A Dark Trace

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Chapter 4

Applied psychoanalysis

4.1 Introduction

“A knowledge of infantile sexual theories in the shapes they assume in the thoughts of children can be of interest in various ways – even, surprisingly enough, for the elucidation of myths and fairy tales”.¹ This knowledge is indispensable for understanding neuroses. As we saw in the previous chapter, neuroses are indeed rooted in infantile sexuality. This is certainly also true of obsessional neuroses, which became increasingly central to Freud’s work after The Interpretation of Dreams and are of primary interest to us because the theme of guilt is linked primarily to these neuroses. Yet there are other directions that can be taken given a knowledge of infantile sexuality, other ways which could be trodden. Freud mentions them briefly: myths and fairy tales, and to these we can add art. In the long run, both obsessional neurosis and myth converge in Totem and Taboo.

Freud reveals an interest in myths from the beginning of his self-analysis. We have seen that in December 1897 he wrote to Fliess enthusiastically about a book by Kleinpaul on endopsychic myths. Freud’s interest in mythology remained. Whenever he sought general models and complexes with which to explain his findings he fell back upon myths. It was for this reason that he introduced the Oedipus myth in The Interpretation of Dreams. Infatuation with one’s mother and hostility toward one’s father are interpreted as general human traits and the myth testifies to this.² Ancient myths thus appear to provide direct access to the deepest levels of psychic life in past and present.

Yet things are not quite that simple: psychoanalytic schemas derived from myth do not have a constant universal or timeless meaning. History reveals increasing repression. Oedipus’s quest to find the cause of Thebes’s misery was not one designed to expose repressed guilt feelings. He was simply ignorant. Thus, on a conscious level the myth illustrates the quest for guilt. With Hamlet, however, guilt feelings are repressed and have formed a conscience whereas this cannot be the case with Oedipus. Freud viewed this as a historical development.

Psychoanalysis is the continuous search for the hidden origin of “an old guilt”. This does justice to the major differences between Oedipus and Hamlet. In short, psychoanalysis is not about demonstrating the same complex over and over again, but about the recognition of constantly changing and shifting individual and even

² Armstrong has argued that Freud’s interpretation of the Oedipus myth is in clear opposition with interpretations of the myth in ancient Greece. Then the myth was understood as a uniquely horrible myth which circumstances could hardly be repeated. It was a paradigmatic myth about disaster, but not a prototypical story about human psychic constellation. R.H. Armstrong, A Compulsion for Antiquity. Freud and the Ancient World, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2005, p.48.
cultural issues. Thus analysis, not the application of preconceived schemes, is central. This analysis largely consists of breaking through culturally determined (or partly culturally determined) resistance in order to make that which is repressed conscious.

The previous chapters have demonstrated that Freud had an eye for the repressive culture of his day. Freud’s study of neuroses circled around the core idea, “that there is repression”. When reviewing the development of psychoanalysis in 1914, he also called it fundamental: “The theory of repression is the corner-stone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests”. In so doing he distanced himself from Jung who deduced individual and collective development from another theoretical conception of the nature of libidinous drives. Freud argued this the other way around: in each case a psychoanalyst must proceed from the symptoms back to their origin. That analysis did not produce well-defined principles, but rather confirmed individual and cultural differences.

We have also seen that Freud portrayed himself as a monomaniac who took paths others had long abandoned. Yet he was certainly not alone in his analyses and critique of bourgeois culture which, given its insistence on repression, produced so many problems. In turn of the century Vienna, bourgeois culture was in fact the subject of intense discussion. Making that which was repressed visible and liberating that which was suppressed were tendencies a younger generation of artists in particular felt very strongly about. Painting was partly determined by symbolism, a trend in which profound connections between a mythic past and the deeper passions were suggested as lying beneath the bourgeois surface. The best-known representative of this movement is Gustav Klimt. In 1897 he established the Vienna Secession, a movement with an aversion to traditional art and with a strong predilection towards giving form to subconscious ideas.

Given this background, it is not strange that Freud and his followers studied art as an expression of unconscious motives. Thus, in his 1908 study of symbolism in fairy tales, Franz Riklin wrote that it was a concentration of symbol systems (the symbolism of dreams and religion) which sprang from the human psyche. He defined a symbol as a “sign of something complicated” and it subsequently appeared that that complication principally consisted of egoistic sexual wishes in which rivalry with and hate of others was also expressed. The symbol expresses

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1 S. Freud, On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, p.16.
2 C. Schorske, Fin-de-siècle Vienna, chapter 5.
3 Ernest Jones defines a work of art as a “sublimated manifestation of various thwarted and ‘repressed’ wishes of which the subject is no longer conscious”. E. Jones, “The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet’s Mystery: Study in Motive”, in The American Journal of Psychology 21 (1910), pp.72-113 (73). In 1911 this text was published in German as Das Problem der Hamlet und der Ödipus-Komplex, Deuticke Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna.
5 Idem, p.30.
this, condenses it and simultaneously conceals it. The symbolists’ adage was used as a guide for applied psychoanalytic research and, conversely, psychoanalytic ideas quickly influenced art.

The roots of the interest in myths and passions lie in the Romantic period. It was here that not only artists but, as we shall see, psychoanalysts too, found their heroes. Three figures, and their mutual relationships, must be named here in particular: Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche. For many artists and thinkers at the turn of the century, these three constituted a prime source of inspiration. Freud could not avoid these men either. He later wrote that he perceived considerable concordance between psychoanalytic findings and the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. With Schopenhauer – as far as he knew his philosophy through texts of his followers – he saw agreement in central themes from his philosophy: the primacy of affects, the major role of sexuality and repression. In this chapter I shall discuss Schopenhauer’s influence on Freud; the similarities with Nietzsche I shall deal with in the next chapter. And then there is Wagner. Precisely in the period preceding Totem and Taboo, several of his followers published studies of Wagner in the series edited by Freud entitled Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde [Writings in Applied Psychology]. Freud himself dealt with literature, but not with music (and thus not with Wagner).

In this chapter we shall take a closer look at Freud’s interest in applied psychoanalysis. This interest expanded on a path explored by his first followers. In so doing he also clearly came into conflict with his most important follower, Jung. I shall try to show that Freud’s first followers adapted central Freudian concepts, in particular the Oedipus complex and projection, in a way that Freud found strange at that time. For him both the Oedipus complex and projection are linked to the sense of guilt, morality and repression. His most personal contribution to applied psychoanalysis is, then, to pay attention to these three core concepts. It was the study of morality and the sense of guilt in constantly changing cultural circumstances and different people that prompted him to much greater cautiousness than his followers, who all too easily applied the Oedipus complex as a universal, timeless scheme with an intrinsic and concrete meaning and stretched the meaning of the term projection. For although he had written in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life that in analogy to paranoia “most modern religions” were nothing but “psychology projected in the external world”11, Freud would soon put in perspective this statement, and in fact abandon this definition.
of religion. *Totem and Taboo* is thus not only Freud’s answer to Jung, but also an attempt to create coherence within his terminology: in this way he was able to include the Oedipus complex and projection in his discourse on morality and the sense of guilt. Oedipus and guilt are inseparable.

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud would draw on other people’s material – Frazer, Robertson Smith, Darwin, Schopenhauer – more than ever before. The choices Freud made here are notable for two reasons. First was the use of authorities against Jung and the second was the use of authorities for his ideas on morality and the sense of guilt. As far as they are relevant I shall briefly deal with these authors, for it is in Freud’s small additions and omissions that we can see his individuality.

### 4.2 The choices of Freud’s followers

Mythology became a central subject in the very first issues of the *Writings in Applied Psychology*. Karl Abraham started the ball rolling with *Traum und Mythus* [*Dream and Myth*] in 1909. Freud was immediately enthusiastic about this study and was convinced that together they would have the honour “of explaining mythology”.¹² That same year he reported to Jung that he was completely convinced that mythology has the core complex of the neuroses as its central theme.¹³ What exactly he meant by core complex was as yet unclear.

Abraham explicitly links *Dream and Myth* to Freud’s publications to that date. He tersely concluded that a heterogeneity of the psyche’s products, as charted by Freud, must consequently be regarded as fantasy.¹⁴ He then differentiated between individual and collective fantasies (fairy tales and myths). Abraham sought to compare the two in order to show that myths can be understood as individual psychology (the dream). He consequently relied heavily upon Freud’s chapter on typical dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Oedipal desires come into conflict with mature cultural morality, are repressed, but return in our dreams. These desires also find expression in myths.¹⁵

It was Abraham who thus made the Oedipus complex central and that was an important step in the psychoanalytic discussion of mythology. Other psychoanalysts then followed this path. The most sensational publication was Jung’s 1909 *Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Schicksal des Einzelnen* [*The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual*]. He was the first who – without naming the Oedipus complex – saw the dependence relationship (including identification) of the parents (with the father as the determinative factor) as fundamental for

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¹⁵ Idem, p.269.
Chapter 4. Applied psychoanalysis

culture and neurosis. In the first part of the article, identification as the inhibition of self-realization is explored with the aid of clinical material. In the final pages Jung discusses religion. He clearly goes a step further than Freud’s analogy of the obsessional neuroses with religion. Instead Jung believed that Old Testament religion is dominated by the severity of Mosaic Law which keeps it at the level of a compulsive ceremony. A development first seen among the prophets and perfected in Christ signifies complete sublimation: Christ’s relationship with God is one of love. We can supplement this by observing that this successfully sublimated religion is no longer dominated by identification, obedience and a sense of guilt. This development is both cultural-historical as well as individual and is, in fact, a question of self-realization, an individual liberation from childhood dependence and submission to parents by their repression. We shall return to this topic, but one thing is of note here: Freud recognized an increase in repression through history while Jung saw increasing personal development and sublimation.

Abraham approached the Oedipus myth from Freud’s perspective as laid out in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, that is, dreams are an expression of a childhood wish. Thus myths are a piece of surmounted infantile mental life. They comprise (in veiled form) a people’s childhood desires. These childhood desires are characterized by egoism and fantasies of grandeur. This is also characteristic of myth: every nation wants to believe it was created by the most powerful god and wants to identify with that god. Fantasies of grandeur are “projected upon heaven”. Another similarity between dream and myth is censorship, the veiling of the wish.

Abraham discussed the sense of guilt within the framework of the veiling of wishes. He did so via a comparison of the Prometheus myth with Moses as the bringer of the “fiery” word. Moses is not only his God’s servant in the “Moses myth”, but also a man who comes into conflict with God. He is severely punished because he struck a rock with his staff (symbol of divine power/fire) from which


19 Idem, p.295.

20 Idem, pp.301ff. The comparison of Prometheus and Moses was first made by the founding father of folk-psychology, Heymann Steinthal. The decorum for this comparison is a 19th-century discussion on the question whether there is a typical Aryan mythology that makes a comparative study of mythological motives found in European and Indian mythology possible. Steinthal believed that the Semitic people also had a pre-monotheistic mythology comparable to Aryan mythology. The comparison between Prometheus and Moses is taken up by Abraham. Jung also elaborates on the Prometheus myth in *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*. I have argued elsewhere that we can see the influence of this comparison between Prometheus and Moses in two of Freud’s late writings, *The Acquisition and Control of Fire and Moses and Monotheism*. H. Westerink, “Zum Verhältnis von Psychoanalyse und Mythologie. Die Einfluß Heymann Steinthals Völkerpsychologie auf die angewandte Psychoanalyse”, in *Psyche. Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen*, 62 (2008/3), pp.290-311.
water then flowed. By so doing he disobeyed his God. Abraham thought that we are dealing here with a displacement: Moses is no longer the robber of divine fire (or water), but only guilty of hitting a rock. Abraham saw here an analogy with obsessional neuroses in which self-reproach, whose origin lay in a sexual activity, shifts to conscientiousness regarding something insignificant.  

Abraham did not share the general opinion of his day, that myths were the expression of philosophical, religious ideas. Just as it cannot be assumed that children are born with an altruistic ethic, it cannot be assumed that prehistoric peoples (and primitive cultures) had philosophical ideas which they symbolized in myths. Ethics is the result of a long history of repression down to the present day. Abraham’s Freudian point of view stands in contrast to the vision Jung would develop, a vision already visible in The Significance of the Father: myths are indeed expressions of fundamental ideas. Abraham found this unsatisfactory; it offered no insight into motives, including repression of feelings of guilt, for the origin of myths. Whatever is valid for myths is also valid for religion generally: men originally identified with gods, but via a long process of repression within monotheism men became subordinate to a heavenly father. Yet this belief also expressed a wish, a wish “projected” onto heaven: God as caretaker.

In Otto Rank’s Der Mythus von der Geburt des Helden [The Myth of the Birth of the Hero], 1909, it appears that Rank wanted to view myths as the expression of fundamental ideas and impressions, but he followed Abraham in seeing them as partial wish fulfilments. In general, myths primarily express fantasies and only a secondary processing of these is “projected onto heaven.” That projection is caused, Rank claimed, by desires and as a defence against hostile feelings toward one’s father.

Rank focused on myths regarding the birth of a hero. Using a comparative analysis of the tales of the birth of various heroes, Rank concluded that disturbed relationships with one’s parents is central and that the cause of this must be sought in the hero’s character. Birth myths are thus about the hero’s character in relation to his family and that is the point where Freud comes in. The link to psychoanalysis is made by a contribution by Freud himself which is known as Family Romances. This piece is essentially about the detachment of the growing individual from parental authority. For the child, parents are authority and the source of everything to which belief is attached. Yet, when the child compares them with other parents, for example, he begins to doubt his own parents’ authority. Sexual rivalry plays

21 K. Abraham, Traum und Mythus, pp.303-304.
22 Idem, p.318.
23 Idem, p.320.
25 Among the heroes Rank analysed we find Moses, Oedipus, Heracles, Zarathustra, Jesus, Siegfried and Lohengrin.
an important role in this process; the child feels he is not receiving the full love to which he feels he is entitled, not because he must share his mother with his father, but because he must share his parents with his siblings. This is how hostile feelings towards both parents arise, the beginning of alienation. Yet, in adult dream life the child’s “overvaluation” of his parents survives. Given the fact that Rank addresses the Oedipus myth, it is of note that Freud does not even mention it. Projection is not discussed either.

Rank pursued this further with an elaboration of the analogy between the child’s fantasy and the general character of the hero myth. He described the projection mechanism as a “reversal of the relation”, certainly when the child’s hostility towards the father appears inverted in the myth: the father is hostile towards the child.27 This inversion stems from the desire for justification of the child’s hostile feelings.

Freud himself published a study on Leonardo da Vinci in *Writings in Applied Psychology*. In this study Freud wrote about Leonardo’s desire for knowledge as a capacity for sublimation, a desire, he maintained, which was particularly profound.28 This desire for knowledge flowers when a child experiences the presence of siblings as a threat to his own interests. The question then presents itself: where did these children come from? This question leads to the first exploration of sexuality. Because this desire for knowledge is linked to sexuality, the chance is high that they are repressed or curbed together. If this happens, it is referred to as a compulsive neurotic check. He named disgust and shame as the mechanisms of repression and added as a third a curb from a religious way of thinking.29 It is, however, also possible that the desire for knowledge is sublimated: the libido (or sexual drive) is then not repressed, but directed to a higher goal, intellectual work. Freud then also suggested how Leonardo’s sublimation was able to come about. He believed that as a child Leonardo desired his mother and it was thus also inevitable that he too would want to take over his father’s place.30 This implies both identification and hostility. After all, “to take someone’s place” means “to be as he is”, but it also means “removing the other from that place”. Yet Leonardo was raised initially without a father: his taking over that place occurred without hostile feelings. Freud then speculated for a while on the question as to what would have happened to him had his father been present and been a figure of authority. Freud believed that had that been the case, it would have resulted in the fate which so many experience: he would have been religious and under the power of a strict, dogmatic religion.31 The idea behind this is that “a personal God

29 Idem, p.79.
30 Idem, p.120.
31 Idem, p.123.
is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father”. Sublimation is also the subject of Oskar Pfister’s analysis of the 18th-century Pietist Zinzendorf which appeared that same year. Freud was enthusiastic about Pfister’s study, noting that Pfister handled the sublimation of the libido somewhat formally. Oskar Pfister, a liberal Reformed Protestant, also did his best to provide a picture of his subject and portrayed Count Zinzendorf as a tragic figure, as are so many neurotics in the history of religious morality. When describing the course of Zinzendorf’s life he placed particular emphasis on the repression of aggressive sexual desire, a repression which was in agreement with orthodox religious ethics. However Zinzendorf’s piety would be strongly coloured by these repressed desires. It was a piety that could be called a failed sublimation (a failed desexualization); a piety characterized by resistance and unstable control over sexual desire, but also by compensation for its loss. Zinzendorf’s piety, Pfister believed, was thus strongly sexualized. He also called this the projection of primary eroticism (infantile sexuality) onto a religious love object. Thus we see here how Pfister merged sublimation and projection and, in fact, made them synonymous. Freud always kept projection and sublimation apart because, *inter alia*, sublimation is not linked to a sense of guilt, as with Leonardo.

In his study of Wagner Rank reflects on the idealization of the hero. His analysis of the relationships and motives in the opera *Lohengrin* and Wagner’s repeated love triangles (two men and a single woman) brought the Oedipus complex to the fore. His version of this complex is consistent with that of Max Graf, who in 1911 also published a study of Wagner: there is desire for the mother and there is subsequent hate of the father who stands in the way. In the fantasy the father then has “the traits of the own ego”, that is to say, “the own idealized personality”.

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32 Idem.
33 “The almighty and just God, and kindly Nature, appear to us as grand sublimations of father and mother, or rather as revivals and restorations of the young child’s ideas of them.” Idem. Here we find in a nutshell the two elements of the God-image that Freud will elaborate on in his texts on religion: the almighty and just God will be the subject in *Totem and Taboo*. Religion as originating from helplessness and the need for care (“kindly Nature”) is the subject of The Future of an Illusion.
39 O. Rank, *Die Lohengrinsage*, p.94.
Rank referred to Freud’s text on the Family Romance, but where Freud identified the origin of rivalry and a feeling of mistrust as being linked to siblings, this link is here broken. In addition, Freud did not call the elevation of the father projection and Rank did. That is to say, when he wrote about Wagner’s own contribution to the conversion of the Lohengrin myth, he called Wagner’s addition “projections of inner psychic contents and developments onto the hero”.  

This projection is the mechanism by which identification is effected by Wagner with Lohengrin.

A study by Jones of Hamlet and the Oedipus complex appeared in 1911 and clearly matched Freud’s thoughts as laid out in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. He regarded Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as the key to understanding not only his work but also his character. Freud linked Hamlet’s doubt (about whether to take revenge) with Hamlet’s sense of guilt. Hamlet has misgivings, for his uncle’s deed is his own deepest wish: to kill his father and marry his mother. By murdering his uncle he can definitely take his father’s place, but it is this very thought that is in conflict with his conscience: “his conscience is his unconscious sense of guilt”.  

This is central for Freud and Jones adhered to it when he traced the doubt to a tortured conscience. The basis of that conscience is an unconscious cause. Here Jones turned to Freud and his views on repression. Those thoughts that generally conflict with cultural morality are repressed and they are the natural instincts, particularly sexual ones. In the search for the origin of repression Jones reached the conclusion that Hamlet nursed the cruel, incestuous wish to take his father’s place, a wish which was powerfully repressed and, under the influence of shame and a sense of guilt, was completely purged from his memory. The outstanding illustration of this early relationship between son and parents (hostile wishes against the father are perceived as interfering with the desired affectionate relationship with the mother) is the Oedipus myth.  

Underlying Hamlet’s doubt is the Oedipus complex.

It is tempting to say that Jones’s study was nothing more than an expansive footnote to *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Yet there are important differences in the details. Jones included the theme of incest: Hamlet repressed not only revenge, but also incestuous desires. Freud principally emphasized sibling jealousy which is passed on to the parental relationships. Drawing on Abraham and Rank, Jones also proposed that the Oedipus complex is a general, human complex which is repressed. This conclusion meant that little stood in the way of a general application of the Oedipus complex. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud was more careful. Let us remind ourselves that Freud approached *Hamlet* and *Oedipus Rex* via his theory of repression and relied upon Meynert’s primary and secondary egos. Over time egoistic drives are increasingly repressed by morality. Freud endorsed this idea in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. What is visible with Oedipus is repressed in Hamlet

40 Idem, pp.131-132.  
42 E. Jones, *The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet’s Mystery*, p.84.  
43 Idem, pp.97ff.
by the progress of repression in the inner life of humanity. Thus he emphasized the fate of the Oedipus complex in relation to an increasingly repressive culture. By contrast, Jones emphasized the continuity between Oedipus and Hamlet.

In 1911 Karl Abraham published a psychoanalytic biography of the late nineteenth-century painter Giovanni Segantini, a forerunner of the Vienna Secession. When he wrote about Segantini’s aggressive desires he raised the issue of the obsessional neurotic’s sense of guilt. The obsessional neurotic has repressed his hate, a hate which manifested itself in fantasies of loved one’s deaths that give rise to feelings of satisfaction. Yet the effect of this process is a feeling of guilt about these impermissible fantasies and feelings, certainly when the beloved person later does actually die. Attached to this feeling of guilt is the resolution “to make amends”. “Remembering the loved one is only accomplished with effusive love or an attempt was made to banish the actual death from consciousness and to bring the dead back to life in fantasy.

Although Freud only mentioned Adolf Storfer’s study of patricide once in Totem and Taboo, this work deserves our (brief) attention. After all, this study made a direct connection between Freud’s search for the “origin of morality” and patricide. The opening sentences set the tone: “The primitive individual does not create an ethics for himself and no ethics is created for him; he experiences pleasure and unpleasure within certain limits which are determined by a natural check of the urges; values such as good and evil only arise via relations with others.” Storfer described this in Hobbesian terms: the battle of everyone against everyone is exchanged for primitive communities at the cost of personal freedom, but with a greater chance of satisfying one’s needs. The first communities, starting with families, were protected by shared religious beliefs and a primitive jurisprudence. Storfer relied here on Freud’s analysis of the analogy of obsessional practice and religious ceremony: cultural development began with the abandonment of direct satisfaction of individual urges. The goal of religion is to repress socially damaging urges. Yet that is not its only goal: religious myths, for example, are also a focal point for repressed wishes and fantasies, unconscious witness of an entire people.

Myths and religions are not only characterized by a ban on socially damaging tendencies, but a “transfer” of that which is harmful “to the surface”, a projection (with a reference to Schopenhauer) of the “will in the outside world”. After the battle of everyone against everyone, in the most primitive communities a distinction was made between permissible and forbidden murder. It was permissible to kill strangers as well as economic and sexual rivals.

44 S. Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, SE IV, p.264.
47 Idem, p.5.
48 Idem, p.2.
Chapter 4. Applied psychoanalysis

It was forbidden to murder one’s father, the leader of the community. In order to support this idea, Storfer then built upon the central idea in *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*: there is an analogy between the development of the individual and that of humanity. Primitives are humanity in its childhood phase. Rivalry (with strangers and the permissibility of killing them) is also the original motive behind patricide. Primitive man is an Oedipus. Storfer then called upon Freud and his followers who, he believed, made the sons’ hostility toward their fathers the psychoanalytic paradigm. The rivalry concerns the most important economic and sexual property: the mother. Thus patricide is rooted in an incest wish. In religions these wishes are repressed and “projected onto heaven”.

In this palaeontology of ethics, a general tendency is formulated most clearly in the pages of the *Writings in Applied Psychology*: the Oedipus complex is central to Freudian psychoanalysis. For Storfer that was a concrete historical fact, as concrete as the Oedipus complex in every person’s childhood.

Storfer reached a conclusion which, in the context of the *Writings in Applied Psychology*, was indeed forceful: the Oedipus complex was the paradigm and projection appeared to be the way in which it was processed in mythology and religion. It is naturally striking that in this period Freud wrote hardly anything on the Oedipus complex and projection in their mutual relationship. After *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud’s attention turned again to repression and specifically the obsessional neuroses. He followed anew the trail of the sense of guilt and self-reproach in the Rat Man case, but not in order to demonstrate that the Oedipus complex was the source of the sense of guilt. It is notable that Freud’s followers did make the Oedipus complex central, thereby focusing completely on the love triangle relationship of father-mother-son. This leads us to another central theme: incest desires. In Freud’s students’ studies this plays a much greater role than in Freud’s own writings of this period. Although the Rat Man did experience hostile feelings towards his father, this was not because he was in love with his mother.

There is yet another remarkable shift: Freud treated myth as a veiled wish and in the case of the Rat Man he emphatically pointed out that the sense of guilt should not be reduced to a fact, but principally to a wish, a fantasy that had been thwarted. Last in the series of followers I have described here, Storfer treated the Oedipus complex and the rivalry with and hostility towards the father not as a veiled wish or fantasy, but as historical fact.

Also remarkable is the presence of the term projection in these studies by Freud’s followers. Until that time the term had been principally used to describe a mechanism in paranoia. Freud’s followers, however, employed the term in a much broader sense. Projection became the shift upwards “onto heaven”, for example in formulae like “whatever I don’t like a god does in my name” and “what I want to be/have, that is/has my god”. Thus that to which one does not have direct access

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or is forbidden is ascribed to another (hero or god). Via the detour of identification with the hero/god the forbidden can be experienced without a sense of guilt.

As we will see, in Totem and Taboo Freud tried to create terminological order, thereby creating distance from Jung and simultaneously attempting to convince his other followers. The analysis of the sense of guilt and morality played a crucial role in this. He continued to search for their roots and in addition he returned the Oedipus complex and projection to their place in the analysis of the sense of guilt and morality.

4.3 A single principle

Freud worked on Totem and Taboo for two years and it appeared in four parts in 1912 and 1913 in the newly established journal Imago, once again a journal for applied psychoanalysis. Each of the four parts has its own character, which is partly determined by the debate Freud was conducting with others. The second and third parts are particularly critical of Wilhelm Wundt, but already reveal the contours of his conflict with Jung. In particular the final part of Totem and Taboo was written in reaction to Jung’s Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido.50

In 1909 he had written to Jung about the study of mythology, which seemed promising and should be “conquered”.51 When Freud read the first part of Jung’s book in 1911 he was still largely positive – with reservations.52 Freud was happy that Jung appreciated that the Oedipus complex was at the root of religious feelings.53 Indeed, Jung’s book begins where Freud’s other followers had already begun: Freud’s dream interpretation and discovery of the Oedipus complex. Nothing seemed to be wrong, but in the spring of 1912 the tone of their correspondence hardened and Jung stated that the second half of his study was a declaration of independence.54 The second part of Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido appeared almost simultaneously with the first part of Totem and Taboo. Jung firstly criticized Freud’s ideas regarding the incest prohibition which he thought was not put into place because real incest was desired, but was a secondary emanation, a symbol of the indeterminable fear which binds with infantile material.55 A fundamental point of criticism was made against Freud’s drive theory and his

50 In the English translation the full title is: Psychology of the Unconscious. A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido. A Contribution to the History of Evolution of Thought, first edited in 1916. To avoid confusion with another book by Jung also bearing the title The Psychology of the Unconscious I will refer to the former using the subtitle that is the actual translation of the original German text Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido.


52 Idem, 280F.

53 Idem, 270F.

54 Idem, 303J, 311F.

55 Idem, 315J.
differentiation of sexual and ego drives as well as against his theory of the partial
drives which are involved in the earliest developmental stages to differentiate
body parts. Jung was searching for an unambiguous essential principle. Behind
the various drives he saw a fundamental life drive: the primal libido, which he
equated with Schopenhauer’s will (see further). A natural developmental process
subsequently takes care of the differentiations which Freud had identified. The
introduction of the primal libido thus automatically also meant a broadening of
Freud’s libido, as regards desexualization. The libido is a life force and the sexual
drive is only one of its later emanations.

In the first part of Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido Jung kept
closely to Abraham’s Dream and Myth in particular and defended the idea that
dreams and myths were analogous phenomena. He cited Abraham’s observation
that myths are the expression of the infantile mental life of a people and dreams
were individual myths. Yet Jung produced a different exegesis of this idea (from
Abraham and Freud). The kinship of myth with dream led Jung to conclude that
the soul possesses a historical stratification and that later introversion or regression
can permit older layers to resurface. He put forward the idea that this archaic
material sheds new light on individual psychology. These ideas meant that the
human spirit could at bottom only be known via folk-psychology, the science of
cultural development and history. Returning to the other Freudians (Abraham,
Riklin, Rank and Jones), Jung saw clear agreement between dream/fantasy
material and ancient myths. He concluded from this that fantasy was an expression
of the deepest, archaic layer in man. Fantasy was consequently clearly distinct
from logical, directed thought. That directed thought is in the service of dealing
with reality.

The difference between fantasy and logical thought appears to match Freud’s
differentiation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle about which
he wrote in Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning (1911).
The human mind fundamentally works according to the pleasure-unpleasure
principle without taking reality into account; man’s relation with reality is not

56 Jung’s critique on the distinction between sexual drives and ego drives is based on his reading of
Freud’s Schreber case study. Here Freud had argued that paranoia is characterized by a withdrawal
of the libido from reality which would explain Schreber’s loss of sense of reality. He had then raised
the question of whether this libidinous decathexis should be limited to the sexual drives only. Jung in
his turn reasoned that in some cases the withdrawal of libido included the ego drives. Consequently,
the distinction between sexual drives and ego drives could not be maintained. On this issue see P.

57 Compare S. Freud, C.G. Jung, The Freud/Jung Letters, 286F.

58 C.G. Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious. A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the
Libido. A Contribution to the History of Evolution of Thought, Princeton University Press, Princeton,
1991, p.27.

59 Idem, p.35.

60 Idem, p.32.

61 Idem, p.13, p.20.
determined by sheer perception of reality, but is organized by the libido. The principle seeks satisfaction and only if that fails is the person forced to seek satisfaction in reality beyond himself. Logical thinking is an attempt to come to grips with reality thereby making satisfaction possible. When the pleasure-ego wants something, the reality-ego makes itself “useful”. Thus the reality principle services the pleasure principle. This model can be found in religion, science or the arts. According to Freud, religions demand curtailment of pleasure and have always impressed upon their faithful a surrogate satisfaction: the curtailment of pleasure here is rewarded in the hereafter. Yet, Freud wrote, that is an empty promise; only science, the terrain of thought, can satisfy the pleasure principle via the reality principle. This perspective had consequences for Freud’s thoughts on the sense of guilt. The moment at which the pleasure principle becomes bogged down and the libido development is checked is decisive for the eventual formation of a specific neurosis. Typical of repression is that it equates reality of thought with external actuality. This is the reason why the sense of guilt can be very powerful, even without there ever being any actual guilt. To illustrate this he supplied a short, veiled autobiographical report of a feeling of guilt in a man who had cared lovingly for his sick father yet was nevertheless full of self-reproach because he unconsciously wished his father dead. The nature of feelings of guilt is evidence for Freud’s being correct, that a normal development from pleasure-ego into reality-ego can be disturbed when forbidden externally and encroached upon in a limited fashion.

Jung took another position: logical thinking that serves conformation to reality should be clearly distinguished from fantasy that not only “sets free subjective wishes” but is also seen as a gate towards wisdom expressed in mythology and religion. Fantasy is thus defined here broadly. Religious and mythical ideas also have a place here. In this connection Jung also addressed projection: religion is in essence a systematic organization designed to process unconscious conflicts in and the accumulation of libido via projection to the external world. “The conscious projection towards which the Christian education aims, offers, therefore, a double benefit”: solving a conflict (actual sin is forgiven and atoned for) and transfer of a personal burden to God. For Jung, Christianity is thus a useful institution.

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63 S. Freud, Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning, p.223. [Le principe de réalité] forme couple avec le principe de plaisir qu’il modifie: dans la mesure où il réussit à s’imposer comme principe régulateur, la recherché de la satisfaction ne s’effectue plus par les voies les plus courtes, mais elle emprunte des détours et ajourne son résultat en fonction des conditions imposés par le monde extérieur. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse, p.336.
64 Idem, p.225.
65 C.G. Jung, Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido, p.20, p.22.
66 Idem, pp.63-64.
67 Idem, pp.64-65.
Freud’s critique of the first part of *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* was that Jung thought too much like a Christian and we can understand immediately why: for Freud religion and morality were both repressive agencies while for Jung religion was different from morality and the first is positively defined as a possibility for the processing of desire. In the meantime, Jung also defined religion as the product of projection, as the “unconscious recasting of the erotic into something religious”. It is a projection which does not call forth moral obligation. Jung also called this projection mechanism sublimation, that is, “the process of transformation of the primal libido” into “associated functions”.

For Jung religion was part of an evolutionary process that was repeated in every individual development. And according to Jung that is precisely the reason why religions exist and repeatedly arise. For Freud, religions were cultural information which changed over time, intervened in a specific way in an individual’s search for pleasure and thereby impacted on individuals differently. Religions evolve and do so within a complete development of culture, but what is missing in Freud is the idea of a positive, systematic development from a single principle. Evolution does not take place without periods of decline, reaction or restoration. According to Freud, it was precisely in these tendencies that morality and religion show their true repressive face.

Jung and Freud’s styles also differ considerably. *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* is a toppled bookcase full of philosophical, religious anecdotes in combination with mythic texts, ideas and dreams which are employed in order to show that the same thoughts and mechanisms return again and again under different guises. Jung regularly cited Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and I believe that this became an important source for Freud’s increasing interest in these two figures. We shall see in *Totem and Taboo* how Freud referred to Schopenhauer to validate his ideas. Yet Freud pulled down a different bookcase, one full of anthropological material and psychoanalytic cases. It is concrete material which permits us to see both agreement as well as peculiar differences. The choice of material is also evidence of Freud’s resistance to Jung.

In *Totem and Taboo* we find the observation that we “are all miserable sinners”. From Freud’s perspective, Jung did not understand these sins. Sense of guilt comes from unconscious, hostile desires. In the Rat Man case the sadistic desires that Freud had partially exposed in *Three Essays* were clearly present. Hostile desires are fundamental for the creation and comprehension of neuroses. With Jung it

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69 On Freudian thought Jung writes: “The stumbling block is the unhappy combination of religion and morality”. Idem, p.74.

70 Idem, p.72. That which is projected Jung called the father and mother imago. The father and mother are the first love objects of daughters and sons. The image of the parents is later projected creating images of God: “the divinity is nothing else than a projected complex of representation”; “the religious instinct feeds upon the incestuous libido of the infantile period”. Idem, p.61.

71 Idem, p.133.

appeared that sins were linked with an unhappy relationship between person and reality, a conflict in which religion or fantasy could offer solace. Jung’s theories of the primal libido repudiated the existence of fundamental, sadistic hostile wishes. Guilt feelings thus played hardly any role to speak of. They were ultimately a secondary phenomenon, one which additionally did not appear to be a burden, but rather to be liberating: whenever the libido has its normal development blocked – Jung used the image of a mountain climber who encounters a steep rock wall in his path – it switches to self-criticism for failing. After all, there is a tension between duty (development) and a need for security and safety. Self-criticism, which can arise as an expression of this tension, is subsequently employed in order to develop a new plan in order to reach the goal anyway. Self-criticism is thus useful, just as religion can also be useful when it is able to identify sin and offer forgiveness.

This entire issue is the core of Totem and Taboo: not the necessary development from a single point, but the ambivalence of feelings; not a world of thought or dealing with reality as the point of departure, but unconscious hostile impulses; not religion as projection, but the study of sense of guilt in order to gain insight into the human mind in relation to culture.

4.4 The prohibition behind the imperative

Freud wrote to Jung saying they would conquer mythology, but what did he mean by that? Was it his intention to explain mythology psychoanalytically? The answer to this question can be found in his earlier interest in culture and religion. Freud began his psychoanalytic career as the discoverer of repression. Three Essays supplied the answer to what was repressed. Naturally the other main question was how did repression come about? He quickly discovered that cultural and religious morality play an important role here. He also thought that this repression had gradually increased over the course of history, albeit each time in a new guise. In Vienna Freud saw the consequences and evidence of this: many people succumbed to the pressure of the high cost of repression. It was thus based on his clinical experience that he went in search of the origin of the repressed and the repressive. The path Freud followed in his self-analysis was that of the sense of guilt; he was looking for “an ancient guilt”. His analysis of the Rat Man followed the same logic. What he hoped to find was the source of morality, religion and the sense of guilt. That was the approach – to look for an origin designed for contemporary application. The question was not so much, “How do I explain religion or morality?”, but “How must I understand the interplay of psyche and culture or morality?” This question has two dimensions: the first deals with the influence of cultural and religious morality on the individual; the second is the question of

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73 This is expressed in for example C.G. Jung, The Theory of Psychoanalysis, in Collected Works 4, §380-381.
the culture itself – which developments and shifts have arisen within the culture?

Freud indicates this precisely in his foreword to *Totem and Taboo*. The investigation of taboos is important, for the taboo continues to work like Kant’s categorical imperative: it “operates in a compulsive fashion and rejects every conscious motives”. The taboo has become negative; it is no longer a prohibition but an injunction. Totemism is more difficult to recognize because it has been replaced by new social-religious institutions. For the analysis of primitive cultures and customs vis-à-vis totems and taboos, Freud proceeds from what is for him a tested method: analogy. Just as an individual experiences development from earliest childhood, so too has culture developed from a primal childhood. There is another aspect visible, however: the blossoming of neuroses in his time, the fin de siècle, must also be seen as a temporally bound result of a specific cultural and religious development. Obsessional neurosis is not only a phenomenon analogous with the emotional/spiritual life of primitives, but also a phenomenon that shows how cultural and religious morality has developed and with what consequences. Obsessional neurosis is thus not only a model in an analogy (to primitive culture), but also a sign of a difference (with contemporary culture). This is a basic problem in *Totem and Taboo*, a reason for justified criticism: obsessional neurosis was understood as the product of a cultural development while it was also the model for the origin of that development. Thus obsessional neurosis was in fact studied from its own perspective.

The first of the four parts of *Totem and Taboo* on “the horror of incest” clearly dovetails with the preparatory work of his followers in the *Writings in Applied Psychoanalysis*: the alleged centrality of the Oedipus complex also meant interest in incest desires. In principle the first part also matches an earlier attempt at comparison and analogy of obsessional neuroses and cultural phenomena. Freud now compared the psychology of the (obsessional) neurotic with the psychology of primitive people in both prehistory and contemporary primitive societies. As their distant descendants, modern man have access to their thoughts via everything we inherit from the past: monuments, art, religion, myths, customs and habits. Moreover, we can see the roots of our own civilization in extant primitive societies.

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74 S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.xiv. It is not clear which of Kant’s works Freud actually read and what was passed on to him by others. The fact is that he sought confirmation of his ideas, such as when he asked Ludwig Binswanger whether the unconscious probably meant the same as the “thing in itself” (*Ding an sich*). Binswanger answered in the negative. S. Freud, L. Binswanger, *The Sigmund Freud-Ludwig Binswanger Correspondence 1908-1939*, G. Fichtner (ed.), Open Gate Press, London, 2003, p.237.

75 Vergote has correctly argued that the Oedipus complex that lies at the heart of neurosis can only occur within a cultural context (family, language, morality). Hence it cannot explain by analogy the foundations of that cultural context. A. Vergote, “Religion after the Critique of Psychoanalysis. The Scope of Psychoanalysis”, in *Psychoanalysis, Phenomenological Anthropology and Religion*, J. Coveleyn, D. Hutsebaut (eds.), Leuven University Press, Amsterdam, Atlanta, 1998, pp.17-37 (33-34).
In fact, there is hardly any discussion of a true comparison between obsessional neurosis and primitive societies. Only in the final line of the first part does Freud make such a comparison. It is certainly not exhaustive and hardly differs from the earlier comparison of obsessional neuroses with religious ceremony. Before making a comparison, Freud had exhaustively mapped the incest prohibition among primitive societies relying almost completely upon James Frazer’s 1910 Totemism and Exogamy.

In *Totemism and Exogamy* Frazer provided a detailed inventory of totemism across the globe. He strongly emphasized exogamy as the distinguishing characteristic of the totem clan. The most severe punishment within the clan was for violating the ban on exogamy. When he subsequently sought the motive for exogamy, he concluded that the core of the prohibition against exogamy is really a prohibition against incest. He first rejected a Darwinistic interpretation: the incest prohibition was not put in place in order to preclude the negative effects of inbreeding. He also rejected the related view of Edward Westermarck (cited regularly by Freud): there is no natural, instinctive aversion to incest, for if there were a natural aversion why would there be such a stern prohibition? Ultimately he reached the conclusion that incest was seen as a threat to group cohesion. His emphasis lay completely on the danger for the entire group and not individual danger. In that case punishment would be superfluous, for the “guilty party” would have already punished himself. Thus Frazer did not distinguish between group and individual guilt, nor did he provide any further explanation for the prohibition against incest.

How does Freud fit these ideas of Frazer’s into his thinking? Primitives have a very low level of civilization: the sexual drives are barely curtailed by morality. Just the same, there are injunctions and prohibitions. In the absence of religious and social institutions, there is a primitive system in which the totem is central. The totem represents the clan’s primogenitor and guardian spirit. Clan members are constrained from killing the totem animal (or eating its flesh). The second prohibition is that clan members are not permitted to have sexual relations with one another (incest prohibition) and may not marry each other, but must marry outside the clan (the exogamy rule).

Freud tried to chart this prohibition and his first attempt to do so mentions guilt. Violation of this prohibition is punished most severely by the clan. Evidently incest signified a danger for the entire clan and the prohibition against incest served to defend against guilt. Freud referred to Frazer’s theory and supplemented it with

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76 S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp.16-17.
80 Idem, p.4.
guilt. The actual meaning of the prohibition, the nature of the danger or the guilt which must be defended against all remain unexplained for the time being. All he did was supply anthropological material in which clan family relations were linked to the central prohibition against incest.

When dealing with the motives for the prohibition against incest, danger and guilt come up, but no more than that. It is all about incest: the analysis of neurotics has shown that the first object choice of young boys is incestuous by nature (i.e., mother, sister). Individuals gradually free themselves of this incestuous fixation, but among obsessional neurotics a piece of the repressed fixation regularly returns. We know that it returns as self-reproach, that as affect its colour fades and it can bind with all kinds of ideas. Yet Freud ignored this here. His point was that the desire for incest is part of a core complex of the neurosis, a desire that, given merely the resistance to the idea, is deeply repressed. That is the only result of the “comparison” between neurosis and primitive people. The incest prohibition amongst primitives, according to Freud, is generally known; psychoanalysis teaches that the first love object is incestuous. All he did was to observe this similarity.

4.5 Ambivalent feelings

The second part of Totem and Taboo dealt with taboos and ambivalence. Freud here debated Wilhelm Wundt, who published the second volume of his voluminous Völkerpsychologie in the period 1905-1909 entitled Mythus und Religion [Myth and Religion]. In the preface to this volume Wundt wrote that he wanted to contribute from a psychological perspective to research on mythology and the history of religion. His goal was not to explain mythologies but rather the reverse: he sought to enrich psychology with material from the history of religions. Myth and religion provide insight into the psychology of fantasy. Religious ideas are always expressions of fantasy. By fantasy he understood the ability to make conscious that which was not present. Mythology and religion are thus rooted in ideas, in conscious thought. Freud directed his criticism at this point.

Before he did so, however, he stated his agreement with Wundt’s analysis of taboo. Wundt, too, drew attention to its essentially double character: a taboo is both holy and impure. In addition, a taboo is a primal idea: it is not created by a god, not an effect of a system, but in itself holy and impure. Freud reiterated the reasons for investigating taboos: the taboo can "throw a light upon the obscure
origin of our own “categorical imperative”". The motive for this comes from outside consciousness.

To what does Wundt trace the origin of taboos? Taboos originate, so Freud cited, where the most primitive and simultaneously enduring human drives have their origin, namely “in fear of ‘demonic’ powers”. For Wundt human drives are the consequence of conscious thoughts about demonic power. The taboo prevents the demonic powers from being called forth. Gradually the taboo is detached from the belief in demons in order to then become the source of custom and law. Freud noted with irony that Wundt would have been correct if demons really existed, but he also noted that demons (and in their wake gods) have their genesis in psychological motives. After all, belief in demons came about by virtue of the idea that the spirits of the dead wandered around their graves. That belief is thus once again a reworking of ideas about the soul. Wundt explained the changing character of demons with various combinations of ideas. Once again we are dealing here with the functioning of fantasy: ideas arise in man without knowledge about the origin of the ideas. These ideas are intuitive and are taken without reflection to be immediately true. Although Wundt did not cite anyone else, Brentano’s theory of inner perception is perceptible here, a theory from which Freud had earlier distanced himself.

With respect to the taboo, we can establish that Wundt thought that the ambivalent character of the taboo was not primal but derivative. Taboos are a reaction to the belief in demons which in turn can be traced back to conscious, intuitive thoughts and ideas about the soul.

In determining his position and that of psychoanalysis, Freud made his differences with Wundt immediately clear. Psychoanalysis is about investigating unconscious influences on mental life and the meaning of this for the concept of taboo. This possibility is opened up via knowledge about obsessional neurosis, because the obsessional neurotic has created taboos for himself which he maintains as steadfastly as the most primitive savage. For Freud this was the basis for an analogy between taboo and obsessional neurosis. He subsequently mentioned four similarities. The first is that both taboos as well as obsessional prohibitions are unmotivated and enigmatic in origin. They are maintained with a strict consciousness, with a certainty that violation would bring great calamity. The second similarity is the fear of contact. In both taboos and obsessional neuroses contact with that which is forbidden is avoided at any cost. The third

85 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.22.
87 Idem, p.123. We are dealing here with the idea that the soul cannot exist without a body; the link between the soul and breathing; the idea that a “shadow soul” can come to life in dreams.
88 Idem, pp.365ff.
90 Idem.
91 Idem, p.27.
similarity lies in displacement: others, people or things, can become the bearer of that which is forbidden.\textsuperscript{92} Finally, there is a similarity as concerns penance and purification: it is possible to make amends for violations.\textsuperscript{93} He proceeded from these four fundamental similarities. The idea was simple: if I can now clarify the mechanism of obsessional neuroses, by analogy I will achieve insight into taboos.

What follows is a short exposition on obsessional neurosis, closely following what we have already seen and culminating in the Rat Man case. Obsessional neuroses begin with desire which is aggressively directed towards an object. This desire is forbidden by a prohibition “from outside”: father forbids biting girls. This prohibition comes from outside, but is internalized by the Rat Man. This is possible because it can continue to build upon inner forces. It can link up with an extant foundation by which Freud meant relations with loved ones. The Rat Man accepted his father’s prohibition because he loves him. Yet the prohibition cannot neutralize the desire, it can only repress it. This is how the unremitting conflict between drive and interdiction arises. It is from here that the principle character of obsessional neurosis stems: the ambivalence of feelings toward the loved, forbidding person.

Returning to the taboo, Freud maintained that naturally there are differences between the savage and the neurotic, but extending the analogy is nevertheless worthwhile.\textsuperscript{94} Just as with the obsessional neurotic, the prohibition exists in order to keep a desire repressed and one can also presume that behind the taboo lies an unconscious motive. They concern activities towards which there was a strong unconscious desire.\textsuperscript{95} The second important point is that the external prohibition from an authority figure is internalized and subsequently carried over as a taboo from generation to generation. The oldest and most important taboos are the two constitutional principles of totemism: the totem animal may not be killed and the avoidance of incest.

In contrast to Wundt, Freud used the analogy of obsessional neurosis and taboo to try to show that the motives behind the taboo are not conscious ideas but unconscious, desirous tendencies. The source of the taboo cannot be found in fear of demons – and not only because demons do not exist. Within obsessional neuroses anxiety is also a symptom of the defence against a repressed desire. We have seen that when made conscious an unconscious sense of guilt can develop into anxiety. Thus anxiety relates to something repressed. In contrast to Wundt’s unambiguity and clarity of fantasy and ideas, Freud proposed emotional ambivalence. For Wundt ambivalence was derivative, a later historical development. For Freud it was fundamental and in fact formed the basis of every cultural development.

\textsuperscript{92} Idem.
\textsuperscript{93} Idem, p.28.
\textsuperscript{94} Idem, p.31.
\textsuperscript{95} Idem.
Now, Freud’s theory is difficult to prove with the strongest taboos because it is there that the unconscious motives are the most powerfully repressed. He opted for a different approach in order to reveal this ambivalence: the analysis of a trio of taboos which are less central and in which ambivalences should be visible sooner. For his examples Freud turned to Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, relying principally on the second part on taboo (*Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*) which appeared in 1911.

Frazer saw taboo as part of magic. Within magic he differentiated between positive and negative magic. Positive magic is sorcery and employs the following formula: “don’t do this, for otherwise something will happen”. The relation of magic to the desired effect is not real but imaginary. It has to do with the avoidance of a presumed danger. That danger has a double meaning. When the taboo is linked with the sanctity of a person or object, then it is about the avoidance of danger for that which is considered sacred. It may not be endangered, and must be protected. When the taboo is linked with impurity, then the taboo serves to protect others against that impurity. For that matter, savages do not differentiate between sacred and impure: “The conceptions of holiness and pollution are not yet differentiated in his mind. To him the common feature of all these persons [to whom the taboo applies, H.W.] is that they are dangerous and in danger, and the danger (…) is (…) imaginary.”

These ideas about danger, danger to the entire group, obviously fit well with *Totemism and Exogamy*. We have just seen that in this regard Freud himself added guilt as a motive, and here, too, with another appeal to Frazer, Freud will address the sense of guilt.

The first two examples Freud cites are the taboos regarding the treatment of enemies and the taboos regarding the ruler (king). With regard to the first group, it can be noted that after the death of enemies extensive atonement rituals take place. The most obvious explanation for this is provided by Frazer (and Wundt): the living fear the revenge of the spirits of the dead. Freud’s point is simple: in addition to hostile feelings for one’s enemy, there are also other feelings – feelings of grief – and there is respect for the dead as well as a “bad conscience”. For Freud, the one does not follow on from the other, rather the two attitudes exist side by side.

Freud’s second example links directly to Frazer’s danger theory: the attitude of the people with respect to their ruler is ambivalent. The ruler must be protected and they must protect themselves against him. Both attitudes are surrounded by taboo prescriptions: the ruler may not be touched, and, it is better to keep him at a distance. Yet the ruler is also the protector of the people and for this reason must be

96 Idem, p.36.
98 Idem, pp.294-295.
99 Idem, p.279.
protected against danger. What struck Freud in Frazer’s collected material was the fearful care and concern surrounding taboo prescriptions. He pointed out that in obsessional neurosis fearful concern is also clearly visible in the conscientiousness with which obsessional acts are performed. That fear appears everywhere where apparent tenderness goes hand in hand with unconscious hostility. In other words, fear is the symptom of ambivalent feelings. This is evident precisely in relations with loved ones, with those we “idolize”.\textsuperscript{101} Another similarity between how we deal with a ruler and neurosis is paranoia. The significance of a person can increase enormously for the paranoid if they are considered omnipotent. The origin of this relationship lies in child-father relations: in the eyes of a small child the father is enormously powerful, but he is simultaneously distrusted by virtue of that fact.\textsuperscript{102} Freud saw the same ambivalence in the savage’s approach to his ruler and suspected the same origin.

Yet the most important similarity between the taboo and neurotic symptoms is the taboo ceremony itself, that is to say, guarding the ruler against danger and guarding oneself from the ruler. The examples Freud borrowed from Frazer indicate that a king is not only elevated, but is also in fact subordinated with the strictest curtailments.\textsuperscript{103} Freud mentioned a number of cultures in which people can be forced into kingship as the brutal severity of the taboos ensures that nobody wants to be king. He recognized in this the compromise character of the obsessional act. The act appears to be designed to keep the repressed urge down, but in the brutal severity of the repression that which has been prohibited is actually repeated. Thus the king has the power to take revenge, but the taboo prescriptions specify that the people may also take revenge on the king.

Freud repeated here the theme he raised in \textit{Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices}. Ceremonial and neurotic compulsion both stem from a sense of guilt. That sense of guilt has its origin in the repression of a drive. Self-reproach arises when an external prohibition is internalized. Freud then also pointed out the compromise character of the obsessional act and the religious ceremony: both always permit the desire which must be avoided to be expressed. In so doing he also made an important difference clear. The obsessional neurosis is about the repression of aggressive sexual urges and the religious ceremony is about the repression of (chiefly) anti-social urges. In \textit{Totem and Taboo} this difference plays no significant role. After all, Freud showed in particular in the Rat Man case that hostility is repressed. The emphasis on hostility makes the differentiation between aggressive sexual and anti-social urges no longer relevant. That also has consequences for revenge, for in \textit{Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices} revenge is linked to anti-social urges and (thus) to religion. Revenge, which here belongs to the religious domain, in \textit{Totem and Taboo} now also found its way to

\textsuperscript{101} Idem, p.49.
\textsuperscript{102} Idem, p.50.
\textsuperscript{103} Idem.
the obsessional neurosis. The underlying hostility becomes a central point of similarity between taboo and obsessional act. What Freud meant, however, was that the elaboration of the theme of hostility goes too far, but suggested in passing a similarity between a child’s hostility toward his father and Frazer’s suggestion that the earliest kings were strangers who were seen as representatives of the gods and were sacrificed after a short time; given back, as it were, to the gods.104

The third example of taboo prescriptions borrowed from Frazer is the most striking and extensive: the taboo surrounding the dead.105 For his discussion of the taboos around enemies and kings he appealed more or less to the chapters of The Golden Bough which bear those titles. Frazer charted the taboos regarding these people, but did not do so for the taboos surrounding death. Freud intended doing just that and to that end suggested that the dead were a category just like other people. Frazer, however, did not speak about the dead in his sections on the taboos surrounding people. Freud borrowed his material from Frazer’s discussion of taboos surrounding mourning and those around the names of the dead.106 These last taboos are part of Frazer’s chapter on taboos with regard to words. In this third example Freud’s alternative to Wundt’s fear of demons also emerges, and crucial for that alternative is the introduction of the effect of the sense of guilt and projection. The dead, Freud wrote, are powerful rulers and are often seen as enemies. The treatment of the dead is surrounded by a number of taboos and specifically concerning those who have had contact with the dead or are mourning. The impurity of the dead was contagious, as it were.107 The taboo of the dead also includes a number of examples of the prohibition against speaking the name of the dead. Freud specifically highlighted the profound link between name and person. According to him, the taboo forbidding naming the name can be traced back to the taboo prohibiting touching the dead. Central to the taboo surrounding the dead is thus the problem of touch.

Freud had to find an explanation for these ideas. The most obvious was the natural (instinctual) aversion to corpses.108 Yet this aversion cannot explain all the taboos. Aversion to the physical changes death causes does not logically result in the prohibition of naming names. Another explanation is the screening and protection from mourning, but mourning cannot explain why death is unclean. Those in mourning are often very busy with searching for memories of the dead, not in avoiding them. In particular, the prohibition against speaking the name of the dead is indicative of the fact that primitives are “afraid of the presence or of the return of the dead person’s ghost”.109 Speaking the name of the dead calls

104 In contrast to Frazer, who emphasized the power and danger of kings, Freud emphasized the hostility of the people towards the king.
105 Idem, pp.51-63.
107 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.51.
108 Idem, p.57.
109 Idem.
them back to life. Wundt’s conclusion is thus impossible to ignore: the essence of the taboo is fear of the soul turned demon. That the dead return as enemies of the living is emphasized by Freud. He also makes use here of Eduard Westermarck’s 1907 Ursprung und Entwicklung der Moralbegriffe [The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas] and Robert Kleinpaul’s The Living and the Dead in Folk Belief, Religion and Legend.

Obviously Freud had referred with irony to Wundt’s proposition that demons did not really exist, thus the question now is where the idea that the dead return as killers comes from. Westermarck believed that this question was easy to answer: the dead never die naturally, but by accident or sorcery. They are unhappy with their fate and return in order to take revenge, or they long to be reunited with their loved ones and try to bring them over. Thus Westermarck appeals to ideas having to do with magic or experiences of a violent death. He believed another explanation for the hostility of the dead lay in an instinctive fear of death and thus of the dead. This appears to be his favoured explanation. The dead’s hostility towards the living is a consequence of the living’s fear of them.

In order to form his own answers, including Westermarck’s options, Freud returned to his practice. It is with some frequency that a wife (after the death of her husband) or a daughter (after the death of her mother) obsessively reproaches herself believing that she was somehow implicated in the death of the loved one by virtue of carelessness or negligence. This self-reproach is more powerful than the consolatory thought that they had done the absolute best they could. Psychoanalytic research had revealed “that in a certain sense these obsessive self-reproaches are justified”. Naturally not because there really was any guilt, but there was “something in her – a wish that was unconscious to herself – which would not have been dissatisfied by the occurrence of death”. Reproach is the result of this unconscious desire after the death of a loved one. Behind love for a person there is always a certain veiled hostility. It is “the prototype of ambivalence”. This is the crux of the position contra Wundt, for the fear of demons is an effect of ambivalence which is so strong among obsessional neurotics and which Freud encountered via his analysis of self-reproach. Fear of the dead is now “a reaction against the hostility latent in their unconscious”. How are we to imagine this? After all, ambivalence does not lead to neurotic self-reproach, but fear of the dead. According to Freud, there is a more primitive mechanism at work, namely projection. The hostility is defended against by displacing it to another person. The living deny their own hostile feelings which are now attributed to the dead.

110 Idem, p.59.
111 Idem; E. Westermarck, Ursprung und Entwicklung der Moralbegriffe, Volume 2, Klinkhardt, Leipzig, 1913, pp.426-427.
112 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.60.
113 Idem, p.61.
114 Idem.
4.6 Projection

There is much to say about the term projection. From the moment that the term projection appeared it stood in relation to self-reproach. In draft H, which he sent to Fliess in 1894, Freud saw projection as the primary defence mechanism active in paranoia.\footnote{S. Freud, Draft H, p.209.} His initial theory about paranoia is in fact a derivative of his earlier ideas on hysteria and obsessional neuroses. The case he discusses is about a woman who had repressed a painful, but exciting memory. “What she was sparing herself was the reproach of being a “bad woman”.\footnote{S. Freud, Draft H, p.208.} Desire had released a self-reproach which was now repressed: her self-judgement was now externalized: “people were saying what otherwise she would have said to herself. In that way the judgement, the reproach, was kept away from her ego”.\footnote{Idem, p.209.} Self-reproach was exchanged for a persecution delusion.

We should recall that Freud first used the term projection in his translation of Charcot’s Lectures where he used it in his description of automatism during which unconscious psychic processes can form physical symptoms (see 1.2). Projection is thus a hysteric mechanism, but simultaneously also a normal one. We are generally aware that our internal state is visible in our body movements and facial expressions. That which is experienced internally is externally perceptible. Freud saw this internal to external mechanism as normal projection. In paranoia this mechanism is misused for defence. In draft K, dated 1896, this idea of projection is repeated: there is a “refusal of the belief in the self-reproach” and in instead a belief in the reproaches of another emerges.\footnote{S. Freud, Draft K, p.227.}

For a time Freud was silent on the subject of projection, but in the Dora case the concept reappears in connection with self-reproach. He noted that reproach of another raised the suspicion that hidden behind it lay self-reproach of equal tenor. As an example he cited the experience of accusing a child of being a liar and the child defending itself with the words, “You’re another!” That is also the mechanism in paranoia: it is about the “projection of a reproach on to another without any alteration in its content”.\footnote{S. Freud, Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria, p.35.}

In 1911-1912 Freud worked further on his ideas of projection in his 1911 Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia and in Totem and Taboo. The point of departure in the first case was the ambivalent homosexual feelings of the paranoid Schreber. The core of his inner conflict was the desire which can be formulated as: “I (a man) love him”.\footnote{S. Freud, Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia, SE XII, p.63.} To counter this
desire a counter-desire arises: “I do not love him – I hate him”. In the paranoid this conflict is processed by the mechanism of projection: “I do not love him – I hate him – because he hates me”. Here projection is no longer a mechanism of defence. The actual defence consists of the withdrawal of the libido from the object (I do not love him – I hate him). Projection is merely responsible for the symptom of the paranoia, namely the delusion of persecution (because he hates me).  

Freud even went a step further: projection is not the actual defence but an attempt at restoration where an inner conflict is insoluble. In other words, the mechanism of projection is not a defence here but rather its opposite: a return to the conflict. In the Schreber case Freud did not mention self-reproach or a sense of guilt. Although one might say that Schreber, too, defended himself against self-reproach (that he loved a man while knowing he should not permit himself to do so), here the direct link to projection is broken. Projection is here no longer a defence (against self-reproach) but a mechanism of symptom formation (delusion).

This does not mean that in this period Freud broke the link between reproach and projection. It is not only in paranoia that we find this mechanism. The Rat Man case is also evidence of its use. We have already seen that the Rat Man had a strongly developed sense of guilt. That sense of guilt was prominent in his case every time he experienced lust. When he felt the desire to see a girl naked he immediately got the uncomfortable thought that his father must die. We have already seen how this thought was linked to self-reproach, yet it is also linked with projection, i.e. the idea that something bad would happen to his father is derived from the idea that his parents knew his thoughts and desires. That too is projection: an internal idea displaced to others (they know what I know). This mechanism worked for the Rat Man to support his sense of guilt. His sense of guilt was not the only brake on his lustful desires. The thought that his parents were, as it were, always looking over his shoulder reinforced this and softened the severity of his self-reproach. That others can also be blamed is a defensive projection of self-reproach.

The mechanism of projection is a displacement from “internal” to “external”. In animism it is a primitive mechanism constituting a philosophy of life (Weltanschauung) before the development of abstract language made possible another relation with the external world. That is the meaning of projection in Totem and Taboo, a meaning which in fact flows from Freud’s theories up to that point on what the constant factor is among the various illnesses. This displacement

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121 Idem.
122 Idem, pp.70-71.
123 As in Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning perception is thus not the key concept in man’s relation with reality. In paranoia the delusion is a symptom, an attempt to restore the relation with reality after the breakdown of the actual structuring processes, the libinal relation with reality. J.-M. Quinodoz, Reading Freud, p.105.
124 On projection in the Rat Man case see J. Jeremias, Die Theorie der Projektion, pp.54-57.
125 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.64.
from internal to external is in reality not a displacement: projection takes place completely within the person’s own mind. He imagines that something outside himself is taking place which had previously been only an internal experience. This is not to say that reality is a projection of internal ideas. We are not dealing here with the creation of reality but with the development of a primitive (pre-religious) systematic world view. The links between phenomena, experience and ideas are laid via projections. In other words, this system of thought arises from an interaction between external phenomena which really occur and internal experiences and thoughts which create the links between them. The term projection thus refers to the laying of meaningful links between the internal and external world, before abstract language is developed.

It is important to see that in *Totem and Taboo* Freud introduced the mechanism of projection within the model of the obsessional neurosis and the old models of paranoia. Projection is thus a defence against the hostile feelings accompanying the affectionate feelings towards a dead person, and the construction of a world view. The primitive mechanism of projection can now also be perceived among the most primitive of peoples. Defence against self-reproach (and the impossibility of its conscious processing) results in self-imposed limitations which serve to protect against the so-called external danger. This is Freud’s answer to Wundt: behind the fear of demons hide ambivalent feelings and associated self-reproach that is defended against via projection.

He was much more careful and laborious with his use of the term projection in *Totem and Taboo* than some of his followers in the *Writings in Applied Psychoanalysis*. Thus Abraham in *Dream and Myth* saw myths as a projection of a people’s desire for greatness, and Rank, too, defended this idea. When Pfister wrote about projection he used it as a synonym for sublimation: projection as sublimation of the primary erotic on a religious love-object. Rank used the term in his studies of Wagner as a mechanism of identification. Storfer followed Abraham and Rank regarding the projection of repressed wishes, specifically incestuous and patricidal desires. In short, a lack of clarity on all sides, but the term is repeatedly used with a certain decisiveness and always in reference to Freud. The crowning touch came with Jung’s contribution to this diversity of opinions, for his use of the term was particularly problematic for Freud. Although Jung too referred to Freud, the idea that religion could process erotic desire in the way that Jung envisaged it was unacceptable.

As indicated earlier, Freud was very careful, used various meanings of the term projection, employed it himself as a catch-all term whereby it appears that the mechanism of projection was introduced when other explanations fell short. In addition, he wrote in the Schreber case that the term required thorough analysis, although he did not then do this. As a primitive mechanism it cannot actually clarify and certainly cannot explain anything. He also played down the meaning

of the projection mechanism by pointing out that cultural development has led to less strong and clear feelings of ambivalence than exist among the primitives: only obsessional neurotics with their powerful obsessional reproaches continue to be plagued by the old ambivalences. Freud abandoned the projection mechanism as a mechanism of “internal to external”\textsuperscript{127} in order to focus on what appeared to be more fruitful: the formation of the conscience, in a certain sense as the reverse of projection – the forming of “external to internal”.

### 4.7 Conscience

An elaborate treatment of projection thus remained unwritten. The question was then raised as to the nature and origin of conscience. Freud understood the term to mean the “internal perception of the rejection of a particular wish operating within us”.\textsuperscript{128} This perception is by definition related to the sense of guilt that was now defined as “the perception of the internal condemnation of an act by which we have carried out a particular wish”.\textsuperscript{129} We have also seen earlier the affinity between conscience and the sense of guilt, when it was said of Hamlet: “his conscience is his unconscious sense of guilt”. The taboo is now a prohibition of conscience whose violation triggers a strong feeling of guilt.\textsuperscript{130}

This is the first time Freud paused to consider conscience. Yet it is not so strange that he addressed the theme here. Obsessional neurosis, which served as a model to understand the taboo, was after all characterized by conscientiousness as a reaction formation against an unconscious, lurking temptation. In addition, the sense of guilt can be defined in terms of anxiety: that for which someone reproaches themselves is also something they fear.\textsuperscript{131} Nevertheless, Freud addressing conscience here is special. In his earlier theories regarding obsessional neuroses he believed that desire dissolved self-reproach, a self-reproach that was repressed but whose character remained preserved in the primary counter-symptom of conscientiousness. It appeared that conscience was established via an internal dynamic, even if it occurred within a specific cultural morality. Yet he learned from the Rat Man (\textit{inter alia}) that the first prohibition of sexual desire was external: it was the Rat Man’s father who forbade him to bite the maid. Although identification and authority are not explicitly discussed in \textit{Totem and Taboo}, his attention to conscience as the prime counter-symptom addressed a theme which

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\textsuperscript{127} L’usage freudien de terme de projection est, on le voit, nettement orienté. Il s’agit toujours de rejeter au-dehors ce qu’on refuse de reconnaître en soi-même ou d’être soi-même. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, \textit{Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse}, p.349.


\textsuperscript{129} S. Freud, \textit{Totem and Taboo}, p.68.

\textsuperscript{130} Idem.

\textsuperscript{131} Idem, p.69.
is derived from internal dynamics. He cleared the way for the primal father as a great nuisance.

The first great similarity between taboo and conscience is their primal nature. A taboo is a prohibition that sees itself legitimated by itself. In his quest for the causes of taboos, Freud eventually returned to the nature of the taboo itself. The motive behind the creation of the taboo must be sought in ambivalent feelings and that is also exactly what taboos at first sight display: taboos have a double meaning of sacred and impure. In contrast to Wundt, who found the motive for the taboo in the fear of demons, Freud found the term’s duality essential and primal. Taboo is a primal word, a primal prohibition which is “true” in itself. Conscience shares this quality with taboos: conscience appears to need no motivation. It is similar to the categorical imperative which also rejects all motivation and inexorably imposes itself as the truth.

There is another similarity between taboos and conscience: when one is violated it generates an enormous amount of sense of guilt. Just as taboos and conscience are grounded in themselves and cannot be criticized, so too is the feeling of guilt directly resulting from the violation of the taboo beyond criticism: the reproach is always just, even if in fact nothing happened. This idea of Freud’s fits well with earlier pronouncements regarding the sense of guilt: it cannot be criticized. Whether there is a factual or an imaginary basis does not matter: once it is there, it is there.

Freud freed the way for the primal father as the great nuisance. Taboos are “not a neurosis but a social institution”. There appears to be a difference between a neurotic and a primitive savage: the former acts in an altruistic way and the latter in an egotistical one. The neurotic is altruistic because the fear of punishment for violating the prohibition is not for himself, but for another (the death of a loved one). The primitive fears violating the taboo for himself. Only when the violator is not spontaneously subjected to revenge by the clan leader can a collective feeling of threat emerge which will then punish the violator. There is thus a difference between a neurotic and primitive man, but that difference is superficial: the obsessional neurotic’s mortal fear is primarily directed at himself and then shifts to loved ones. Altruism is a kind of compensation for an underlying egoism. How altruism precisely comes into being Freud does not indicate here.

Yet he did provide a certain explanation. He now proposed that social impulses stem from a contraction of egoistic and erotic components. This idea was promptly adapted to the study of taboos: obsessional neurosis can shed light on the origin of culture. The same impulses and mechanisms lie at the root of both. On

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132 Idem, p.68.
133 Idem, pp.68-69.
134 Idem, p.71.
135 Idem, p.72.
136 Idem, p.73.
account of the differences, he no longer spoke about an analogy between religion and obsessional neuroses but about the neurosis as a “caricature of a religion”, a clownesque and absurd enlargement of religious practices\textsuperscript{137} and simultaneously as the symptom of a bourgeois culture which demanded that one control and behave oneself. This last thought is indeed a consequence of the oldest intuitions regarding bourgeois society as impulse control and the harmful consequences of this (\textit{Carmen}).

Freud invested a great deal of time working out the analogies between obsessional neuroses and taboos. He linked three of the four most important similarities (unmotivated origin and strong conscience; fear of trouble and avoidance of contact with that which is forbidden; and the shift to others) with the sense of guilt, as we have seen in detail above. The fourth analogy, the possibility of penance and purification, were conspicuously not worked out. His attention thus remained with the analysis of the sense of guilt, not with its resolution.

4.8 Systems of thought

The third part of \textit{Totem and Taboo} deals with animism, magic and the omnipotence of ideas. The first sections on animism are an extension of the attention Freud paid to the belief in demons and spirits. Animism is after all “the doctrine of spiritual beings”.\textsuperscript{138} Freud once again reacted to Wundt\textsuperscript{139} with criticism which referred to his debate with Jung: “it is not to be supposed that men were inspired to create their first system of the universe by pure speculative curiosity”.\textsuperscript{140} What was he arguing against? Wundt’s view of animism is that it is a system of thought that creates universal coherence from a single point. With this one point Wundt meant an essential, hypothesized human consciousness in its natural condition. The system of thought unfolds along essential paths from a vital starting point, one that is particularly problematic because it is reflexive by nature. Freud did not dispute that there has been cultural development since the very beginning, but he did dispute that this is an essential development from a single unequivocal point. This was also the core of his critique of Jung and his concept of primal libido. For Wundt, animism was an initial intellectual interpretation of the phenomena in their context. These develop into religions and then into scientific explanations.

\textsuperscript{137} “It might be maintained that a case of hysteria is a caricature of a work of art, that an obsessional neurosis is a caricature of a religion and that a paranoid delusion is a caricature of a philosophical system.” Idem. As to the relation between paranoia and philosophy Freud not only refers to the paranoid projection and development of a philosophy of life, but later also refers to Schopenhauer who had argued, according to Freud, that “the problem of death” (which leads to paranoia and projection) “stands at the outset of every philosophy”. Idem, p.87.

\textsuperscript{138} Idem, p.75.


\textsuperscript{140} S. Freud, \textit{Totem and Taboo}, p.78.
In principle Freud did not disagree with this tripartite division: James Frazer, whom he often cited, also employed it. Above all, however, scientific explanations must be sought after: that is an adage to which he always remained true. The problem is in the necessary development of one into another. According to Freud, Wundt could not explain the connection between myth and animism.

In his rejoinder Freud was in search of the motives for the intellectual effort to get to grips with the world and jumped at the chance to analyse the phenomenon of magic. Magic is the technique of animism and characterizes itself by its subjugation of natural phenomena to human will. He directed his attention broadly to magical procedures designed to hurt an enemy, and once again made use of Frazer’s material. He spent some time on Frazer’s differentiation between imitative or homeopathic magic and contagious magic. The motive for these magic acts does not lie in an intellectual awareness, but “they are human wishes”. The will constitutes the motor impulse of the wish; its purpose is to satisfy wishes. At this point primitive magical acts are comparable to child’s play. Child’s play is the expression of desire and will.

That Freud here suddenly spoke about the will as a motor may strike some as astonishing. We are accustomed to him speaking about drives or desires. The introduction of the will here constitutes a retort to Jung’s equation of the primal libido with Schopenhauer’s Wille. Freud’s interest in Schopenhauer is not new. He had referred to him a few times earlier in The Interpretation of Dreams and Jung was not the first to indicate that there were certain similarities between psychoanalytic discoveries and Schopenhauer’s philosophy. In 1911-1912 Rank and the Berlin psychoanalyst Otto Juliusburger (inter alia) published articles in which they indicated a similarity between both men. Rank’s short article consisted principally of Schopenhauer citations on madness from his 1819 The World as Will and Representation which, according to Rank, demonstrated before

141 Idem, p.77.
142 Idem, p.78.
143 Idem.
144 Idem, pp.79ff.
145 Idem, p.83.
146 Idem, p.84.
Freud that repression existed and that that which had been repressed was based on madness. Indeed, Schopenhauer thought that madmen suffered from wishes which manifested themselves as counter-will (Widerstreben des Willens) against the conscious intellect.\textsuperscript{149} Via the writings of his followers on Schopenhauer, Freud could easily recognize the terminology of his earlier work. Schopenhauer meant – Rank failed to cite the final line of the chapter on madness – that madness chiefly breaks out when the will gains the advantage and acts as a blind, annihilating force of nature. Thus this will must be moderated, as it were, repressed. That is what Schopenhauer called \textit{Verneinung} (negation).

Schopenhauer’s ethics are also based on the relationship between will and intellect.\textsuperscript{150} His starting point is Hobbesian: man is essentially egoistic and in a lawless society it’s every man for himself. This egoism is held in check by compassion (or “sympathy”) which can arise when another person becomes the target of my will. Yet compassion for another is not the only egoistic motive behind the development of morality and keeping the will in check. In this connection Schopenhauer also spoke about guilt: egoism makes one guilty and in fact this is an egoistic motive not to be egoistic. He concurred with the ancient idea that a guiltless life is a life without suffering. Morality thus begins when a person recognizes their guilt. He linked repression (in Rank’s words) with a sense of guilt: conscious of his guilt, man wants to be absolved of it by checking his egoistic will. The major difference between Freud and Schopenhauer is that the latter’s checking of the sense of guilt was based on conscious consideration while with Freud it took place unconsciously.

We can safely assume that Freud’s views of morality implicitly matched Schopenhauer’s critique of the Kantian categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is a modern taboo behind which unconscious motives hide. Schopenhauer borrowed that imperative and reached his ethical positions, which Freud was now able to recognize: positions on egoism, sexuality and its repression.\textsuperscript{151} In the first of his two articles on Schopenhauer, Juliusburger mentioned not only repression as a common point with Freudian psychoanalysis, but also the meaning of sexuality. He cited Schopenhauer’s opinion that the human will is concentrated in the sexual drive.\textsuperscript{152} In the second article he added a few more points of commonality: sublimation, the father and mother complexes, the primacy of egoism. According to Juliusburger, sublimation lay in the extension of the \textit{Verneinung}/repression: when the “will to lust” can be repressed, room is

\textsuperscript{149} A. Schopenhauer, \textit{Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, Volume 2}, Diogenes, Zurich, 1977, chapter 32.
\textsuperscript{151} Compare S. Freud, \textit{An Autobiographical Study}, p.59. Here Freud lists the main points of agreement between Schopenhauer and psychoanalysis: the dominance of emotions, the importance of sexuality, and the mechanism of repression.
\textsuperscript{152} Juliusburger cites from the chapter \textit{Leben der Gattung} [The Life of the Species], Freud’s favourite chapter.
created for a conscience that is directed toward higher spiritual issues. He then once again referred to Schopenhauer’s ethics, whereas Rank failed to do so: the starting point is egoism, but in his ethics Schopenhauer presented, “one of the most beautiful paths to improvement, to the sublimation of egoism”. Juliusburger strongly emphasized that egoism is conquered when compassion is awakened, that is to say, when an individual recognizes himself in another. Juliusburger did not mention the element of guilt in this.

When Jung referred to Schopenhauer’s *Wille*, the emphasis was completely on the element of *Bejahung* (affirmation). Jung emphasized that the will was a free desire to live, a forward striving and expanding power which only in the end of life can become a backwards striving. This process is in fact a biological development of growth toward old age (and death). He introduced this conception of will in *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* at a crucial moment. When he proposed that there are few things in the world of people which cannot be reduced to the urge to reproduce, he referred to the customary distinction between preservation of the species and self-preservation. In Freud’s drive theory this was the essential differentiation between sexual and ego drives, a distinction he used (in *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*, for example) to show that obsessive neurosis and religion were analogous but not the same. Jung maintained that such a distinction cannot be found in nature. The sexual and ego drives can be summarized as life drives, as the “will to live”. For Jung, Schopenhauer’s *Wille* is thus the primal libido from which everything stems, the source of all collective and, by derivation, individual developments. Is it thus comprehensible that Jung traced his own ideas back to Schopenhauer? I cannot escape the conclusion that Jung read (even) more selectively than Freud: *The World as Will and Representation* does not present such a clear and overall positive conceptualization of the will.

For Freud the will was not the primal libido, but a “motor impulse” which is linked to a desire. We know, of course, which desires he meant: the ambivalent desires of hate and love. Magic acts are techniques to satisfy wishes in a hallucinatory way. He now proposed that these acts were overvaluations of man’s possibilities. The thought and fantasy worlds eclipse reality here. Primitive man thought he could influence reality with his thoughts. Freud eventually concluded that magic was ruled by the “omnipotence of thought”. The term is borrowed from the Rat Man

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154 Jung explicitly referred to chapter 45 of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* on the affirmation of the will.
156 Idem, p.130.
159 Idem, pp.85ff.
case where the patient used it to characterize his own obsessive thoughts, thereby indicating that his thoughts were stronger than his sense of reality. As we already know, the Rat Man’s obsessive thoughts were almost always linked to his sense of guilt: his repressed hate was expressed in obsessive thoughts which permitted his hate to be vented and about which he felt guilty. Indeed, Freud also referred here to neurotics’ sense of guilt in general. “To attribute the neurotic sense of guilt to real misdeeds would show an equal misunderstanding.” Instead, it is based upon “intense and frequent death wishes”. The wish is more powerful than reality (or lack thereof). This is how the neurotic is related to primitive man.

Drawing on Frazer, Freud had already proposed that magic was directed toward enemies, either for protection or as a weapon. In as much as magic is a defence against the expectation of disaster or doom, it corresponds to obsessive neurosis. This certainly included the expectation of death, a conclusion he based on the Rat Man’s repressed death wishes. Thus the omnipotence of thoughts to counter the death wishes that are clearly recognizable in a primitive society can also be recognized in obsessive neurosis.

Freud then moved on to an attempt to place the omnipotence of thought in the theoretical framework he had laid out in *Three Essays*. A primal stage of autoerotism is followed by object choice. Between these two stages he inserted a third stage: narcissism, a stage in which the love object is not yet outside the child, but is “his own ego, which has been constituted at about this same time”.

How and why does Freud introduce narcissism here? Overestimation of one’s own powers is the hallmark of the omnipotence of thought, which is the key. The omnipotence of thought is a matter of a kind of infatuation with one’s own thoughts. Animism is by nature narcissistic and precedes the religious stage of object-choice as well as the subsequent scientific stage of far-reaching adjustment to reality as source for realistic objects of desire. This narcissism immediately became Freud’s newest weapon in his battle against Wundt and Jung. Animism is not an intellectual interpretation of reality from a single point, a single principle. At the root of animism is that emotional conflict just as narcissism is preceded by a diffuse autoerotic stage. The omnipotence of thought and the influence it can exercise on reality via spirits has as its source a primal emotional conflict and these thoughts have the same source as the taboo prescriptions and the repression of hostile urges and desires. The conflict is not only the source of the creation of the world of spirits and demons, but also the source of the first moral restrictions.

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160 Idem, pp.86-87.
161 Idem, pp.88f.
162 Idem, p.89.
163 Idem, p.90.
164 Idem, p.93.
4.9 An ancient guilt

The fourth part of *Totem and Taboo* immediately starts to counter Jung and to a certain degree also other followers who had somewhat excessively adapted the Oedipus complex or projection to their own purposes: one cannot expect psychoanalysis “to trace the origin of anything so complicated as religion back to a single source”.165 Freud also went a step further: even a composite origin discovered by psychoanalysis cannot explain religion’s origins. Nonetheless, in the fourth part he investigated the fundamental contribution psychoanalysis could make to understanding the origin of religion. We must not forget that religion is still not distinct from morality. Put more strongly, the fourth part of *Totem and Taboo* principally addresses the question with which he had always engaged: the origin of morality. In a letter to Abraham he wrote that it was his intention that sense of guilt and conscience should be analytically clarified.166 Conscience and the sense of guilt had already been discussed, but are the focal point of attention here. He wrote to Jones that in the fourth part he wanted to formulate the historical source of repression and had in the meantime already reached the conclusion that any internal repression is the historic outcome of a hindrance.167 Morality, sense of guilt and repression are the basic themes whose interconnection Freud wanted to clarify.

Freud returned to totemism which he regarded as a social system, as the oldest form of religion and additionally as a form which had left traces in the customs and habits of modern society. Once again he introduced Frazer’s *Totemism and Exogamy*, as well as Wundt’s *Folk-Psychology*, this time in a positive light.168 There is a close connection between totemism as religion and as a social system: the clan leaders think they are descended from the totem (although their relationship to the totem is by nature religious and the clan is obviously a social construction). The totem is sacred, and usually represented as an animal; it may not be killed, hunted or eaten, and sometimes even touching or looking at it is also prohibited. The totem clan is an extremely tight group with an important characteristic: exogamy.169

Freud neatly summed up the questions which he found most important regarding totemism. What is the origin of totemic organization? What is the motivation for exogamy? And what is the link between the two? The first question is historical (directed toward the conditions for the development of totemism) and psychological (in as much as it concerns which human needs totemism expresses). The combination of these two questions is extremely problematic and Jung warned...

165 Idem, p.100.
166 S. Freud, K. Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue*, p.120.
169 Idem, pp.102ff.
Freud of this.® The historical question is, after all, one of fact, inquiring after real events which lie at the heart of totemism. Jung formulated the problem in a letter: it is of no importance whether the incest prohibition can be traced back to a fact or fantasy. Freud understood Jung’s reference: the seduction theory.® He wrote back that he was taking this warning very seriously. Nevertheless he had decided not to decouple the psychoanalytic question from the historical and would indeed fall back upon the seduction theory.® The reason for this is to provide an alternative to Jung.

According to Freud, the question of totemism’s origins can be answered in three ways. Nominalistic theories proceed from the idea that groups want to distinguish themselves with names.® Totemism thus originated from the need to differentiate oneself from others. Consanguinity and exogamy are then secondary developments derived from having the same name. Sociological theories proceed from the idea that totemism has its origin in a social instinct.® He referred to Émile Durkheim, inter alia, and particularly to Frazer and his idea that totemism is in essence a practical organization whereby each clan specializes, if you will, in a specific magical terrain. Such specialization is to everyone’s benefit. Freud assumed that such totemism with specializations is a later development. Given that he does not proceed from innate altruism but from egoism, this is not a strange position to take. The third group are the psychological theories.® Again he cited first Frazer and his theory that the totem is a kind of sanctuary in case of danger. Totemism then manifests itself out of a belief in the soul, an idea which Frazer later abandoned (rightly, Freud thought). Frazer then developed a second theory: the origin of totemism lay in the search for an explanation for conception. Freud considered this theory implausible. The belief that a man is involved in procreation is more obvious than the belief in impregnation of a virgin by a spirit.

Freud’s treatment of the theories of the origin of exogamy and their relationship to totemism is briefer. With regard to their mutual relations, Freud maintained that there are actually two streams: those (e.g., Frazer) who claimed that totemism and exogamy had essentially different origins and those (e.g., Durkheim) who

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170 S. Freud, C.G. Jung, The Freud/Jung Letters, 315J.
171 Idem, 316F. Freud does not mention the seduction theory, but refers to it as his “first big mistake”.
172 I agree with Gay when he writes: “Neurotics, as Freud himself pointed out in Totem and Taboo, fantasize about oedipal killings but never carry them out. If he had been willing to apply this clinical insight to his story of the primal crime as he employed other knowledge gleaned from the couch, he would have anticipated and disarmed the most devastating criticism to which Totem and Taboo would be exposed.” P. Gay, Freud, p.333. Indeed, the Oedipus complex and the ambivalence of feelings would have been sufficient to account for the sense of guilt. The critique of Freud’s reconstruction of real primal events subsequently distracted attention from the true core of Totem and Taboo: the idea that morality and religion should be understood in their conflicitous origin (drive dichotomy) and historic development in which sense of guilt plays a crucial role.
173 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, pp.110ff.
174 Idem, pp.113ff.
175 Idem, pp.116ff.
thought they did not. Freud opted for Frazer’s position: the incest prohibition which underlies exogamy does not explain totemism and conversely it is difficult to derive this prohibition from totemism. The prohibition should then originate from an instinctive abhorrence of sexual relations with those to whom they are related. This last position is adopted by Westermarck, mentioned above. The horror of incest is “an innate aversion to sexual intercourse between persons living very closely together from early youth”.

As a contrast to this position Freud cited Frazer: a prohibition is not necessary to reinforce an instinct but to curb the urges. Basically, Freud argued against Jung’s ideas on innate potencies here.

We have now in my view arrived at a crucial point in the fourth part of Freud’s paper. One would now expect Freud to supply clinical material in order to support his own position vis-à-vis the preceding psychological theories. Yet in his debate with Jung he now turned to a biological authority, Charles Darwin, whereby he simultaneously also introduced the question of historical origin into his argument.

Although the moment when he introduced Darwin is crucial, the fact that he introduced him is not that surprising. Darwin’s ideas were ubiquitous in Freud’s day. Two fundamental ideas are first and foremost characteristic of Darwinism. The first is the developmental idea that as such is not new, but is in its application to biology. In this evolutionary conception man is the product of biological development: the transformation of nerves, brains, etc. Second, man is the absolute high point of evolution and may nurture the hope that this development will not end: man can achieve an even higher destiny. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries these two fundamental Darwinian principles were taken as read. The question was not whether there was evolution, but its course. The question was not whether there is a higher stage of development, but what it will look like. Freud was falling back not only on a recognized authority, but additionally on someone he had trusted since his earliest scientific work. When he still worked in the laboratory he studied brains, nerves and the transformations of abnormalities. We have also seen how strong the biological explanatory models were for mental illnesses (Krafft-Ebing, Löwenfeld). And we have seen for

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176 Idem, pp.119ff.
177 Idem, p.122; E. Westermarck, Ursprung und Entwicklung der Moralbegriffe, Volume 2, p.299.
178 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.123.
179 Idem, p.125.
example his teacher Meynert’s pronounced Darwinism in *The Brain and Civilized Behaviour*.

I should like to add one additional fundamental Darwinistic principle: the search for the origin of phenomena, not only within biology, but for example also within the up and coming human sciences. The anthropological material Freud brought together in *Totem and Taboo* has the common characteristic that it searches for the origin of culture and morality and the discrimination of fundamental principles and secondary developments. The latter is also typically Darwinistic. Freud’s writings, whether case studies or applied psychoanalytic studies, were in each case quests for causes. Freud (in this time) is thus a “Darwinian”; Darwin was a self-evident authority whom he came to know via his earlier teachers.182

This should not blind us to the differences. One of the most important differences is the origin of morality. Darwin, too, was in search of the origin of morality and indeed (like Freud) based on a reference to Kant.183 He wondered where duty comes from, but his answer was that morality does not arise from selfishness and was also not based on the utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness. Based on his studies of animals and primitives Darwin proceeded from the following: “moral sense is fundamentally identical with the social instincts”.184 These social instincts are directed at the group. Social instincts are those which are visible among the animals and among people are called ethical. A most important social instinct is sympathy.185 Yet love, too, and even conscience were social instincts for Darwin (he cited the example of the conscientious dog). Of course morality among people is developed to a high form, a morality in combination with intellect and habit is based on the golden rule of the categorical imperative. Like Darwin, Freud posed the question of origin, but he made no mention of an innate or inherited altruism. Jung was much closer to Darwin’s ethics. Put even more strongly, while Jung never cited Darwin in *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido* among many other greats, his theory of the inheritance of archaic remnants and developments to a higher level was much closer to Darwin and other evolutionist theories than Freud.

It is in his debate with Jung that Freud explicitly introduced Darwin. Darwin was already discussed in their correspondence. Jung had read the first part of *Totem and Taboo* and had made some objections to Freud’s theory regarding the incest prohibition.186 Jung wrote that he had come to the conclusion that incest is

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182 In addition Stocking has argued that the anthropologists Freud drew upon in *Totem and Taboo* were “products of the post-Darwinian intellectual milieu” that “drew heavily on classic evolutionist thought”. He adds that in *Totem and Taboo* classic Darwinian evolutionism is left behind: the primitive and savage are no longer regarded as an early stage in human development, but are seen as irrational elements in the psychic life of civilized man. G.W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, The Free Press, New York, 1987, p.326.


184 Idem, pp.97-98.

185 Idem, pp.72ff, p.82.

essentially a “fantasy problem” and that parts of the incest prohibition had only become part of patriarchy where culture had already developed into the formation of families. Fathers need no strong prohibition to keep children in check. It was grown sons they needed to fear, but by that time sons no longer have incestuous desires toward their mothers. A tendency toward incest is probably more likely within a matriarchical culture but, given the promiscuity of such societies, fathers had no interest in an incest prohibition for their sons. Jung then stated that the purpose of the incest prohibition was not to prevent incest but to establish the family and, by extension, establish religion and the state. Yet, Jung wrote, the incest prohibition may well be foundational for the family for its content was “worthless” and functioned at the level of an empty atonement ceremony. As far as the incest prohibition can be regarded as “primal morality”, this is so only in this latter meaning: something is being forbidden which has never been meaningful but can indeed be made important in fantasy. Freud reacted by stating that a primal promiscuity was improbable (and that there must thus have been some form of a prohibition or command) and that he himself chose the “Darwinian” line.

What then is the Darwinian line? In Totem and Taboo Freud referred to The Descent of Man (1871), specifically chapter 20 of the second part in which Darwin wrote about the differences between men and women. In that chapter Darwin developed a hypothesis about the social bonds of the primal horde and inquired after the origin of marriage. Although at that time many assumed that primitive societies were characterized by promiscuity, by analogy with all kinds of ape species Darwin hypothesized that “promiscuous intercourse in a state of nature is extremely improbable”. What then is the analogy between ape and man at this point? It is the male’s jealousy of his rivals. The primal horde was probably actually a small group, lead by a jealous man who protected the group against other men. Within the group competition arose between the younger men and the leader of the group: the strongest wins and the others are banished. This hypothesis is supported by Darwin’s observation that in the most primitive cultures one finds polygamy or monogamy, but never promiscuity. Freud now drew upon this hypothesis: the primal horde and its jealous leader provided Freud with an argument against Jung’s idea that the incest prohibition was secondary.

This hypothesis of Darwin’s also formed James Atkinson’s point of departure in his 1903 book Primal Law. Using this hypothesis, Atkinson tried to derive a theory regarding the earliest developments in social forms and the origin of the first prohibition and commands. Freud introduced him in order to connect

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187 Idem, 313f.
188 Idem.
189 Idem, 314f.
191 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.125.
the Darwinian primal horde and the origin of exogamy.\textsuperscript{192} In the primal horde the sexually jealous leader makes marriage between the sons and the women impossible, not as a law, but in practice. Exogamy arose as “habit (not as an expressed law)”.\textsuperscript{193} The jealousy and competition led to the expulsion of the sons who went and established their own horde. The custom of exogamy was then continued in the new horde. Exogamy as a custom was thus also fundamental for the development of totemism and totem clans. But how did these sons find their women? How were new hordes created? Atkinson proposed the idea that once strong enough the son horde would attack the primal horde, kill the leader and steal the women. The son horde would subsequently fall apart on account of the same sexual jealousy which was characteristic from the beginning.\textsuperscript{194} In this theory there is no reason why history could not be repeated forever. Atkinson also created a more prominent role for women. Because childhood is longer, sons fall increasingly under the influence of motherly love and the spiral of jealousy and murder can be broken. How? The mother’s devotion meant that the men were able to differentiate between the women and attach themselves to a single woman or a pair of women. This development meant that it was possible for many men to live in a single horde. Yet the old habit, exogamy, remained and became law: jealousy remained a strong instinct. This is where Freud found the idea of the son-horde that kills the father. He dismissed the idea that morality arose from motherly love.\textsuperscript{195}

The question that remained for Freud is that of the relationship between totemism and exogamy (the incest prohibition). The various anthropological visions evidently did not deliver a decisive argument for one or the other and thus Freud now turned to his own clinical experiences and those of his follower Sandor Ferenczi. Two studies of children were presented: Little Hans and Little Arpad.\textsuperscript{196} Freud’s starting point was once again the analogy (this time) between children and primitive man.\textsuperscript{197} Like savages, children’s uninhibited nature places them close to the animal world, but a harmonic relationship can be disturbed and then a fear of animals develops, as with Little Hans, usually after a period of intense interest in the relevant animal. Analysis showed that the fear of an animal can be traced back to fear of the father. Freud described the core of his analysis of Little Hans. The young boy competed with his father for his mother’s favour, and found himself in

\textsuperscript{192} Idem, p.126.
\textsuperscript{194} Idem, pp.220-221.
\textsuperscript{195} S. Freud, \textit{Totem and Taboo}, pp.142-143.
\textsuperscript{197} Rieff has correctly argued that Freud’s use of analogy between the primitive and the child was not solely an effect of psychoanalytic thought, but in fact a customary trait in anthropological studies that construed the primitive society as the childhood of civilization. Ph. Rieff, \textit{The Mind of the Moralist}, pp.208-209.
a “typical” relationship with his parents, a relationship “which we have given the name of the “Oedipus complex”“; the “nuclear complex of the neuroses”.

This is the first time that he so clearly makes the Oedipus complex central, although he subsequently immediately focused on the father and the ambivalent feelings with regard to him alone.

The two case studies reveal important similarities with totemism. The special relationship Little Hans had with horses and Little Arpad with chickens are evidence of ambivalent feelings with regard to these animals. Both boys identified either by behaviour or in words with the animals. Both analyses demonstrated that the relationship with the animals could be traced back to that with the father. Totemism reveals the same pattern: the totem animal is the tribal father. In the two cases and in totemism everything revolves around the father in the role of the opponent with respect to the child’s sexual interests.

Primitive people call their totem their primal father and that, coupled with the analogy between child and primitive, was reason enough for Freud to define totemism based on the relationship with the father. The two principle commands of totemism, the totem cannot be killed and sexual relations with the totem’s women is prohibited, are now consistent with a child’s two Oedipal desires.

How did Freud want to make this hypothesis convincing? He went in search of Oedipal residues in totemism. To that end he introduced Lectures on the Religion of the Semites (1889) by William Robertson Smith into the debate. Freud knew this was a gamble, for he refers to a weak point in Robertson Smith’s theory (what it claims about totemism is not confirmed by extant totemic material) and tried to defend him against criticism.

In the foreword to the first edition of his book, Robertson Smith made clear that he was continuing with the material assembled by Frazer and also made grateful use of other historical-critical studies. Robertson Smith sought to study the great Semitic religions in their entirety on the basis of commonalities. These religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) were the positive religions, that is to say, they were all established by religious innovators (Moses, Jesus and Mohammed). Behind these, he maintained, lay the “old unconscious religious tradition”, the entirety of customs and belief that cannot be traced back to an individual authority or founder. Religious traditions develop; in order to understand them one must study their development. It is thus interesting to examine the historical origin of

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198 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.129.
199 Idem, p.131.
200 Idem, p.132.
202 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, pp.132-133, pp.139-140 (footnote).
204 Idem, p.1.
positive religions: upon what material does a founder build? Robertson Smith took it as a general opinion that religions arise from proclamations of faith (creeds) and dogmas on one hand, and religious practices and traditions on the other. Ancient religions demonstrate that practices and customs precede the proclamations of faith and dogmas. Between the two lie the myths which in fact form the transition between ritual and dogma. As regards the Semitic religions, Robertson Smith dealt with rituals and customs as well as specifically with the practice of sacrifice, which appears as self-evident in the Old Testament, but is never explained. Sacrifices simply happen. Another issue for him is that religious practices and traditions are part of the group’s social order. For the members of the group, maintaining religious practices is described in terms of duty and obedience. What does the group now consist of? According to Robertson Smith, they consist of a group of (blood) relatives and fellow townspeople and the gods. Thus a person was always included in a well-defined relationship with neighbours and gods. The relationship between the gods and the group can be described in terms of paternity. That paternity has two important aspects. The physical aspect signifies consanguinity. The moral aspect signifies that the father-child relationship is one of protection and obedience. He thus traced religion back to a moral principle: obedience to the father’s authority.

Robertson Smith now links the idea of this mutual relationship between the gods and the group with the practice of sacrifice: in its oldest form, animal sacrifice is a social institution between the gods and men and it is an extension of the communal feast. This sacrificed animal was originally also part of the group. (Robertson Smith agreed here with Frazer’s ideas on totemism.) The sacrificial animal may be killed and eaten if the entire group agrees and actively participates. The purpose of the sacrifice of an animal that belongs to the group is nothing less than the constitution of the group: the animal confirms the blood bond between the members.

When Freud recapitulated Robertson Smith’s ideas a number of issues became conspicuous. Robertson Smith opined that the primitives’ gods are mortal and

205 Idem, pp.17ff.
206 Idem, pp.213ff.
207 Idem, p.224, pp.253-257.
208 Idem, 255ff.
209 Idem, Lecture VIII. This blood kinship is strongly stressed by Freud. S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, pp.134-138.
210 One of the striking facts regarding Freud’s reading of Robertson Smith is that the latter focussed his attention on ancient Semitic religion, especially ancient Judaism. Although Freud’s fascination for his own religious background in general and the figure of Moses in particular has often been elaborated upon by scholars, it has hardly been noticed that Judaism is virtually absent in Totem and Taboo as if Freud was unable to situate Judaism in the general development from primitive religions to monotheistic religions. As we will see, in Moses and Monotheism this problem is resolved: Judaism was monotheistic from the very beginning and is thus an exception to the general rule of development. On this issue see H. Westerink, “De mythische held of de man Mozes? Over joodse mythologie”, in Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse 13, 2007/1, pp.3-15.
that the sacrificial animal originally belonged to the group as a blood relation, he thus stressed the kinship between men, gods and animals, and not the animal as representant of the god. Yet Freud brought this to the fore. After all, he wrote that “originally they [the sacred animals] were identical with the gods themselves.” Robertson Smith believed that within the most primitive groups of people gods and animals were both blood relatives and equal in meaning and value. Only in the second development, after animals were differentiated from people and gods, was the sacrificial animal raised to the value of gods and people; only then could the sacrificial animal be seen as representative of the gods and man. The second idea Freud emphasized is the sense of guilt within the sacrificing group. He wrote that the group collectively sacrificed in order to be able to avoid reproaching one another: they are all equally guilty. Yet we do not find this idea in Robertson Smith’s work: the sacrifice is communal because the entire community acts as a whole. He did indicate, however, that the group mourned and grieved after the sacrifice. Any “feelings of contrition” may play a role in this: reflection reveals that these feelings are not “expressions of sorrow for sin”, but in their oldest, essential form are part of mourning the death of a “kindred victim”. We can only speak of guilt when we are dealing with the murder of a member of the group, but there is no question of murder in sacrifice. When, however, Freud wrote about the sacrificial animal, he called it a murdered or slaughtered animal. These differences in emphasis are significant: Freud’s reading of Robertson Smith raised two typical themes: the father’s death and the sons’ sense of guilt. These had been familiar themes since The Interpretation of Dreams.

Freud read through psychoanalytic glasses: after all, psychoanalysis taught that the totem animal is the father substitute. This is why, according to Freud, it is forbidden to kill the animal. This is why the dead are mourned and why the sacrificial meal is simultaneously also a celebration. These are the reverberations with respect to the father.

212 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.136.
214 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.146.
216 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.135, p.152.
217 “Psychoanalysis has revealed that the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father.” Idem, p.141.
218 Idem, pp.140ff.
Now Freud could present a synthesis of Darwin, Atkinson and Robertson Smith, a “hypothesis which may seem fantastic”. This fantastic hypothesis stems from the question of how the transition from Darwinian primal horde to totem clan and its corresponding taboos must be conceptualized. The key is the totem meal, derived from Robertson Smith’s sacrificial meal. The sons who have been driven away join together one day, murder their father and eat him. The primal father was a feared example and by eating him they identify with him. They make a part of his strength their own. The totem meal is subsequently a “repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things – social organization, moral restrictions and of religion”.

How did Freud make this credible? It must be assumed that as regards the father the mob of brothers have the same ambivalent feelings as can be observed in children and neurotics: they hate and admire their father. His death meant satisfaction of that hate and eating him identification with him. What follows is remorse in the form of a sense of guilt. When we follow Freud’s logic, that the sense of guilt is also generated out of the positive part of ambivalent feelings, then the sense of guilt stems from love and admiration. These form the basis for identification. In other words, the sense of guilt stems from identification with the admired and hated father, specifically with the father’s violent, terrifying power. He repeatedly refers to psychoanalytic experience with neurotics in his argument, particularly obsessive neurotics. This reference is essential: in a later development identification and the sense of guilt lead to obedience to the father. The primal rebellion is transformed after the crime into obedience.

In order to achieve a good understanding of Freud’s psychoanalytic contribution to this fantastic hypothesis, we must briefly recapitulate our discussion of the Rat Man. As we have seen, obsessive neurosis is the psychoanalytic model that serves as the backdrop for Totem and Taboo. With the exception of the contributions concerning Little Hans and Little Arpad, it is the Rat Man case that constitutes the basis of the central thesis about the ambivalence of feelings and the taboo. The repeated treatment of the problem of a sense of guilt is part of psychoanalytic theory regarding obsessional neurosis. The sense of guilt is the very core of the

219 Idem, p.141. An overview of critique by anthropologists – after all, Freud had primarily made use of anthropological material – on this “hypothesis” can be found in E.R. Wallace, Freud and Anthropology, pp.113-169. One of the most important critics in this respect was Bronislaw Malinowski who severely criticized the universality of the Oedipus complex (whereas his field work among the Trobriand islanders also revealed remarkable confirmation of Freud’s ideas on myths, dreams and sexual obsessions) in the 1920s. His critique would long influence the difficult relationship between psychoanalysis and anthropology. Geza Roheim, one of the few “Freudian” anthropologists, would dedicate his work to prove Malinowski’s critique wrong. For an overview on Malinowski’s critique, his hidden agendas, and the misunderstandings concerning Malinowski’s Freud critique see Y. Kuiper, “Oedipus op de Trobriandeilanden. Vijf misverstanden over de verhouding tussen antropologie en psychoanalyse”, in Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse 13, 2007/1, pp.26-39.

220 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.142.

221 Idem, p.143.
hypothesis which describes the origin of totemism and taboos. Social organization, morality and religion stem from the sense of guilt, and the sense of guilt stems from a crime, but what was the origin of the sense of guilt again?

We have seen in the Rat Man case that the origin of his obsessional neurosis and his sense of guilt were not so easy to trace back to hate and love towards a person. Obsessional ideas were “transformed self-reproaches which have re-emerged from repression and which always relate to some sexual act that was performed with pleasure in childhood”. What did Freud mean by some sexual act? In the Rat Man case it was very concretely about biting the maid. The girl was seen as a sexual object and when his father intervened and biting was forbidden, the father was experienced as interfering and the Rat Man directed his hate against him. The analysis of the sense of guilt leads to a component of cruelty within the sexual drive. The trail thus led back to the drives, to love and hate which feed off and restrain each other. This dialectic is linked in earliest childhood to a person: love for the mother and hate of the father. Cruelty finds its object here. Freud wrote of a “pairing” and stated that these conflicts were not independent of one another. Yet the two emotional conflicts have simultaneously both intrinsically and genetically nothing in common: the sadistic urge is different from hate of the father; auto-erotic love is intrinsically different from love of the mother. Still more important in this regard is the genetic difference. The drives are representative of somatic stimulations. Love for the mother and hate of the father are not biologically anchored urges, but the effect of object choice and its failure. The essential point, since his surrendering of the seduction theory, is that it is not important whether the father was in fact interfering, but whether the child experienced the father as interfering. Freud discovered that we are not dealing here with fact, but with experience in fantasy.

The question we should like to ask Freud is why he suddenly wanted to trace back the sense of guilt to an actual crime. There is a moment when Jung correctly warned him of the seduction theory pitfall – as we have seen. Gay wrote of an “obstinacy” which had previously not been so visible. I hypothesize that tracing the sense of guilt back to a cruelty component of the drives could bring Freud dangerously close to Jung’s theories regarding the primal libido and archaic residues. Now, he indeed came close to these Jungian ideas when he opined that the sons act as a collective mind and that the sons’ sense of guilt leaves traces in history and must be repeatedly dealt with. In addition, he thought that psychical dispositions

222 S. Freud, Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis, p.221.
(especially the sense of guilt) were inheritable. What he absolutely wanted to avoid was that all kinds of psychic dispositions and mental developments stemmed from a single inherited or collective (drive) mechanism. He did propose the idea that ambivalence is a fundamental phenomenon. This ambivalence could thus be part of our heritance, but Freud would not tolerate this idea. It is also possible that the ambivalence was originally perceived as strange and only arises from the father-complex. Thus he opted for a primal crime in order to not give the ambivalent feelings the status of Jung’s primal libido. Freud then had to design a theory of how the sense of guilt worked though history after the primal crime and how every new generation had to produce prohibitions and curtailments.

Neurotics represent here an extreme, but when one inquires after the “why” of their “excessive morality” (Übermoral) no fact can be produced, no primal crime, only wishful fantasy. This wishful fantasy among neurotics is the source of their sense of guilt. Yet Freud chose the primal crime and not the primal fantasy. For this reason he now even adapted his theory of the neuroses: an excessive morality is not based on the repression of feelings and ideas alone, but always upon some piece of reality as well. The Rat Man bit the maid. Thus, “in the beginning was the Deed” and this is so for every generation, every individual anew.

The drive contains a component of cruelty in every person; this characterizes the earliest, perverse phase. It is human fate that this is irrevocably paired with the first objects: mother and father. The cruelty component is irrevocably directed at one person; whoever interferes becomes the victim and the sense of guilt follows of its own accord. This repetition is for Freud a tragic fate that needs further interpretation. He suggests that at least some sense of guilt can pass from generation to generation over thousands of years “through the inheritance of psychic dispositions”. The whole theory of primal origin and its aftereffects was, after all, based on the idea of a certain continuity in the mental life of man. And yet the sense of guilt does not appear to be completely inheritable: an inheritable sense of guilt would make prohibition and repression superfluous. With an innate sense of guilt every taboo

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224 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.158. The idea of the inheritance of psychic dispositions can be seen as an influence of the evolutionist thought of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. In work on Freud’s sketchy study Overview of the Transference Neuroses (written in 1915, but only published in 1985), his correspondence with Ferenczi, and especially Moses and Monotheism Freud’s so-called pseudo-Lamarckism has been recognized. Two remarks should be made here. First, the idea of the inheritance of psychic dispositions can already be found in the Old Testament and Greek mythology. Hence, Freud need not have been directly influenced by Lamarck, but might have had other sources. Second, Meynert taught Freud that the idea of the inheritance of acquired characteristics was “a Darwinian doctrine”. Given that Darwin is elaborated upon in Totem and Taboo and Lamarck is not mentioned, it is plausible Freud still believed the idea was Darwinian. L. Ritvo, Darwin’s Influence on Freud, p.31, p.173.


226 Idem, p.160.


228 Idem, p.158.

229 Idem, pp.157-159.
would be unnecessary and Kant would never have come up with the categorical imperative. Hence, there is an inheritance of psychic dispositions “which need to be given some sort of impetus in the life of the individual before they can be roused into actual operation”.\footnote{Idem, p.158. This idea will be repeated, as we will see, in the Wolf Man case.} A “deed” is required.

The Deed is thus primarily anti-Jung. It is an alternative to Jung’s primal libido and all its consequent developments. It was also an alternative to a world in which the difference between fantasy and reality did not mean much and the sense of guilt was ascribed little significance.\footnote{A few years later Freud wrote that in Jungian thought “the Oedipus complex has a merely ‘symbolic’ character” and the neurotic’s sense of guilt only “corresponds to his self-reproach for not properly fulfilling his ‘life-task’”. S. Freud, \textit{On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement}, p.62.} Simultaneously, it must be stated that the choice for the deed can be seen as more than just a reply to Jung. His followers had levelled the field here. Freud did not just associate himself with Darwin and Robertson Smith, but also with Storfer, who in his palaeontology of ethics stated that the Oedipus complex lay at the root of ethics, as a concrete historical fact.

We now return to Freud’s argument. Identification and the sense of guilt lead to obedience to the father. What happens is the following. The sons’ sense of guilt, based on identification with the murdered father (love and admiration), leads to a retraction of their act. The totem is set up as a father substitute and what led to the sense of guilt is now declared illegal: taking the totem’s women and the death of the totem animal. What is forbidden (repressed) are both of the Oedipus complex’s desires.\footnote{S. Freud, \textit{Totem and Taboo}, p.143.} Establishment of the incest prohibition or the exogamy command, incidentally, is not only based upon Oedipal wishes. There is a practical reason as well: competition among the brothers over the women could be devastating to the horde. Freud did not forget to consider fraternal (and sororal) jealousy.\footnote{Idem, p.144.}

The totem animal may not be killed. The sons used this to try to “allay their burning sense of guilt, to bring about a kind of reconciliation with their father”.\footnote{Idem.} That atonement is realized by obedience to the father/totem. In all later religions this fundamental characteristic can be seen whereby “they vary according to the stage of civilization at which they arise and according to the methods which they adopt”.\footnote{Idem.} Religions are not only expressions of the sense of guilt and attempts at atonement. The living memory of the victory over the father remains within them as well. The totem meal and the animal sacrifice are repetitions of the primal crime which is preserved in memory just when changing circumstances threaten to lose it. The brotherhood remains too: social organizations are the continuation of this. Thus morality (and religion) is based on the primal horde’s sense of guilt.

\footnotesize 230 Idem, p.158. This idea will be repeated, as we will see, in the Wolf Man case.

\footnotesize 231 A few years later Freud wrote that in Jungian thought “the Oedipus complex has a merely ‘symbolic’ character” and the neurotic’s sense of guilt only “corresponds to his self-reproach for not properly fulfilling his ‘life-task’”. S. Freud, \textit{On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement}, p.62.

\footnotesize 232 S. Freud, \textit{Totem and Taboo}, p.143.

\footnotesize 233 Idem, p.144.

\footnotesize 234 Idem.

\footnotesize 235 Idem, p.145.
We have seen that Storfer’s palaeontology of ethics matched Hobbes’s theories of the social contract. Rieff correctly observed that Freud’s thinking about the horde and about the masses was very close to Hobbes’s. The big difference between Hobbes’s social contract presented in his 1651 *Leviathan* and Freud is that the former was based upon a (rational) assessment of needs: it is in my interests to surrender some of my freedom in order to remain alive and own things. In order to make a safe society possible an individual is prepared to subject himself to the Leviathan, the authority with absolute power who determines what is right. Freud’s primal horde theory is in fact also a theory of a social contract. That contract is, however, not based on an assessment of personal interests but on the sense of guilt after the murder of the “Leviathan”. That element of the sense of guilt is powerfully stressed, more powerfully even than by Storfer. After all, Storfer proposed first a social contract and only then the patricide. In the working through of the murder he laid emphasis not on the sense of guilt and the formation of morality but on the projection of desires in religion.

In the above I have brought Freud’s emphasis on variability and change to the fore. No matter what, he sought to prevent an unequivocal mental principle being thought to underlie human acts, a principle that was thought to be inheritable and present in culture as a continuous undercurrent, an ontological essence. The development of repression of the sense of guilt (and consequently the development of morality and religion) is not constant, however (as with Jung), but shifts and varies. After briefly mentioning the patterns that run through religion (the totem sacrifice and the father-son relationship), he maintains that the personal relationship with a god is formed after the relationship with the biological father, but emphasized that this is about a relationship that varies from person to person. Freud does not mention the term projection here either, in order to avoid automatism. The father-son relationship can, he wrote, also be essentially changed through history: the democratic, evenly matched son-horde, after all, disintegrates into individuals. He subsequently cited a number of changes, for example in the meaning of the sacrificial animal. Originally it was the father, then a god and later still simply an animal offered to the gods. There are for example myths in which not people but the gods kill sacred animals. These developments are different kinds of repudiations of the primal crime. The ambivalence towards the father, father figures or gods appears to have been stronger in the past, at least more easily seen, but appearing now to be completely struck silent. In short, Freud

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236 Ph. Rieff, *The Mind of the Moralist*, pp.242ff. Rieff correctly notes that unlike Hobbes, Freud was not interested in a theory legitimizing governmental authority, but was searching for the origins of morality.


239 Idem, p.150.
A Dark Trace

cited a number of shifts and variations while not offering an explanation or a clear motive for these changes. He did not present the changes as fixed mechanisms. This is an important point, for in fact he thus differentiated himself not only from Jung, but also from other followers. Compared with followers who regularly wrote about “projections onto heaven”, Freud is more nuanced. Not every cultural development was an improvement and projection could certainly not explain religion, quite the contrary.

Cultural history does not show either logic or consistent progress. Typical here is Freud’s elaboration of Christianity. For Jung this constituted liberation from the neurotic compulsions of Jewish law. Freud brought the element of original sin to the fore. This Christian doctrine is not a liberating victory over Judaism. It is, however, one more doctrine that expresses the sense of guilt relationship between God and humanity. Freud made clear that Christianity did not have to stem from Judaism: it had to compete with, for example, the Mithras cult and employ traditions that are not Jewish. The original sin has an Orphic origin (and is thus not Jewish). In a certain sense with the doctrines of sin and atonement by Christ’s sacrificial death, Christians admit the “guilty primal deed”. Something primal is being expressed here as the nth variation on a theme.

The final section of Totem and Taboo is largely restricted to historical variations and changes. The repression of the primal crime takes a different form each time. Within the framework of variations on how the sense of guilt is worked through, he once again introduced the Oedipus complex. In the Oedipus complex “the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge”. This position obviously follows from the hypothesis that the sense of guilt is rooted in Oedipal desires and the deeds which result from them. In short, the Oedipus complex is once again included within the exposition on the vicissitudes of the sense of guilt and the origin of morality. For Freud the complex remained primarily the pre-eminent expression of the ambivalence of hate and love as expressed in relationships with people, and indeed specifically with the father figure. Although the Oedipus complex is a nuclear complex, its meaning and effects are variable and change per individual and over time. This is a crucial point, because with this position the complex has a place in history, not beyond it. This is how he corrected his followers’ tendencies in the Writings in Applied Analysis.

We have seen that in their applied psychoanalytic work Freud’s followers frequently relied on the section on typical dreams in The Interpretation of Dreams, and from this standpoint stressed the Oedipus complex as the psychoanalytic

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242 Idem, p.154.
243 In Repression (1915) Freud brought this even more to the fore: “Repression acts in a highly individual manner”. S. Freud, Repression, SE XIV, p.150.
244 S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, p.156.
paradigm. In Abraham’s *Dream and Myth* and in Jung’s *The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual* the Oedipus complex is used as foundational in order to clarify developments. We see thereafter the tendency to apply the Oedipus complex as a blueprint to explain people, art, etc. Freud provided occasion for this use of the Oedipus complex when in *The Interpretation of Dreams* he wrote that every person can recognize his deepest desires in the myth. Yet when he wrote there about a psychoanalyst’s work he did not maintain that this was the result of the application of the Oedipus complex as a paradigmatic scheme, but that the analyst’s work is comparable to Oedipus’ quest for “an ancient guilt”. That is exactly what Freud tried to do in *Totem and Taboo*. The question is where morality comes from, what Kant’s categorical imperative actually expresses. The answer is that every morality (and religion) is a specific expression of a sense of guilt owing to a primal crime.

With respect to the sense of guilt, there is ultimately a single, succinct conclusion. In comparison with his followers and in the very selective choice of literature (whereby Freud, like Frazer, creatively reworks definition or, as in his reading of Darwin, omits contrary hypotheses) it appears that his most personal contribution in *Totem and Taboo* consists of the central place allotted to the sense of guilt. As regards his followers, that meant a certain relativization of the Oedipus complex and, even more so, the mechanism of projection. From the remaining literature Freud borrowed primarily those elements which strongly supported his ideas about the sense of guilt.