, Nathaniel Micklem says :

'Commentators used to give much space to a discussion of the question why such and such creatures, and such or such states and symptoms were unclean. Have we, for instance, primitive rules of hygiene? Or were certain creatures and states unclean because they represented or typified certain sins? It may be taken as certain that neither hygiene, nor any kind of typology, is the basis of uncleanness. These regulations are not by any means to be rationalised. Their origins may be diverse, and go back beyond history . . .'

Compare also R. S. Driver (1895):

'The principle, however, determining the line of demarcation between clean animals and unclean, is not stated; and what it is has been much debated. No single principle, embracing all the cases, seems yet to have been found, and not improbably more principles than one co-operated. Some animals may have been prohibited on account of their repulsive appearance or uncleanly habits, others upon sanitary grounds; in other cases, again, the motive of the prohibition may very probably have been a religious one, particularly animals may have been supposed, like the serpent in Arabia, to be animated by superhuman or demoniac beings, or they may have had a sacramental significance in the heathen rites of other nations; and the prohibition may have been intended as a protest against these beliefs. . . .'

P. P. Saydon takes the same line in the *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (1953), acknowledging his debt to Driver and to Robertson Smith. It would seem that when Robertson Smith applied the ideas of primitive, irrational and unexplainable to some parts of Hebrew religion they remained thus labelled and unexamined to this day.

Needless to say such interpretations are not interpretations at all, since they deny any significance to the rules. They express

Purity and Danger

bafflement in a learned way. Micklem says it more frankly when he says of Leviticus:

'Chapters XI to XV are perhaps the least attractive in the whole Bible. To the modern reader there is much in them that is meaningless or repulsive. They are concerned with ritual 'uncleanness' in respect of animals (11) of childbirth (12), skin diseases and stained garments (13), of the rites for the purgation of skin diseases (14) of leprosy and of various issues or secretions of the human body (15). Of what interest can such subjects be except to the anthropologist? What can all this have to do with religion?'

Pfeiffer's general position is to be critical of the priestly and legal elements in the life of Israel. So he too lends his authority to the view that the rules in the Priestly Code are largely arbitrary:

'Only priests who were lawyers could have conceived of religion as a theocracy regulated by a divine law fixing exactly, and therefore arbitrarily, the sacred obligations of the people to their God. They thus sanctified the external, obliterated from religion both the ethical ideals of Amos and the tender emotions of Hosea, and reduced the Universal Creator to the stature of an inflexible despot. . . . From immemorial custom P derived the two fundamental notions which characterise its legislation: physical holiness and arbitrary enactment—archaic conceptions which the reforming prophets had discarded in favour of spiritual holiness and moral law.' (p. 91)

It may be true that lawyers tend to think in precise and codified forms. But is it plausible to argue that they tend to codify sheer nonsense—arbitrary enactments? Pfeiffer tries to have it both ways, insisting on the legalistic rigidity of the priestly authors and pointing to the lack of order in the setting out of the chapter to justify his view that the rules are arbitrary. Arbitrariness is a decidedly unexpected quality to find in Leviticus, as the Rev. Prof. H. J. Richards has pointed out to me. For source criticism attributes Leviticus to the Priestly source, the dominant concern of whose authors was for order. So the weight of source criticism supports us in looking for another interpretation.

As for the idea that the rules are allegories of virtues and vices, Professor Stein derives this vigorous tradition from the

The Abominations of Leviticus

same early Alexandrian influence on Jewish thought (p. 145 seq.). Quoting the letter of Aristeeus, he says that the High Priest, Eleazar:

'admits that most people find the biblical food restrictions not understandable. If God is the Creator of everything, why should His law be so severe as to exclude some animals even from touch (128 f)? His first answer still links the dietary restrictions with the danger of idolatry. . . . The second answer attempts to refute specific charges by means of allegorical exegesis. Each law about forbidden foods has its deep reason. Moses did not enumerate the mouse or the weasel out of a special consideration for them (143 f). On the contrary, mice are particularly obnoxious because of their destructiveness, and weasels, the very symbol of malicious tale-bearing, conceive through the ear and give birth through the mouth (164 f). Rather have these holy laws been given for the sake of justice to awaken in us devout thoughts and to form our character (161-168). The birds, for instance, the Jews are allowed to eat are all tame and clean, as they live by corn only. Not so the wild and carnivorous birds who fall upon lambs and goats, and even human beings. Moses, by calling the latter unclean, admonished the faithful not to do violence to the weak and not to trust their own power (145-148). Cloven-hoofed animals which part their hooves symbolise that all our actions must betray proper ethical distinction and be directed towards righteousness. . . . Chewing the cud, on the other hand stands for memory.'

Professor Stein goes on to quote Philo's use of allegory to interpret the dietary rules:

'Fish with fins, and scales, admitted by the law, symbolise endurance and self-control, whilst the forbidden ones are swept away by the current, unable to resist the force of the stream. Reptiles, wriggling along by trailing their belly, signify persons who devote themselves to their ever greedy desires and passions. Creeping things, however, which have legs above their feet, so that they can leap, are clean because they symbolise the success of moral efforts.'

Christian teaching has readily followed the allegorising tradition. The first century epistle of Barnabas, written to convince the Jews that their law had found its fulfilment, took the clean and unclean animals to refer to various types of men, leprosy to mean sin, etc. A more recent example of this tradition is in

Bishop Challoner's notes on the Westminster Bible in the beginning of this century:

'Hoof divided and cheweth the cud. The dividing of the hoof and chewing of the cud signify discretion between good and evil, and meditating on the law of God; and where either of these is wanting, man is unclean. In like manner fishes were reputed unclean that had not fins and scales: that is souls that did not raise themselves up by prayer and cover themselves with the scales of virtue.' Footnote verse 3.

These are not so much interpretations as pious commentaries. They fail as interpretations because they are neither consistent nor comprehensive. A different explanation has to be developed for each animal and there is no end to the number of possible explanations.

Another traditional approach, also dating back to the letter of Aristeeus, is the view that what is forbidden to the Israelites is forbidden solely to protect them from foreign influence. For instance, Maimonides held that they were forbidden to seethe the kid in the milk of its dam because this was a cultic act in the religion of the Canaanites. This argument cannot be comprehensive, for it is not held that the Israelites consistently rejected all the elements of foreign religions and invented something entirely original for themselves. Maimonides accepted the view that some of the more mysterious commands of the law had as their object to make a sharp break with heathen practices. Thus the Israelites were forbidden to wear garments woven of linen and wool, to plant different trees together, to have sexual intercourse with animals, to cook meat with milk, simply because these acts figured in the rites of their heathen neighbours. So far, so good: the laws were enacted as barriers to the spread of heathen styles of ritual. But in that case why were some heathen practices allowed? And not only allowed—if sacrifice be taken as a practice common to heathens and Israelites—but given an absolutely central place in the religion. Maimonides' answer, at any rate in *The Guide to the Perplexed*, was to justify sacrifice as a transitional stage, regrettably heathen, but necessarily allowed because it would be impractical to wean the Israelites abruptly from their heathen past. This is an extraordinary statement to come from the pen of a rabbinical scholar, and indeed in his serious rabbinical writings Maimonides did not

attempt to maintain the argument: on the contrary, he there counted sacrifice as the most important act of the Jewish religion.

At least Maimonides saw the inconsistency and was led by it into contradiction. But later scholars seem content to use the foreign influence argument one way or the other, according to the mood of the moment. Professor Hooke and his colleagues have clearly established that the Israelites took over some Canaanite styles of worship, and the Canaanites obviously had much in common with Mesopotamian culture (1933). But it is no explanation to represent Israel as a sponge at one moment and as a repellent the next, without explaining why it soaked up this foreign element but repelled that one. What is the value of saying that seething kids in milk and copulating with cows are forbidden in Leviticus because they are the fertility rites of foreign neighbours (1935), since Israelites took over other foreign rites? We are still perplexed to know when the sponge is the right or the wrong metaphor. The same argument is equally puzzling in Eichrodt (pp. 230-1). Of course no culture is created out of nothing. The Israelites absorbed freely from their neighbours, but not quite freely. Some elements of foreign culture were incompatible with the principles of patterning on which they were constructing their universe; others were compatible. For instance, Zaehner suggests that the Jewish abomination of creeping things may have been taken over from Zoroastrianism (p. 162). Whatever the historical evidence for this adoption of a foreign element into Judaism, we shall see that there was in the patterning of their culture a pre-formed compatibility between this particular abomination and the general principles on which their universe was constructed.

Any interpretations will fail which take the Do-nots of the Old Testament in piecemeal fashion. The only sound approach is to forget hygiene, aesthetics, morals and instinctive revulsion, even to forget the Canaanites and the Zoroastrian Magi, and start with the texts. Since each of the injunctions is prefaced by the command to be holy, so they must be explained by that command. There must be contrariness between holiness and abomination which will make over-all sense of all the particular restrictions.

Holiness is the attribute of Godhead. Its root means 'set apart'. What else does it mean? We should start any cosmological enquiry by seeking the principles of power and danger. In the Old

Purity and Danger

Testament we find blessing as the source of all good things, and the withdrawal of blessing as the source of all dangers. The blessing of God makes the land possible for men to live in.

God's work through the blessing is essentially to create order, through which men's affairs prosper. Fertility of women, livestock and fields is promised as a result of the blessing and this is to be obtained by keeping covenant with God and observing all His precepts and ceremonies (Deut. xxviii, 1-14). Where the blessing is withdrawn and the power of the curse unleashed, there is barrenness, pestilence, confusion. For Moses said:

'But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you to this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading trough. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your cattle, and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in and cursed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your doings, because you have forsaken me . . . The Lord will smite you with consumption, and with fever, inflammation, and fiery heat, and with drought, and with blasting and with mildew; they shall pursue you till you perish. And the heavens over your head shall be brass and the earth under you shall be iron. The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down upon you until you are destroyed.' (Deut. xxviii, 15-24)

From this it is clear that the positive and negative precepts are held to be efficacious and not merely expressive: observing them draws down prosperity, infringing them brings danger. We are thus entitled to treat them in the same way as we treat primitive ritual avoidances whose breach unleashes danger to men. The precepts and ceremonies alike are focussed on the idea of the holiness of God which men must create in their own lives. So this is a universe in which men prosper by conforming to holiness and perish when they deviate from it. If there were no other clues we should be able to find out the Hebrew idea of the holy by examining the precepts by which men conform to

The Abominations of Leviticus

it. It is evidently not goodness in the sense of an all-embracing humane kindness. Justice and moral goodness may well illustrate holiness and form part of it, but holiness embraces other ideas as well.

Granted that its root means separateness, the next idea that emerges is of the Holy as wholeness and completeness. Much of Leviticus is taken up with stating the physical perfection that is required of things presented in the temple and of persons approaching it. The animals offered in sacrifice must be without blemish, women must be purified after childbirth, lepers should be separated and ritually cleansed before being allowed to approach it once they are cured. All bodily discharges are defiling and disqualify from approach to the temple. Priests may only come into contact with death when their own close kin die. But the high priest must never have contact with death.

Levit. xxi

17. 'Say to Aaron, None of your descendants throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the bread of his God. 18. For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long. 19. or a man who has an injured foot or an injured hand, 20. or a hunch-back, or a dwarf, or a man with a defect in his sight or an itching disease or scabs, or crushed testicles; 21. no man of the descendants of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the Lord's offerings by fire; . . .'

In other words, he must be perfect as a man, if he is to be a priest.

This much reiterated idea of physical completeness is also worked out in the social sphere and particularly in the warriors' camp. The culture of the Israelites was brought to the pitch of greatest intensity when they prayed and when they fought. The army could not win without the blessing and to keep the blessing in the camp they had to be specially holy. So the camp was to be preserved from defilement like the Temple. Here again all bodily discharges disqualified a man from entering the camp as they would disqualify a worshipper from approaching the altar. A warrior who had had an issue of the body in the night should keep outside the camp all day and only return after sunset, having washed. Natural functions producing bodily waste were to be performed outside the camp (Deut. xxiii, 10-15). In short the idea of holiness was given an external,

physical expression in the wholeness of the body seen as a perfect container.

Wholeness is also extended to signify completeness in a social context. An important enterprise, once begun, must not be left incomplete. This way of lacking wholeness also disqualifies a man from fighting. Before a battle the captains shall proclaim:

Deut. xx

5. 'What man is there that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. 6. What man is there that has planted a vineyard and has not enjoyed its fruit? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man enjoy its fruit. 7. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her.'

Admittedly there is no suggestion that this rule implies defilement. It is not said that a man with a half-finished project on his hands is defiled in the same way that a leper is defiled. The next verse in fact goes on to say that fearful and faint-hearted men should go home lest they spread their fears. But there is a strong suggestion in other passages that a man should not put his hand to the plough and then turn back. Pedersen goes so far as to say that:

'in all these cases a man has started a new important undertaking without having finished it yet . . . a new totality has come into existence. To make a breach in this prematurely, i.e. before it has attained maturity or has been finished, involves a serious risk of sin'. (Vol. III, p. 9)

If we follow Pedersen, then blessing and success in war required a man to be whole in body, whole-hearted and trailing no uncompleted schemes. There is an echo of this actual passage in the New Testament parable of the man who gave a great feast and whose invited guests incurred his anger by making excuses (Luke xiv, 16-24; Matt. xxii. See Black & Rowley, 1962, p. 836). One of the guests had bought a new farm, one had bought ten oxen and had not yet tried them, and one had married a wife. If according to the old Law each could have validly justified his refusal by reference to Deut. xx, the parable supports Pedersen's view that interruption of new projects was held to be bad in civil as well as military contexts.

Other precepts develop the idea of wholeness in another direction. The metaphors of the physical body and of the new undertaking relate to the perfection and completeness of the individual and his work. Other precepts extend holiness to species and categories. Hybrids and other confusions are abominated.

Lev. xviii

'23. And you shall not lie with any beast and defile yourself with it, neither shall any woman give herself to a beast to lie with it: it is perversion.'

The word 'perversion' is a significant mistranslation of the rare Hebrew word *tebhel*, which has as its meaning mixing or confusion. The same theme is taken up in Leviticus xix, 19.

'You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall there come upon you a garment of cloth made of two kinds of stuff.'

All these injunctions are prefaced by the general command:

'Be holy, for I am holy.'

We can conclude that holiness is exemplified by completeness. Holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused.

Another set of precepts refines on this last point. Holiness means keeping distinct the categories of creation. It therefore involves correct definition, discrimination and order. Under this head all the rules of sexual morality exemplify the holy. Incest and adultery (Lev. xviii, 6-20) are against holiness, in the simple sense of right order. Morality does not conflict with holiness, but holiness is more a matter of separating that which should be separated than of protecting the rights of husbands and brothers.

Then follows in chapter xix another list of actions which are contrary to holiness. Developing the idea of holiness as order, not confusion, this list upholds rectitude and straight-dealing as holy, and contradiction and double-dealing as against holiness. Theft, lying, false witness, cheating in weights and measures, all kinds of dissembling such as speaking ill of the deaf (and presumably smiling to their face), hating your brother in your heart (while presumably speaking kindly to him), these are

clearly contradictions between what seems and what is. This chapter also says much about generosity and love, but these are positive commands, while I am concerned with negative rules.

We have now laid a good basis for approaching the laws about clean and unclean meats. To be holy is to be whole, to be one; holiness is unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind. The dietary rules merely develop the metaphor of holiness on the same lines.

First we should start with livestock, the herds of cattle, camels, sheep and goats which were the livelihood of the Israelites. These animals were clean inasmuch as contact with them did not require purification before approaching the Temple. Livestock, like the inhabited land, received the blessing of God. Both land and livestock were fertile by the blessing, both were drawn into the divine order. The farmer's duty was to preserve the blessing. For one thing, he had to preserve the order of creation. So no hybrids, as we have seen, either in the fields or in the herds or in the clothes made from wool or flax. To some extent men covenanted with their land and cattle in the same way as God covenanted with them. Men respected the first born of their cattle, obliged them to keep the Sabbath. Cattle were literally domesticated as slaves. They had to be brought into the social order in order to enjoy the blessing. The difference between cattle and the wild beasts is that the wild beasts have no covenant to protect them. It is possible that the Israelites were like other pastoralists who do not relish wild game. The Nuer of the South Sudan, for instance, apply a sanction of disapproval of a man who lives by hunting. To be driven to eating wild meat is the sign of a poor herdsman. So it would be probably wrong to think of the Israelites as longing for forbidden meats and finding the restrictions irksome. Driver is surely right in taking the rules as an *a posteriori* generalisation of their habits. Cloven-hoofed, cud-chewing ungulates are the model of the proper kind of food for a pastoralist. If they must eat wild game, they can eat wild game that shares these distinctive characters and is therefore of the same general species. This is a kind of casuistry which permits scope for hunting antelope and wild goats and wild sheep. Everything would be quite straightforward were it not that the legal mind has seen fit to give ruling on some borderline cases. Some animals seem to be ruminant, such as the hare and the hyrax (or rock badger), whose constant grinding of their

teeth was held to be cud-chewing. But they are definitely not cloven-hoofed and so are excluded by name. Similarly for animals which are cloven-hoofed but are not ruminant, the pig and the camel. Note that this failure to conform to the two necessary criteria for defining cattle is the only reason given in the Old Testament for avoiding the pig; nothing whatever is said about its dirty scavenging habits. As the pig does not yield milk, hide nor wool, there is no other reason for keeping it except for its flesh. And if the Israelites did not keep pig they would not be familiar with its habits. I suggest that originally the sole reason for its being counted as unclean is its failure as a wild boar to get into the antelope class, and that in this it is on the same footing as the camel and the hyrax, exactly as is stated in the book.

After these borderline cases have been dismissed, the law goes on to deal with creatures according to how they live in the three elements, the water, the air and the earth. The principles here applied are rather different from those covering the camel, the pig, the hare and the hyrax. For the latter are excepted from clean food in having one but not both of the defining characters of livestock. Birds I can say nothing about, because, as I have said, they are named and not described and the translation of the name is open to doubt. But in general the underlying principle of cleanness in animals is that they shall conform fully to their class. Those species are unclean which are imperfect members of their class, or whose class itself confounds the general scheme of the world.

To grasp this scheme we need to go back to Genesis and the creation. Here a three-fold classification unfolds, divided between the earth, the waters and the firmament. Leviticus takes up this scheme and allots to each element its proper kind of animal life. In the firmament two-legged fowls fly with wings. In the water scaly fish swim with fins. On the earth four-legged animals hop, jump or walk. Any class of creatures which is not equipped for the right kind of locomotion in its element is contrary to holiness. Contact with it disqualifies a person from approaching the Temple. Thus anything in the water which has not fins and scales is unclean (xi, 10-12). Nothing is said about predatory habits or of scavenging. The only sure test for cleanness in a fish is its scales and its propulsion by means of fins.

Four-footed creatures which fly (xi, 20-26) are unclean. Any

Purity and Danger

creature which has two legs and two hands and which goes on all fours like a quadruped is unclean (xi, 27). Then follows (v. 29) a much disputed list. On some translations, it would appear to consist precisely of creatures endowed with hands instead of front feet, which perversely use their hands for walking: the weasel, the mouse, the crocodile, the shrew, various kinds of lizards, the chameleon and mole (Danby, 1933), whose forefeet are uncannily hand-like. This feature of this list is lost in the New Revised Standard Translation which uses the word 'paws' instead of hands.

The last kind of unclean animal is that which creeps, crawls or swarms upon the earth. This form of movement is explicitly contrary to holiness (Levit. xi, 41-44). Driver and White use 'swarming' to translate the Hebrew *shérec*, which is applied to both those which teem in the waters and those which swarm on the ground. Whether we call it teeming, trailing, creeping, crawling or swarming, it is an indeterminate form of movement. Since the main animal categories are defined by their typical movement, 'swarming' which is not a mode of propulsion proper to any particular element, cuts across the basic classification. Swarming things are neither fish, flesh nor fowl. Eels and worms inhabit water, though not as fish; reptiles go on dry land, though not as quadrupeds; some insects fly, though not as birds. There is no order in them. Recall what the Prophecy of Habakkuk says about this form of life:

'For thou makest men like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler.' (1, v. 14)

The prototype and model of the swarming things is the worm. As fish belong in the sea so worms belong in the realm of the grave, with death and chaos.

The case of the locusts is interesting and consistent. The test of whether it is a clean and therefore edible kind is how it moves on the earth. If it crawls it is unclean. If it hops it is clean (xi, v. 21). In the Mishnah it is noted that a frog is not listed with creeping things and conveys no uncleanness (Danby, p. 722). I suggest that the frog's hop accounts for it not being listed. If penguins lived in the Near East I would expect them to be ruled unclean as wingless birds. If the list of unclean birds could be retranslated from this point of view, it might well turn out that they are anomalous because they swim and dive as

The Abominations of Leviticus

well as they fly, or in some other way they are not fully bird-like.

Surely now it would be difficult to maintain that 'Be ye Holy' means no more than 'Be ye separate'. Moses wanted the children of Israel to keep the commands of God constantly before their minds:

Deut. xi

'18. You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
19. And you shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise.
20. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.'

If the proposed interpretation of the forbidden animals is correct, the dietary laws would have been like signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God. By rules of avoidance holiness was given a physical expression in every encounter with the animal kingdom and at every meal. Observance of the dietary rules would thus have been a meaningful part of the great liturgical act of recognition and worship which culminated in the sacrifice in the Temple.

Powers and Dangers

GRANTED THAT DISORDER SPOILS PATTERN; it also provides the materials of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power.

Ritual recognises the potency of disorder. In the disorder of the mind, in dreams, faints and frenzies, ritual expects to find powers and truths which cannot be reached by conscious effort. Energy to command and special powers of healing come to those who can abandon rational control for a time. Sometimes an Andaman Islander leaves his band and wanders in the forest like a madman. When he returns to his senses and to human society he has gained occult power of healing (Radcliffe Brown, 1933, p. 139). This is a very common notion, widely attested. Webster in his chapter on the Making of a Magician (*The Sociological Study of Magic*), gives many examples. I also quote the Ehanzu, a tribe in the central region of Tanzania, where one of the recognised ways of acquiring a diviner's skill is by going mad in the bush. Virginia Adam, who worked among this tribe, tells me that their ritual cycle culminates in annual rain rituals. If at the expected time rain fails, people suspect sorcery. To undo the effects of sorcery they take a simpleton and send him wandering into the bush. In the course of his wanderings he unknowingly destroys the sorcerer's work.

Powers and Dangers

In these beliefs there is a double play on inarticulateness. First there is a venture into the disordered regions of the mind. Second there is the venture beyond the confines of society. The man who comes back from these inaccessible regions brings with him a power not available to those who have stayed in the control of themselves and of society.

This ritual play on articulate and inarticulate forms is crucial to understanding pollution. In ritual form it is treated as if it were quick with power to maintain itself in being, yet always liable to attack. Formlessness is also credited with powers, some dangerous, some good. We have seen how the abominations of Leviticus are the obscure unclassifiable elements which do not fit the pattern of the cosmos. They are incompatible with holiness and blessing. The play on form and formlessness is even more clear in the rituals of society.

First, consider beliefs about persons in a marginal state. These are people who are somehow left out in the patterning of society, who are placeless. They may be doing nothing morally wrong, but their status is indefinable. Take, for example, the unborn child. Its present position is ambiguous, its future equally. For no one can say what sex it will have or whether it will survive the hazards of infancy. It is often treated as both vulnerable and dangerous. The Lele regard the unborn child and its mother as in constant danger, but they also credit the unborn child with capricious ill-will which makes it a danger to others. When pregnant, a Lele woman tries to be considerate about not approaching sick persons lest the proximity of the child in her womb causes coughing or fever to increase.

Among the Nyakyusa a similar belief is recorded. A pregnant woman is thought to reduce the quantity of grain she approaches, because the foetus in her is voracious and snatches it. She must not speak to people who are reaping or brewing without first making a ritual gesture of goodwill to cancel the danger. They speak of the foetus 'with jaws agape' snatching food, and explain it by the inevitability of the 'seed within' fighting the 'seed without'.

'The child in the belly . . . is like a witch; it will damage food like witchcraft; beer is spoiled and tastes nasty, food does not grow, the smith's iron is not easily worked, the milk is not good.'

Even the father is endangered at war or in the hunt by his wife's pregnancy (Wilson, pp. 138-9).

Levy-Bruhl noted that menstrual blood and miscarriage sometimes attract the same kind of belief. The Maoris regard menstrual blood as a sort of human being *manqué*. If the blood had not flowed it would have become a person, so it has the impossible status of a dead person that has never lived. He quoted a common belief that a foetus born prematurely has a malevolent spirit, dangerous to the living (pp. 390-6). Levy-Bruhl did not generalise that danger lies in marginal states, but Van Gennep had more sociological insight. He saw society as a house with rooms and corridors in which passage from one to another is dangerous. Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable. The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others. The danger is controlled by ritual which precisely separates him from his old status, segregates him for a time and then publicly declares his entry to his new status. Not only is transition itself dangerous, but also the rituals of segregation are the most dangerous phase of the rites. So often do we read that boys die in initiation ceremonies, or that their sisters and mothers are told to fear for their safety, or that they used in the old days to die from hardship or fright, or by supernatural punishment for their misdeeds. Then somewhat tamely come the accounts of the actual ceremonies which are so safe that the threats of danger sound like a hoax (Vansina, 1955). But we can be sure that the trumped up dangers express something important about marginality. To say that the boys risk their lives says precisely that to go out of the formal structure and to enter the margins is to be exposed to power that is enough to kill them or make their manhood. The theme of death and rebirth, of course, has other symbolic functions: the initiates die to their old life and are reborn to the new. The whole repertoire of ideas concerning pollution and purification are used to mark the gravity of the event and the power of ritual to remake a man—this is straightforward.

During the marginal period which separates ritual dying and ritual rebirth, the novices in initiation are temporarily outcast. For the duration of the rite they have no place in society. Sometimes they actually go to live far away outside it. Sometimes they live near enough for unplanned contacts to take place between full social beings and the outcasts. Then we find them behaving like dangerous criminal characters. They are licensed to waylay,

steal, rape. This behaviour is even enjoined on them. To behave anti-socially is the proper expression of their marginal condition (Webster, 1908, chapter III). To have been in the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at a source of power. It is consistent with the ideas about form and formlessness to treat initiands coming out of seclusion as if they were themselves charged with power, hot, dangerous, requiring insulation and a time for cooling down. Dirt, obscenity and lawlessness are as relevant symbolically to the rites of seclusion as other ritual expressions of their condition. They are not to be blamed for misconduct any more than the foetus in the womb for its spite and greed.

It seems that if a person has no place in the social system and is therefore a marginal being, all precaution against danger must come from others. He cannot help his abnormal situation. This is roughly how we ourselves regard marginal people in a secular, not a ritual context. Social workers in our society, concerned with the after-care of ex-prisoners, report a difficulty of resettling them in steady jobs, a difficulty which comes from the attitude of society at large. A man who has spent any time 'inside' is put permanently 'outside' the ordinary social system. With no rite of aggregation which can definitively assign him to a new position he remains in the margins, with other people who are similar credited with unreliability, unteachability, and all the wrong social attitudes. The same goes for persons who have entered institutions for the treatment of mental disease. So long as they stay at home their peculiar behaviour is accepted. Once they have been formally classified as abnormal, the very same behaviour is counted intolerable. A report on a Canadian project in 1951 to change the attitude to mental ill-health suggests that there is a threshold of tolerance marked by entry to a mental hospital. If a person has never moved out of society into this marginal state, any of his eccentricities are comfortably tolerated by his neighbours. Behaviour which a psychologist would class at once as pathological is commonly dismissed as 'just a quirk', or 'He'll get over it', or 'It takes all sorts to make a world'. But once a patient is admitted to a mental hospital, tolerance is withdrawn. Behaviour which was formerly judged to be so normal that the psychologist's suggestions raised strong hostility, was now judged to be abnormal (quoted in Cumming). So mental health workers find exactly the same problems in rehabilitat-

ing their discharged patients as do the prisoners' aid societies. The fact that these common assumptions about ex-prisoners and lunatics are self-validating is not relevant here. It is more interesting to know that marginal status produces the same reactions the world over, and that these are deliberately represented in marginal rites.

To plot a map of the powers and dangers in a primitive universe, we need to underline the interplay of ideas of form and formlessness. So many ideas about power are based on an idea of society as a series of forms contrasted with surrounding non-form. There is power in the forms and other power in the inarticulate area, margins, confused lines, and beyond the external boundaries. If pollution is a particular class of danger, to see where it belongs in the universe of dangers we need an inventory of all the possible sources of power. In a primitive culture the physical agency of misfortune is not so significant as the personal intervention to which it can be traced. The effects are the same the world over: drought is drought, hunger is hunger; epidemic, child labour, infirmity—most of the experiences are held in common. But each culture knows a distinctive set of laws governing the way these disasters fall. The main links between persons and misfortunes are personal links. So our inventory of powers must proceed by classifying all kinds of personal intervention in the fortunes of others.

The spiritual powers which human action can unleash can roughly be divided into two classes—internal and external. The first reside within the psyche of the agent—such as evil eye, witchcraft, gifts of vision or prophecy. The second are external symbols on which the agent must consciously work: spells, blessings, curses, charms and formulas and invocations. These powers require actions by which spiritual power is discharged.

This distinction between internal and external sources of power is often correlated with another distinction, between uncontrolled and controlled power. According to widespread beliefs, the internal psychic powers are not necessarily triggered off by the intention of the agent. He may be quite unaware that he possesses them or that they are active. These beliefs vary from place to place. For example, Joan of Arc did not know when her voices would speak to her, could not summon them at will, was often startled by what they said and by the train of events which her obedience to them started. The Azande

believe that a witch does not necessarily know that his witchcraft is at work, yet if he is warned, he can exert some control to check its action.

By contrast, the magician cannot utter a spell by mistake; specific intention is a condition of the result. A father's curse usually needs to be pronounced to have effect.

Where does pollution come in the contrast between uncontrolled and controlled power, between psyche and symbol? As I see it, pollution is a source of danger altogether in a different class: the distinctions of voluntary, involuntary, internal, external, are not relevant. It must be identified in a different way.

First to continue with the inventory of spiritual powers, there is another classification according to the social position of those endangering and endangered. Some powers are exerted on behalf of the social structure; they protect society from malefactors against whom their danger is directed. Their use must be approved by all good men. Other powers are supposed to be a danger to society and their use is disapproved; those who use them are malefactors, their victims are innocent and all good men would try to hound them down—these are witches and sorcerers. This is the old distinction between white and black magic.

Are these two classifications completely unconnected? Here I tentatively suggest a correlation: where the social system explicitly recognises positions of authority, those holding such positions are endowed with explicit spiritual power, controlled, conscious, external and approved—powers to bless or curse. Where the social system requires people to hold dangerously ambiguous roles, these persons are credited with uncontrolled, unconscious, dangerous, disapproved powers—such as witchcraft and evil eye.

In other words, where the social system is well-articulated, I look for articulate powers vested in the points of authority; where the social system is ill-articulated, I look for inarticulate powers vested in those who are a source of disorder. I am suggesting that the contrast between form and surrounding non-form accounts for the distribution of symbolic and psychic powers: external symbolism upholds the explicit social structure and internal, unformed psychic powers threaten it from the non-structure.

This correlation is admittedly difficult to establish. For one

thing it is difficult to be precise about the explicit social structure. Certainly people carry round with them a consciousness of social structure. They curb their actions in accordance with the symmetries and hierarchies they see therein, and strive continually to impress their view of the relevant bit of structure on other actors in their scene. This social consciousness has been so well demonstrated by Goffman that there should be no need to labour the point further here. There are no items of clothing or of food or of other practical use which we do not seize upon as theatrical props to dramatise the way we want to present our roles and the scene we are playing in. Everything we do is significant, nothing is without its conscious symbolic load. Moreover, nothing is lost on the audience. Goffman uses dramatic structure, with its division of players and audience, stage and back-stage, to provide a frame for his analysis of everyday situations. Another merit of the analogy with theatre is that a dramatic structure exists within temporal divisions. It has a beginning, climax and end. For this reason Turner found it useful to introduce the idea of social drama to describe clusters of behaviour which everyone recognises as forming discrete temporal units (1957). I am sure that sociologists have not finished with the idea of drama as an image of social structure but for my purpose it may be enough to say that by social structure I am not usually referring to a total structure which embraces the whole of society continually and comprehensively. I refer to particular situations in which individual actors are aware of a greater or smaller range of inclusiveness. In these situations they behave as if moving in patterned positions in relation to others, and as if choosing between possible patterns of relations. Their sense of form makes demands on their behaviour, governs their assessment of their desires, permits some and over-rides others.

Any local, personal view of the whole social system will not necessarily coincide with that of the sociologist. Sometimes in what follows, when I speak of social structure, I will be referring to the main outlines, lineages and the hierarchy of descent groups, or chiefdoms and the ranking of districts, relations between royalty and commoners. Sometimes I will be talking about little sub-structures, themselves chinese-box-like, containing others which fill in the bare bones of the main structure. It seems that individuals are aware in appropriate contexts of all these structures and aware of their relative importance. They do

not all have the same idea of what particular level of structure is relevant at a given moment; they know there is a problem of communication to be overcome if there can be society at all. By ceremony, speech and gesture they make a constant effort to express and to agree on a view of what the relevant social structure is like. And all the attribution of dangers and powers is part of this effort to communicate and thus to create social forms.

The idea that there may be a correlation between explicit authority and controlled spiritual power was first suggested to me by Leach's article in *Rethinking Anthropology*. In developing the idea I have taken a somewhat different direction. Controlled power to harm, he suggests, is often vested in explicit key points in the authority system, and contrasted with the unintentional power to harm supposed to lurk in the less explicit, weakly articulated areas of the same society. He was mainly concerned with the contrast of two kinds of spiritual power used in parallel contrasting social situations. He presented some societies as sets of internally structured systems interacting with one another. Living within one such system people are explicitly conscious of its structure. Its key points are supported by beliefs in controlled forms of power attached to controlling positions. For instance, Chiefs among the Nyakusa can attack their foes by a kind of sorcery which sends invisible pythons after them. Among the patrilineal Tallensi, a man's father has a correspondingly controlled right of access to ancestral power against him, and among the matrilineal Trobrianders the maternal uncle is thought to support his authority with consciously controlled spells and charms. It is as if the positions of authority were wired up with switches which can be operated by those who reach the right places in order to provide power for the system as a whole.

This can be argued along familiar Durkheimian lines. Religious beliefs express society's awareness of itself; the social structure is credited with punitive powers which maintain it in being. This is quite straightforward. But I would like to suggest that those holding office in the explicit part of the structure tend to be credited with consciously controlled powers, in contrast with those whose role is less explicit and who tend to be credited with unconscious, uncontrollable powers, menacing those in better defined positions. Leach's first example is the

Kach'in wife. Linking two power groups, her husband's and her brother's, she holds an interstructural role and she is thought of as the unconscious, involuntary agent of witchcraft. Similarly, the father in the matrilineal Trobrianders and Ashanti, and the mother's brother in patrilineal Tikopia and Taleland, is credited with being an involuntary source of danger. These people are none of them without a proper niche in the total society. But from the perspective of one internal sub-system to which they do not belong, but in which they must operate, they are intruders. They are not suspect in their own system and may be wielding the intentional kind of powers on its behalf. It is possible that their involuntary power to do harm may never be activated. It may lie dormant as they live their life peacefully in the corner of the sub-system which is their proper place, and yet in which they are intruders. But this role is in practice difficult to play coolly. If anything goes wrong, if they feel resentment or grief, then their double loyalties and their ambiguous status in the structure where they are concerned makes them appear as a danger to those belonging fully in it. It is the existence of an angry person in an interstitial position which is dangerous, and this has nothing to do with the particular intentions of the person.

In these cases the articulate, conscious points in the social structure are armed with articulate, conscious powers to protect the system; the inarticulate, unstructured areas emanate unconscious powers which provoke others to demand that ambiguity be reduced. When such unhappy or angry interstitial persons are accused of witchcraft it is like a warning to bring their rebellious feelings into line with their correct situation. If this were found to hold good more generally, then witchcraft, defined as an alleged psychic force, could also be defined structurally. It would be the anti-social psychic power with which persons in relatively unstructured areas of society are credited, the accusation being a means of exerting control where practical forms of control are difficult. Witchcraft, then, is found in the non-structure. Witches are social equivalents of beetles and spiders who live in the cracks of the walls and wainscoting. They attract the fears and dislikes which other ambiguities and contradictions attract in other thought structures, and the kind of powers attributed to them symbolise their ambiguous, inarticulate status.

Pondering on this line of thought, we can distinguish different types of social inarticulateness. So far we have only considered witches who have a well-defined position in one sub-system and an ambiguous one in another, in which they none the less have duties. They are legitimate intruders. Of these Joan of Arc can be taken as a splendid prototype: a peasant at court, a woman in armour, an outsider in the councils of war; the accusation that she was a witch puts her fully in this category.

But witchcraft is often supposed to operate in another kind of ambiguous social relation. The best example comes from the witchcraft beliefs of the Azande. The formal structure of their society was pivoted on princes, their courts, tribunals and armies, in a clear cut hierarchy down to princes' deputies, through local governors, to heads of families. The political system afforded an organised set of fields for competition, so that commoners did not find themselves in competition with nobles, nor poor against rich, nor sons against fathers, nor women against men. Only in those areas of society which were left unstructured by the political system did men accuse each other of witchcraft. A man who had defeated a close rival in competition for office might accuse the other of bewitching him in jealousy, and co-wives might accuse one another of witchcraft. Azande witches were thought to be dangerous without knowing it; their witchcraft was made active simply by their feelings of resentment or grudge. The accusation attempted to regulate the situation by vindicating one and condemning the other rival. Princes were supposed not to be witches, but they accused one another of sorcery, thus conforming to the pattern I am seeking to establish.

Another type of unconscious power to harm emanating from inarticulate areas of the social system is illustrated by the Mandari, whose land-owning clans build up their strength by adopting clients. These unfortunates have, for one reason or another, lost their claim to their own territory and have come to a foreign territory to ask for protection and security. They are landless, inferior, dependent on their patron who is a member of a land-owning group. But they are not completely dependent. To some real extent the patron's influence and status depend on his loyal following of clients. Clients who become too numerous and bold can threaten their patron's lineage. The explicit structure of society is based on land-holding clans. By these people

clients are held likely to be witches. Their witchcraft emanates from jealousy of their patrons and works involuntarily. A witch cannot control himself, it is his nature to be angry and harm emanates from him. Not all clients are witches, but hereditary lines of witches are recognised and feared. Here are people living in the interstices of the power structure, felt to be a threat to those with better defined status. Since they are credited with dangerous, uncontrollable powers, an excuse is given for suppressing them. They can be charged with witchcraft and violently despatched without formality or delay. In one case the patron's family merely made ready a big fire, called in the suspect witch to share a meal of roast pig, and forthwith bound him and put him on the fire. Thus the formal structure of land-holding lineages was asserted against the relatively fluid field in which landless clients touted for patronage.

Jews in English society are something like Mandari clients. Belief in their sinister but undefinable advantages in commerce justifies discrimination against them—whereas their real offence is always to have been outside the formal structure of Christendom.

There are probably many more variant types of socially ambiguous or weakly defined statuses to which involuntary witchcraft is attributed. It would be easy to go on piling up examples. Needless to say, I am not concerned with beliefs of a secondary kind or with short-lived ideas which flourish briefly and die away. If the correlation were generally to hold good for the distribution of dominant, persistent forms of spiritual power, it would clarify the nature of pollution. For, as I see it, ritual pollution also arises from the interplay of form and surrounding formlessness. Pollution dangers strike when form has been attacked. Thus we would have a triad of powers controlling fortune and misfortune: first, formal powers wielded by persons representing the formal structure and exercised on behalf of the formal structure: second, formless powers wielded by interstitial persons: third, powers not wielded by any person, but inhering in the structure, which strike against any infraction of form. This three-fold scheme for investigating primitive cosmologies unfortunately comes to grief over exceptions which are too important to brush aside. One big difficulty is that sorcery, which is a form of controlled spiritual power, is in many parts of the world credited to persons who ought, according to

my hypothesis, be charged with involuntary witchcraft. Malevolent persons in interstitial positions, anti-social, disapproved, working to harm the innocent, they should not be using conscious, controlled, symbolic power. Furthermore, there are royal chiefs who emanate unconscious, involuntary power to detect disaffection and destroy their enemies—chiefs who according to my hypothesis should be content with explicit, controlled forms of power. So the correlation I have tried to draw does not hold. However, I will not throw it aside until I have looked more closely at the negative cases.

One reason why it is difficult to correlate social structure with type of mystic power is that both elements in the comparison are very complex. It is not always easy to recognise explicit authority. For example, authority among the Lele is very weak, their social system makes a criss-cross of little authorities, none very effective in secular terms. Many of their formal statuses are supported by the spiritual power to curse or bless, which consists in uttering a form of words and spitting. Cursing and blessing are attributes of authority; a father, mother, mother's brother, aunt, pawn owner, village head and so on, can curse. Not any one can reach out for a curse and apply it arbitrarily. A son cannot curse his father, it would not work if he tried. So this pattern conforms to the general rule I am seeking to establish. But, if a person who has a right to curse refrains from formulating his curse, the unspit saliva in his mouth is held to have power to cause harm. Better than harbour a secret grudge, anyone with a just grievance should speak up and demand redress, lest the saliva of his ill-will do harm secretly. In this belief we have both the controlled and uncontrolled spiritual power attributed to the same person in the same circumstances. But as their pattern of authority is so weakly articulated, this is hardly a negative case. On the contrary, it serves to warn us that authority can be a very vulnerable power, easily reduced to nothing. We should be prepared to elaborate the hypothesis to take more account of the varieties of authority.

There are several likenesses between the unspoken curse of the Lele and the witchcraft beliefs of the Mandari. Both are tied to a particular status, both are psychic, internal, involuntary. But the unspoken curse is an approved form of spiritual power, while the witch is disapproved. Where the unspoken curse is revealed as the cause of harm restitution is made to the agent, when

Purity and Danger

witchcraft is revealed the agent is brutally attacked. So the unspoken curse is on the side of authority; its link with cursing makes this clear. But authority is weak in the case of the *Lele*, strong in the case of the *Mandari*. This suggests that to test the hypothesis fairly we should display the whole gamut from no formal authority at one end of the scale to strong effective secular authority at the other end. At either extreme I am not prepared to predict the distribution of spiritual powers, because where there is no formal authority the hypothesis does not apply, and where authority is firmly established by secular means it less requires spiritual and symbolic support. Under primitive conditions authority is always likely to be precarious. For this reason we should be ready to take into account the failure of those in office.

First consider the case of the man in a position of authority who abuses the secular powers of his office. If it is clear that he is acting wrongly, out of role, he is not entitled to the spiritual power which is vested in the role. Then there should be scope for some shift in the pattern of beliefs to accommodate his defection. He ought to enter the class of witches, exerting involuntary, unjust powers instead of intentionally controlled powers against wrongdoers. For the official who abuses his office is as illegitimate as an usurper, an incubus, a spanner in the works, a dead weight on the social system. Often we find this predicted shift in the kind of dangerous power he is supposed to wield.

In the Book of Samuel, Saul is presented as a leader whose divinely given powers are abused. When he fails to fill his assigned role and leads his men into disobedience, his charisma leaves him and terrible rages, depression and madness afflict him. So when Saul abuses his office he loses conscious control and becomes a menace even to his friends. With reason no longer in control, the leader becomes an unconscious danger. The image of Saul fits the idea that conscious spiritual power is vested in the explicit structure and uncontrolled unconscious danger vested in the enemies of the structure.

The *Lugbara* have another and similar way of adjusting their beliefs to abuse of power. They credit their lineage elders with special powers to invoke the ancestors against juniors who do not act in the widest interests of the lineage. Here again we have conscious controlled powers upholding the explicit structure.

Powers and Dangers

But if an elder is thought to be motivated by his own personal, selfish interests, the ancestors neither listen to him nor put their power at his disposal. So here is a man in a position of authority, improperly wielding the powers of office. His legitimacy being in doubt, he must be removed, and to remove him his antagonists accuse him of having become corrupt and emanating witchcraft, a mysterious, perverted power which operates at night (*Middleton*). The accusation is itself a weapon for clarifying and strengthening the structure. It enables guilt to be pinned on the source of confusion and ambiguity. So these two examples symmetrically develop the idea that conscious power is exerted from the key positions in the structure and a different danger from its dark, obscure areas.

Sorcery is another matter. As a form of harmful power which makes use of spells, words, actions and physical materials, it can only be used consciously and deliberately. On the argument we have been following, sorcery ought to be used by those in control of key positions in the social structure as it is a deliberate, controlled form of spiritual power. But it is not. Sorcery is found in the structural interstices where we have located witchcraft, as well as in the seats of authority. At first glance it seems to cut across the correlation of articulate structure with consciousness. But on closer inspection this distribution of sorcery is consistent with the pattern of authority that goes with sorcery beliefs.

In some societies positions of authority are open to competition. Legitimacy is hard to establish, hard to maintain and always liable to reversal. In such very fluid political systems we would expect a particular type of beliefs in spiritual power. Sorcery is unlike cursing and invocation of ancestors in that it has no built-in device to safeguard against abuse. *Lugbara* cosmology, for example, is dominated by the idea of the ancestors upholding lineage values; the Israelite cosmology was dominated by the idea of the justice of *Jehovah*. Both these sources of power contain an assumption that they cannot be deceived or abused. If an incumbent of office misuses his power, spiritual support is withdrawn. By contrast, sorcery is essentially a form of controlled and conscious power that is open to abuse. In the Central African cultures, where sorcery beliefs flourish, this form of spiritual power is developed within the idiom of medicine. It is freely available. Anyone who takes the trouble to acquire sorcery power may use it. In itself it is morally and

socially neutral and it contains no principle for safeguarding against abuse. It works *ex opere operato*, equally well whether the intentions of the agent are pure or corrupt. If the idea of spiritual power in the culture is dominated by this medical idiom, the man who abuses his office and the person in the unstructured crevices have the same access to the same kind of spiritual powers as the lineage or village head. It follows that if sorcery is available to anyone who wants to acquire it, then we should suppose that positions of political control are also available, open to competition, and that in such societies there are not very clear distinctions between legitimate authority, abuse of authority and illegitimate rebellion.

The sorcery beliefs of Central Africa, west to east from the Congo to Lake Nyasa, assume that malign spiritual powers of sorcery are generally available. In principle these powers are vested in the heads of matrilineal descent groups and are expected to be used by these men in authority against enemy outsiders. There is a general expectation that the old man may turn his powers against his own followers and kin. and if he is disagreeable or mean, their deaths are likely to be attributed to him. He always risks being dragged down from his little elevation of senior status, degraded, exiled or put to the poison ordeal (Van Wing, p. 359-60, Kopytoff, p. 90). Then another contender will take his official role and try to exercise it more warily. Such beliefs, as I have tried to show in my study of the Lele, correspond to a social system in which authority is weakly defined and has little real sway (1963). Marwick has claimed for similar beliefs among the Cewa that they have a liberating effect, since any young man can plausibly accuse of sorcery a reactionary old incumbent of an office which he himself is qualified to occupy when the senior obstacle has been removed (1952). If sorcery beliefs really serve as instruments for self-promotion they also ensure that the ladder of promotion is short and shaky.

The fact that anyone may lay hands on sorcery power and that it is available for use against, or on behalf of society suggests another cross-classification of spiritual powers. For in Central Africa sorcery is often a necessary adjunct to roles of authority. The mother's brother must be acquainted with sorcery to be able to combat enemy sorcerers and to protect his descendants. It is a double-edged attribute, for if he uses it unwisely he can be ruined. Thus there is always the possibility,

even the expectation, that the man in an official position will fail to fill it creditably. The belief acts as a check on the use of secular power. If a leader among the Cewa or Lele becomes unpopular the sorcery beliefs contain an escape clause enabling his dependents to get rid of him. This is how I read the Tsav beliefs of the Tiv, checking as much as validating the eminent lineage elder's authority (Bohannan). So freely available sorcery is a form of spiritual power biased towards failure. This is a cross-classification which puts witchcraft and sorcery in the same bracket. Witchcraft beliefs are also tilted to expect role failure and to deal with it punitively, as we have seen. But witchcraft beliefs expect failure in interstitial roles, while sorcery beliefs expect failure in official roles. The whole scheme in which spiritual powers are correlated with structure becomes more consistent if we contrast those powers which are biased towards failure with powers which are biased towards success.

Teutonic notions of Luck, and some forms of *baraka* and *mana* are success-biased beliefs which parallel sorcery as a failure-biased belief. *Mana* and Islamic *baraka* exude from official positions, regardless of the intention of the incumbent. They are either dangerous powers to strike or benign powers for good. There are chiefs and princes exerting *mana* or *baraka* whose merest contact is worth a blessing and a guarantee of success, and whose personal presence makes the difference between victory and defeat in battle. But these powers are not always so well anchored to the outlines of the social system. Sometimes *baraka* can be a free-floating benign power, working independently of the formal distribution of power and allegiance in society.

If we find such free-lance benign contagion playing an important role in people's beliefs, we can expect either that formal authority is weak or ill-defined or that, for one reason or another, the political structure has been neutralised so that the powers of blessing cannot emanate from its key points.

Dr. Lewis has described an example of an un-sacralised social structure. In Somaliland there is a general division in thought between secular and spiritual power (1963). In secular relations power derives from fighting strength and the Somali are militant and competitive. The political structure is a warrior system where might is right. But in the religious sphere the Somalis are Muslims and hold that fighting within the Muslim com-

munity is wrong. These deeply held beliefs de-ritualise the social structure so that Somali do not claim that divine blessings or dangers emanate from its representatives. Religion is represented not by warriors but by men of God. These holy men, religious and legal experts, mediate between men as they mediate between men and God. They are only reluctantly involved in the warrior structure of society. As men of God they are credited with spiritual power. It follows that their blessing (*baraka*) is great in proportion as they withdraw from the secular world and are humble, poor and weak.

If this argument is correct it should apply to other Islamicised peoples whose social organisation is based on violent internal conflict. However the Moroccan Berbers exhibit a similar distribution of spiritual power without the theological justification. Professor Gellner tells me that Berbers have no notion that fighting within the Moslem community is wrong. Moreover it is a common feature of competitive segmentary political systems that the leaders of the aligned forces enjoy less credit for spiritual power than certain persons in the interstices of political alignment. The Somali holy man should be seen as the counterpart of the Tallensi Earth shrine priest and the Nuer Man of the Earth. The paradox of spiritual power vested in the physically weak is explained by social structure rather than by the local doctrine which justifies it. (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p.22).

Baraka in this form is something like witchcraft in reverse. It is a power which does not belong to the formal political structure, but which floats between its segments. As witchcraft accusations are used to reinforce the structure, so do people in the structure try to make use of *baraka*. Like witchcraft and sorcery its existence and strength is proved empirically, *post hoc*. A witch or sorcerer is identified when a misfortune occurs to someone against whom he has a grudge. The misfortune indicates there is witchcraft at work. The known grudge indicates the possible witch. It is his reputation for quarrels which essentially focusses the charge against him. *Baraka* is also identified empirically, *post hoc*. A piece of marvellous good fortune indicates its presence, often quite unexpectedly (Westermarck, I, chapter II). The reputation of a holy man for piety and learning focusses interest on him. Just as the witch's bad name will get worse with every disaster that befalls her neighbours, so the saint's

good name will improve with every stroke of good fortune. The snow-ball effect is the same.

The failure-biased powers have a negative feed-back. If anyone potentially possessing them tries to get above himself, the accusation cuts him down to size. The fear of accusation works like a thermostat on everyone in advance of actual quarrels. It is a control device. But the success-biased powers have the possibility of a positive feed-back. They could build up and up indefinitely to an explosion. As witchcraft has been called institutionalised jealousy, so *baraka* can work as institutionalised admiration. For this reason it is self-validating when it works in a freely competitive system. It is on the side of the big battalions. Empirically tested by success, it attracts adherents and so earns more success. 'People in fact become possessors of *baraka* by being treated as possessors of it.' (Gellner 1962).

I should make it clear that I do not believe that *baraka* is always available to competing elements in tribal social systems. It is an idea about power which varies in different political conditions. In an authoritative system it can emanate from the holders of authority and validate their established status, to the discomfiture of their foes. But it also has the potentiality of disrupting ideas about authority and about right and wrong, since its only proof lies in its success. The possessor of *baraka* is not subject to the same moral restraints as other persons (Westermarck, I, p. 198). The same applies to *Mana* and Luck. They can be on the side of established authority or on the side of opportunism. Raymond Firth came to the conclusion that at least in Tikopia, *Mana* means success (1940). Tikopian *Mana* expresses the authority of hereditary chiefs. Firth reflected on whether the dynasty would be endangered if the chief's reign were not a fortunate one, and concluded (correctly as it happened) that the chiefship would be strong enough to ride such a storm. One of the great advantages of doing sociology in a teacup is to be able to discern calmly what would be confusing in a larger scene. But it is a drawback not to be able to observe any real storms and upheavals. In a sense all colonial anthropology takes place in a teacup. If *mana* means success it is an apt concept for political opportunism. The artificial conditions of colonial peace may have disguised this potential for conflict and rebellion which the success-biased powers imply. Anthropology has often been weak in political analysis. The equivalent of a

paper constitution without any dust or conflict or serious estimate of the balance of forces is sometimes offered in lieu of an analysis of a political system. This must necessarily obscure interpretation. It may be helpful to turn to a pre-colonial example.

Luck, for our Teutonic ancestors, like the opportunist or freelance forms of *mana* and *baraka*, also seems to have operated freely in a competitive political structure, fluid, with little in the way of hereditary power. Such beliefs can follow swift changes in the lines of allegiance, and change judgments of right and wrong.

I have tried to push as far as possible the parallel between these success-biased powers and witchcraft and sorcery, both failure-biased and both capable of operating independently of the distribution of authority. Another parallel with witchcraft is in the involuntary nature of these success forces. A man discovers he has *baraka* because of its effects. Many men may be pious and live outside the warrior system, but not many have great *baraka*. *Mana* too may be exerted quite unconsciously, even by the anthropologist, as Raymond Firth wryly recounts when a magnificent haul of fish was attributed to his *mana*. The Sagas of the Norsemen are full of crises resolved when a man suddenly discovers his Luck or finds that his Luck has deserted him (Grönbech, Vol. I, ch. 4).

Another characteristic of success power is that it is often contagious. It is transmitted materially. Anything which has been in contact with *baraku* may get *baraka*. Luck was also transmitted partly in heirlooms and treasures. If these changed hands, Luck changed hands too. In this respect these powers are like pollution, which transmits danger by contact. However, the potentially haphazard and disruptive effects of these success powers contrasts with pollution, austere committed to support the outlines of the existing social system.

To sum up, beliefs which attribute spiritual power to individuals are never neutral or free of the dominant patterns of social structure. If some beliefs seem to attribute free-floating spiritual powers in a haphazard manner, closer inspection shows consistency. The only circumstances in which spiritual powers seem to flourish independently of the formal social system are when the system itself is exceptionally devoid of formal structure, when legitimate authority is always under challenge or when the rival segments of an acephalous political system resort to media-

tion. Then the main contenders for political power have to court for their side the holders of free-floating spiritual power. Thus it is beyond doubt that the social system is thought of as quick with creative and sustaining powers.

Now is the time to identify pollution. Granted that all spiritual powers are part of the social system. They express it and provide institutions for manipulating it. This means that the power in the universe is ultimately hitched to society, since so many changes of fortune are set off by persons in one kind of social position or another. But there are other dangers to be reckoned with, which persons may set off knowingly or unknowingly, which are not part of the psyche and which are not to be bought or learned by initiation and training. These are pollution powers which inhere in the structure of ideas itself and which punish a symbolic breaking of that which should be joined or joining of that which should be separate. It follows from this that pollution is a type of danger which is not likely to occur except where the lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined.

A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone. Bringing pollution, unlike sorcery and witchcraft, is a capacity which men share with animals, for pollution is not always set off by humans. Pollution can be committed intentionally, but intention is irrelevant to its effect—it is more likely to happen inadvertently.

This is as near as I can get to defining a particular class of dangers which are not powers vested in humans, but which can be released by human action. The power which presents a danger for careless humans is very evidently a power inhering in the structure of ideas, a power by which the structure is expected to protect itself.



ARK

MARY DOUGLAS

**PURITY
AND DANGER**

**AN ANALYSIS
OF THE CONCEPTS OF
POLLUTION AND TABOO**

Kelly Elroy

ARK PAPERBACKS

London and New York

1966