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CHAPTER II

THE LAW OF PARTICIPATION

I

IF the primitives' collective representations differ from ours through their essentially mystic character ; if their mentality as I have endeavoured to show, is oriented in another direction than our own ; we must admit, too, that their representations are not connected with each other as ours would be. Must we then infer that these representations obey some other system of logic than the one which governs our own understanding ? That would be going too far, for such a hypothesis would exceed that which facts warrant us in affirming. Nothing proves that the connections of collective representations must depend solely upon laws of a logical kind. Moreover, the idea of a logic different from our own could only provide us with a negative concept, devoid of meaning. Now as a matter of fact we can at least endeavour to comprehend how representations are connected in the minds of primitives. We understand their language, we make bargains with them, we succeed in interpreting their institutions and their belief : all this shows that there is a possible transition, a practicable method of communication between their mentality and our own.

With these exceptions, however, the mentalities are different, and the disparity becomes the more perceptible as the comparative study advances, and the documentary evidence admits of its being extended. The explorer who travels rapidly through communities of an uncivilized type has no time to probe into this problem ; in fact, he scarcely ever thinks of it as such. First, he ascertains the curious persistence of certain traits of human nature, manifesting themselves in the most varied conditions, and he then expresses

his surprise when brought face to face with methods of thinking and acting of which both the origin and reason escape him. He leaves to his reader the task of discovering how these successive impressions may be reconciled, or else he confines himself to some general "explanations" derived from traditional psychology and logic, if he happens to possess a smattering of either.

But when we listen to observers who have lived for a longer time among primitives, and especially those who have endeavoured to penetrate their method of thinking and feeling, we hear something quite different. Whether it be the North American Indians (of whom Cushing and Powell tell us), the negroes of the French Congo (studied by Miss Kingsley), the Maoris of New Zealand (known to Elsdon Best), or any other "primitive" people whatever, a "civilized being" can never expect to see his thought following exactly the same course as that of the primitive, nor to find again the path by which the latter has travelled. "The mentality of the Maori is of an intensely mystical nature. . . . We hear of many singular theories about Maori beliefs and Maori thought, but the truth is that we do not understand either, and, what is more, we never shall. We shall never know the inwardness of the native mind. For that would mean retracing our steps for many centuries, back into the dim past, far back to the time when we also possessed the mind of primitive man. And the gates have long closed on that hidden road." ¹

Cushing had acquired a kind of mental "naturalization" among the Zúñis. Not content with living with, and like, them for many years, he had made their religious rulers adopt him and admit him to their secret societies; in their sacred ceremonies he, like their priests, had his own rôle, and carried it out. The unfortunately rare works of his which have been published give us, however, the feeling of a form of mental activity with which our own would never exactly correspond. Our habits of thought are too far removed from those of the Zúñis. Our language, without which we can conceive nothing, and which is essential to our reasoning, makes use of categories which do not coincide with theirs. Lastly and

¹ Elsdon Best, "Maori Medical Lore," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, xiii. p. 219 (1904).

chiefly, the ambient social reality, of which the collective representations and, to a certain extent, the language, are functions, is with them too far removed from our own case.

Thus the mentality of inferior peoples, though not so impenetrable as it would be as if it were regulated by a logic different from our own, is none the less not wholly comprehensible to us. We are led to imagine that it does not exclusively obey the laws of *our* logic, nor possibly of any laws which are wholly logical. An analysis of some characteristic phenomena may perhaps serve to throw light on this point.

Observers have frequently collected the arguments, or rather, the connections between representations which have seemed strange and inexplicable to them. I shall quote but a few instances. "A certain drought at Landana was attributed to the missionaries wearing a certain kind of cap during the services: the natives said that this stopped the rain, a great outcry that the missionaries must leave the country was raised. . . . The missionaries showed the native princes their own garden, that their cultivation was being ruined for want of water, and asked if it was probable that they would spoil their own crops. The natives remained unconvinced, and only when the rains at length fell plentifully did the excitement subside." ¹ Pechuël-Loesche relates an exactly similar case, and adduces enough analogous facts to allow of our generalizing on the matter. "After the Catholic missionaries had landed, there was a scarcity of rain, and the plantations were suffering from drought. The people at once took it into their heads that this was the fault of these clerics, and especially due to the long robes they wore, for such had never been seen before. There was besides a white horse which had recently been landed, and it had prevented trading, and occasioned many troublesome discussions. A contractor had a great deal of trouble because he had replaced the pole of native wood which was badly warped, upon which his flag was erected, by an upright mast which had just been imported. A shiny mackintosh coat, an unusual hat, a rocking-chair, any instrument whatever, can give rise to disquieting suspicions. The entire coast population may be disturbed at the sight of a sailing-ship with unfamiliar rigging, or a steamer which has

¹ Phillips, "The Lower Congo," *J.A.I.*, xvii. p. 220.

one more funnel than the others. If anything vexatious should occur, it is at once attributed to something unusual that has taken place." ¹

In New Guinea, "at the time my wife and I took up our residence in Motumotu," writes Edelfelt, "a kind of pleurisy epidemic prevailed along the coast. . . . Of course my wife and I were accused of bringing the messenger of destruction, and for this loud rumours were about that we—including the Polynesian teachers—should suffer death. . . . Someone or something was still the cause of it, and they blamed a poor unfortunate sheep I had, that was killed to please them; but the epidemic raged as violently as ever. Now our two goats were blamed; these animals, however, lived it all out. Finally, they levelled their abuse and accusations against a large picture of Queen Victoria, which hung in our dining-room. Previous to the epidemic appearing people came in from long distances to see this picture, and . . . would . . . look at it several hours at a time. . . . The harmless image of our gracious Queen became eventually . . . an imaginary destroyer of health and life, and they requested me to take the picture down; to this I did not concede." ²

At Tanna, in the New Hebrides, "it can hardly be said that there is any sequence of ideas, properly so called. If a person were passing along a path, and some creature (say a snake) fell on him out of a tree, and next day, or the week after, he heard of the death of a son in Queensland, he would connect the two. A turtle came ashore one night and laid a nestful of eggs. It was captured in the act. Such a thing had never taken place in the memory of the people. The conclusion was that Christianity was the cause of the turtle coming ashore to lay its eggs, and the right thing to do was to offer the turtle to the missionary who had brought the worship of Jehovah." ³

Ideas are linked up in the same way in North America. "One evening, when talking about the animals of the country, I wanted to let them know that we had rabbits and leverets

¹ *Die Loango-Expedition*, iii. 2, p. 83.

² "Customs and Superstitions of New Guinea Natives," *Proceedings of Royal Geographical Society of Australasia*, Queensland Branch, vii. p. 1 (1891-2).

³ Gray, "Notes on the Natives of Tanna," *J.A.I.*, xxviii. p. 131.

in France, and I showed them to them by making the shadow on the wall in the firelight. It happened quite by chance that they caught more fish than usual the next morning; they believed that the shadow pictures I had made for them were the cause of this, and they begged me to do this every evening and to teach them how, a thing which I refused to do, as I would not minister to this foolish superstition of theirs." ¹

Lastly, in New Guinea. "A man returning from hunting or fishing is disappointed at his empty game-bag, or canoe, and turns over in his mind how to discover who would be likely to have bewitched his nets. He perhaps raises his eyes and sees a member of a neighbouring friendly village on his way to pay a visit. It at once occurs to him that this man is the sorcerer, and watching his opportunity, he suddenly attacks him and kills him." ²

The current explanation of such phenomena consists of saying that primitives apply the principle of causality undiscerningly, and that they confound cause and antecedent. This would be the very common logical fallacy known as the fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. The primitives, we are told, have not the least idea that this can be wrong. That the representations are consecutive in their minds is a sufficient guarantee that they are connected: or rather, they do not consider the connection needs any guarantee. The observers themselves frequently suggest this explanation. "To natives," says Pechuël-Loesche, "there is no such thing as chance. Occurrences which are close together in point of time, even if widely removed in space, readily appear to them to be linked by a causal relation." ³

It is true, and later on we shall discover the reason for it, that there is no such thing as chance to the primitive. As for the rest, the explanation suggested, if not wholly incorrect, is assuredly incomplete. Primitives are undoubtedly prone, as much as, and possibly more than, civilized beings, to the fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. But in the facts I have quoted, some simple cases from a very large number

¹ Father Sagard, *Le Grand Voyage au Pays des Hurons*, pp. 256-7 (1632).

² Guise, "Wangela River, New Guinea," *J.A.I.*, xxviii. p. 212.

³ *Die Loango-Expedition*, iii. 2, p. 333.

of instances there is something more and something different ; it is not merely an artless and erroneous application of the principle of causality. It is not only direct anteriority in time which makes the connection between one fact and another. The sequence perceived or remarked may suggest the connection, but the connection itself is not in any way confused with this sequence. It consists in a mystic relation which the primitive represents to himself—and of which he is convinced as soon as he represents it to himself—between the antecedent and the consequent : the first having the power to produce the second and make it apparent. This is a result of the very facts related by Pechuël-Loesche, if we regard them in the light of what has already been established respecting the mystic properties in the forms taken by persons and things.¹ What effects may not the mystic virtues of a cassock, a steamer with three funnels, a mackintosh, a tent-pole, in short, any unusual object produce ? Who knows the consequences which may arise from their very presence ? “ Anything strange is uncanny to the native,” say Spencer and Gillen.² In the case of Queen Victoria’s portrait, the fallacy *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* is obviously an inadequate explanation. The portrait was well known to the natives long before the epidemic broke out. They did not attach any blame to it except in the fourth place, after having successively imputed the outbreak to the missionary, his sheep, and his two goats. If, after that, they laid the trouble at its door, it was undoubtedly because of the magic power they believed to be attaching to this unusual object. The case of the Hurons, related by Sagard, can be similarly explained.

To comprehend facts such as these, and refer them to one common principle, we must go back to the mystic nature of the collective representations in the mentality of undeveloped peoples and look for the same characteristic in the connections between them. The sequence in time is one element of the connection, but it is not always a necessary element, and it is never all-sufficing. If it were otherwise, how could we explain the fact that the most unvarying and most evident

¹ Vide Chap. I. pp. 41-43.

² *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 31-2.

sequences in phenomena so often escape the notice of primitives? For instance, "the Ja-Luo believe that the sun goes back to the east overhead during the night, hidden behind the heavens. They do not associate the daylight sky with the light of the sun, but look upon it as something quite distinct, and asked what became of it at night."¹

Dobrizhoffer points out that the Abipones are often unable to comprehend direct and self-evident relations between cause and effect. "A wound inflicted with a spear often gapes so wide that it affords ample room for life to go out and death to come in; yet if the man dies of the wound, they really believe him killed, not by a weapon, but by the deadly arts of the jugglers. . . . They are persuaded that the juggler will be banished from amongst the living, and made to atone for their relation's death, if the heart and tongue be pulled out of the dead man's body immediately after his decease, roasted at the fire, and given to dogs to devour. Though so many hearts and tongues are devoured, and they never observe any of the jugglers die, yet they religiously adhere to the custom of their ancestors by cutting out the hearts and tongues of infants and adults of both sexes, as soon as they have expired."²

Thus not only does the time sequence in phenomena of the most impressive kind often remain unperceived by the primitive's mind, but he frequently believes firmly in an order of succession which is not borne out by experience, for experience can no more undeceive primitives than it can teach them. In an infinite number of cases, as we have seen, their minds are impervious to experience. Therefore when they make the cassocks of the missionaries responsible for the drought, or attribute an epidemic to a portrait, it is not merely the sequence in point of time which impresses their minds and becomes a causal relation to them. The mental process is a different and rather more complex one. That which we call experience and the natural order of phenomena does not find in primitives, minds prepared to receive and be impressed by it. On the contrary, their minds are already preoccupied

¹ Hopley, "British East Africa, Kavirondo and Nandi," *J.A.I.*, xxxiii. p. 358.

² *An Account of the Abipones*, ii. p. 223.

with a large number of collective representations, by virtue of which objects, whatever they may be, living beings, inanimate objects, or articles manufactured by man, always present themselves charged with mystic properties. Consequently while these minds are very often unheeding of the objective relations, they pay great attention to the mystic connections, whether virtual or actual. These preformed connections are not derived from the experience of the present, and experience is powerless against them.

II

Let us then no longer endeavour to account for these connections either by the mental weakness of primitives, or by the association of ideas, or by a naïve application of the principle of causality, or yet by the fallacy *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*; in short, let us abandon the attempt to refer their mental activity to an inferior variety of our own. Rather let us consider these connections in themselves, and see whether they do not depend upon a general law, a common foundation for those mystic relations which primitive mentality so frequently senses in beings and objects. Now there is one element which is never lacking in such relations. In varying forms and degrees they all involve a "participation" between persons or objects which form part of a collective representation. For this reason I shall, in default of a better term, call the principle which is peculiar to "primitive" mentality, which governs the connections and the preconnections of such representations, *the law of participation*.

At the moment it would be difficult to formulate this law in abstract terms. It will be sufficiently defined in the course of this chapter, although that which we desire to define scarcely enters the ordinary framework of our thought. However, in default of a wholly satisfactory formula, we can make an attempt to approximate it. I should be inclined to say that in the collective representations of primitive mentality, objects, beings, phenomena can be, though in a way incomprehensible to us, both themselves and something other than themselves. In a fashion which is no less incomprehensible, they give forth and they receive mystic powers,

virtues, qualities, influences, which make themselves felt outside, without ceasing to remain where they are.

In other words, the opposition between the one and the many, the same and another, and so forth, does not impose upon this mentality the necessity of affirming one of the terms if the other be denied, or vice versa. This opposition is of but secondary interest. Sometimes it is perceived, and frequently, too, it is not. It often disappears entirely before the mystic community of substance in entities which, in our thought, could not be confused without absurdity. For instance, "the Trumai (a tribe of Northern Brazil) say that they are aquatic animals.—The Bororo (a neighbouring tribe) boast that they are red araras (parakeets)." This does not merely signify that after their death they become araras, nor that araras are metamorphosed Bororos, and must be treated as such. It is something entirely different. "The Bororos," says Von den Steinen, who would not believe it, but finally had to give in to their explicit affirmations, "give one rigidly to understand that they are araras *at the present time*, just as if a caterpillar declared itself to be a butterfly."¹ It is not a name they give themselves, nor a relationship that they claim. What they desire to express by it is actual identity. That they can be both the human beings they are and the birds of scarlet plumage at the same time, Von den Steinen regards as inconceivable, but to the mentality that is governed by the law of participation there is no difficulty in the matter. All communities which are totemic in form admit of collective representations of this kind, implying similar identity of the individual members of a totemic group and their totem.

From the dynamic standpoint also, the creation of entities and phenomena, the manifestation of such and such an occurrence, are the result of a mystic influence which is communicated, under conditions themselves of mystic nature, from one being or object to another. They depend upon a participation which is represented in very varied forms: contact, transference, sympathy, telekinesis, etc. In many aggregates of an undeveloped type the abundance of game, fish, or fruit, the regularity of the seasons, and the rainfall, are connected

¹ K. von den Steinen, *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentralbrasilens*, pp. 305-6.

with the performance of certain ceremonies by individuals destined thereto, or to the presence or to the well-being of a sacred personality who possesses a special mystic power. Or yet again, the newborn child feels the effects of everything its father does, what he eats, etc. The Indian, out hunting or engaged in warfare, is fortunate or unfortunate according to whether his wife, left behind in the camp, eats, or abstains from eating, certain foods, or is doing or not doing certain things. The collective representations abound in relations of this nature. What we call the natural relation of cause and effect passes unnoticed, or is of but slight importance. It is the mystic participations which are in the front rank, and frequently occupy the whole field.

On this account the mentality of primitives may be called *prelogical* with as good reason as it may be termed *mystic*. These are two aspects of the same fundamental quality, rather than two distinct characteristics. If we take the content of the representations more particularly into account, we shall call it mystic—and, if the connections are the chief consideration, we pronounce it prelogical. By *prelogical* we do not mean to assert that such a mentality constitutes a kind of antecedent stage, in point of time, to the birth of logical thought. Have there ever existed groups of human or pre-human beings whose collective representations have not yet been subject to the laws of logic? We do not know, and in any case, it seems to be very improbable. At any rate, the mentality of these undeveloped peoples which, for want of a better term, I call *prelogical*, does not partake of that nature. It is not *antilogical*; it is not *alogical* either. By designating it "prelogical" I merely wish to state that it does not bind itself down, as our thought does, to avoiding contradiction. It obeys the law of participation first and foremost. Thus oriented, it does not expressly delight in what is contradictory (which would make it merely absurd in our eyes), but neither does it take pains to avoid it. It is often wholly indifferent to it, and that makes it so hard to follow.

As has been said, these characteristics apply only to the collective representations and their connections. Considered as an individual, the primitive, in so far as he thinks and acts independently of these collective representations where

possible, will usually feel, argue and act as we should expect him to do. The inferences he draws will be just those which would seem reasonable to us in like circumstances. If he has brought down two birds, for instance, and only picks up one, he will ask himself what has become of the other, and will look for it. If rain overtakes and inconveniences him, he will seek shelter. If he encounters a wild beast, he will strive his utmost to escape, and so forth. But though on occasions of this sort primitives may reason as we do, though they follow a course similar to the one we should take (which in the more simple cases, the most intelligent among the animals would also do), it does not follow that their mental activity is always subject to the same laws as ours. In fact, as far as it is collective, it has laws which are peculiar to itself, and the first and most universal of these is the law of participation.

The very material upon which this mental activity is exercised has already undergone the influence of the law of participation, for we must realize that their collective representations are very different from our concepts. The latter, the material with which our logical thought works, are themselves the result, as we know, of previous operations of a similar kind. The mere expression of a general abstract term, such as man, animal, organism, virtually connotes a number of separate judgments which involve definite relations between many concepts. But the collective representations of primitives are not, like our concepts, the result of intellectual processes properly so called. They contain, as integral parts, affective and motor elements, and above all they imply, in the place of our conceptual inclusions or exclusions, participations which are more or less clearly defined, but, as a general rule, very vividly sensed.

Why, for example, should a picture or portrait be to the primitive mind something quite different from what it is to ours? Whence comes that attributing of mystic properties to it, of which we have just had an instance? Evidently from the fact that every picture, every reproduction "participates" in the nature, properties, life of that of which it is the image. This participation is not to be understood as a share—as if the portrait, for example, involved a fraction of the whole of the properties or the life which the model

possesses. Primitive mentality sees no difficulty in the belief that such life and properties exist in the original and in its reproduction *at one and the same time*. By virtue of the mystic bond between them, a bond represented by the law of participation, the reproduction *is* the original, as the Bororo *are* the araras. Therefore one may obtain from the one what one gets from the other; one may influence the second by influencing the first. For this reason, if the Mandan chiefs let Catlin take their portrait, they will not sleep quiet in their graves. Why is this? Because, by virtue of an inevitable participation, anything that happens to their pictures, delivered over to strange hands, will be felt by them after their death. And why is the tribe so uneasy at the idea that the repose of their chiefs should be thus disturbed? Evidently—though Catlin does not tell us so—it is because the welfare of the tribe, its prosperity, its very existence depend, by virtue of this same participation, upon the condition of its chiefs, whether living or dead.

The same argument applies to the other collective representations, the mystic character of which we have already demonstrated: those concerning a man's name and his shadow, for instance. There is one which we should dwell on particularly, however, because it serves as a rallying-point for the entire theory of primitive mentality. It is the representation of the "soul," the starting-point of the doctrine known as animism, the principles of which Tylor formulates thus: "It seems as though thinking men, as yet at a low level of culture, were deeply impressed by two groups of biological problems. In the first place, what is it that makes the difference between the living body and the dead one? What causes waking, sleep, trance, disease, death? In the second place, what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions? Looking at these two groups of phenomena, the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step to the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, his life and his phantom. These two are evidently in close connection with the body, the life as enabling him to feel and think and act, the phantom as being his image or second self; both, also, are perceived to be things separable from the body, the life as able to go

away and leave it insensible or dead, the phantom as appearing to people at a distance from it, The second step . . . merely the combining the life and the phantom. As both belong to the body, why should they not also belong to one another, and be manifestations of one and the same soul? . . . This, at any rate, corresponds with the actual conception of the personal soul or spirit among the lower races, which may be defined as follows: a thin unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film or shadow; the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates, independently possessing the personal conscience and volition of its corporal owner, past or present; capable of leaving the body far behind, to flash swiftly from place to place; mostly impalpable and invisible, yet also manifesting physical power, and especially the appearing to men, waking or asleep, as a phantasm separate from the body to which it bears a likeness; continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body; able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, animals, and even of things. . . . These are doctrines answering in the most forcible way to the plain evidence of men's senses, as interpreted by a fairly consistent and rational primitive philosophy."¹

It is indeed a favourite idea of Tylor's that animism is a doctrine which is all the more consistent and satisfactory from the logical standpoint, the nearer to its source that we can view it, that is, in its most primitive form. Later, when complicated by new elements and endeavouring to resolve more subtle problems and to generalize, it becomes obscure and entangled. At its source, its clarity is absolute because it imposes itself, so to speak, on the naïve reflection of the "savage philosopher" when faced by the facts. And the satisfaction which this philosopher would find in his hypothesis is savoured by the savant of to-day in his turn, when he affirms that this hypothesis is the spontaneous and universal product of an intellectual activity which is always identical at bottom, and which, like his own, is impelled by the rational need for supplying an answer to the problems which the facts propound to the intelligence.

It is a very seductive theory, and it seems as if, were we

¹ *Primitive Culture*, i. pp. 428-9 (4th edit., 1903).

in the place of the "savage philosopher," we should reason as he does—that is, as we make him reason. But have such "savage philosophers" ever existed? Do the collective representations of the soul in the lower races constitute a sort of doctrine born of the necessity for resolving biological problems? Nothing seems more unlikely. Nothing seems more improbable even, if it be certain that the mentality of such races is oriented differently from our own, and that their collective representations are, above all, mystical by nature, primitives being much more concerned about the mystic virtues inherent in things than about the logical coherence of their own thought. That is why, the more rational and consecutive this primitive "philosophy" of the soul becomes, the more reason will there be to fear that, in spite of the amount of evidence collected and the skill of those who interpret it, it will still be very far removed from that which it pretends to explain.

As a matter of fact, in almost every case where there has been an adequately prolonged and careful investigation, we must abandon the happy simplicity of "one and the same soul" manifesting itself as "life on the one side and phantom on the other." The collective representations offer something much more complex and far less easy to "explain."

To take a few examples from the West Coast of Africa, Ellis has found a number of collective representations which do not tally in any way (as he himself expressly states) with the idea of a soul such as Tylor has defined, quoted above. The natives, says Ellis, distinguish the *kra* from the *srahman*. "The *kra* existed before the birth of the man, probably as the *kra* of a long series of men, and after his death it will equally continue its independent career, either by entering a newborn human body, or that of an animal, or by wandering about the world as a *sisá* or *kra* without a tenement. The general idea is that the *sisá* always seeks to return to a human body and again become a *kra*, even taking advantage of the temporary absence of a *kra* from its tenement to take its place. . . . The *kra* can quit the body it inhabits at will, and return to it again. Usually it only quits it during sleep, and the occurrences dreamed of are believed to be the adventures of the *kra* during its absence. The *srahman* or ghost-man only

commences its career when the corporeal man dies, and it simply continues in the Dead-land, the existence the corporeal man formerly led in the world. Thus we must consider separately (1) the man; (2) the indwelling spirit or *kra*; (3) the ghost or *srahman*, though in another form the last is only the continuation of the first in shadowy form."

This differentiation is applied in every case. "When the bush is torn up and withers, the *kra* (so to speak) of the bush enters a seedling bush, or a seed, and the ghost-bush goes to Dead-land. Similarly, the *kra* (so to speak) of the sheep, when that sheep is killed, enters a newborn lamb, and the ghost-sheep goes to Dead-land for the use of ghost-men. . . . Dead-land itself, its mountains, forests, and rivers are, the Tshi-speaking negro holds, the ghosts of similar natural features which formerly existed in the world."

The *kra*, therefore, is not the soul. "The soul, in the accepted sense of the word, is the 'animating, separable, surviving entity,' the 'vehicle of individual personal existence' (Tylor), whereas every *kra* has been the indwelling spirit of many men, and probably will be of many more. The *kra* in some respects resembles a guardian spirit, but it is more than that. Its close connection with the man is indicated by the fact of its nocturnal adventures during its absence from the body being remembered by that man when he awakes. The latter even feels physically the effect of his *kra*'s actions, and when a negro awakes feeling stiff and unrefreshed, or with limbs aching from muscular rheumatism, he invariably attributes these symptoms to the fact of his *kra* having been engaged in some struggle with another, or in some severe toil. . . . It has, though doubtless in a shadowy form, the very shape and appearance of the man, and both the mind and the body of the latter are affected by, and register the results of, the *kra*'s actions."

"When the *kra* leaves the body of the man it inhabits, that man suffers no physical inconvenience; it goes out, when he is asleep, without his knowledge, and if it should leave him when he is awake, he is only made aware of its departure by a sneeze or a yawn. When, however, the soul, 'the vehicle of personal individual existence,' leaves the body, that body falls into a condition of suspended animation;

it is cold, pulseless, and apparently lifeless. Sometimes, though rarely, the soul returns after such an absence, and then the man has been in a swoon or trance; more generally it does not return; then the man is dead."¹

How therefore are we to regard the relations of a man with his *kra* which certainly, as Ellis tells us, is not his soul? It is equally incorrect to say that his *kra* is himself and that he is not himself. It is not the individual, for it existed before him and survives him; it is nevertheless not himself, for upon awaking the individual remembers what the *kra* has done, endured, and suffered during the night. If we persist in submitting these representations to the claims of logical thought, we shall not only not discover in them the "consistent and rational philosophy" which Tylor and his school expect, but they will remain unintelligible. On the other hand, we shall understand them to the extent to which they may be "understood," if we refer them to the general law of participation. The individual, while living, participates in the *kra* that inhabits him, that is, he to a certain extent is this *kra*, and at the same time he is not: for the actual contradiction does not disturb his prelogical mentality. At the moment of death, this participation comes to an end.²

Representations which are just as involved are to be found in most undeveloped aggregates. Since they did not suggest any meaning which investigators could accept (judging them as they did by the rules of logical thought) these writers frequently tried to guard against absurdity by supposing that primitives admitted of several souls. It thus became possible to distribute among these that which would have been irreconcilable and incompatible in a single one. Spencer and Gillen, for instance, refer frequently to multiple souls in dealing with the tribes of Central Australians.³ Among the natives of the Torres Straits, Haddon speaks of parts of

¹ A. B. Ellis, *The Ewe-speaking Peoples*, pp. 15-21, 106. Cf. *The Tshi-speaking Peoples*, p. 149.

² Traces of representations of this kind were found among the Greeks who, according to Rohde (*Psyche*, i. pp. 4, 6, 257; ii. pp. 141, 157, 183-4, 304-5), distinguished between a vital principle, a soul or shade in Hades after death, and another principle, which inhabited the body during life, but which neither disease nor death could affect.

³ *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 515; *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 450.

the soul. "There was a belief that part of the *mari* left at death, and part remained until frightened away."¹ In North America, a plurality of souls seems to be the rule. "They distinguish four souls in the same body. An old man told us sometime ago that some natives had two or three souls, and that his own had left him more than two years before, to go away with his dead parents, and that he now only possessed the soul of his body, which would go down to the grave with him. By this we know that they imagine that the body has a soul of its own, which some call the soul of their nation (?) and that besides there are others which leave it sooner or later according to their fancy."² "It is believed by some of the Hidatsa that every human being has four souls in one. They account for the phenomenon of gradual death where the extremities are apparently dead while consciousness remains, by supposing the four souls to depart, one after another, at different times. When dissolution is complete, they say that all the souls are gone, and have joined together again outside of the body."³—"The Mandan believe that each person has several spirits dwelling within him; one of which is black, another brown, and a third light-coloured, the last alone returning to the Lord of Life."⁴ The Dacotans recognize four: "(1) a spirit of the body, which dies with the body; (2) a spirit which always remains with or near the body; (3) the soul which accounts for the deeds of the body and is supposed by some to go south or by others west. The fourth always lingers with the small bundle of the hair of the deceased, kept by the relatives until they have a chance to throw it into the enemy's country, when it becomes a roving spirit, bringing disease and death."⁵ Some Sioux even admit of five souls. In British Columbia, "man is believed to have four souls. The main soul is said to have the shape of a mannikin, the others are the shadows of the first. In disease either the lesser souls or the main one leave the body. Shamans can easily return the shadows, but not the main soul. If the latter leaves the body the sick one must die. After death the main soul goes to the sunset, and here it remains. The

¹ "The Western Tribes of Torres Straits," *J.A.I.*, xix. p. 317.

² *Relations du Père Lejeune*, p. 146 (1630).

³ Dorsey, "Siouan Cults," *E. B. Rept.*, xi. p. 517.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 512.

⁵ Lynd, cited by Dorsey, *ibid.*, p. 484.

shadows become ghosts. They revisit the places which the deceased frequented during lifetime, and continue to do the same actions which he did when alive." ¹

These reports, to which we might add many others, are far from being unanimous regarding the functions of the various souls. Nevertheless they all attest a multiplicity of souls in the same individual, and diversity in the functions of these souls. They indicate, too, though less regularly and clearly, that the fate of these souls is not the same after death. Is it not permissible to imagine that this multiplicity is pre-eminently expressive of the impossibility which the investigators found in reconciling what the "savages" had told them, with their own preconceived ideas upon the soul? Gross misunderstanding and misconstruction were inevitable. The missionaries and explorers were making use of terms (soul, spirit, ghost, etc.) defined for them by prolonged evolution in religion, philosophy, and literature, and they found themselves dealing with collective representations which were essentially mystic and prelogical, not yet reduced to a conceptual form, and paying very little regard to logical laws. Consequently nearly all they report needs to be revised and corrected. As a general rule, an observer's report is the more suspect, the more readily it agrees with the current conception of the soul. On the other hand, observations frequently manifest a characteristic obscurity, or even present an inextricable confusion, which is a faithful reflection of the perplexity felt by their authors.

I shall quote but two instances. "It is difficult to say precisely what the Fijians believe to be the essence of the immortal part of a man. The word 'yalo' has the following meanings. Yalo (with pronoun-suffixed) means Mind, as Yalo-ngu. Yalo (with possessive pronoun separated) means Shade or Spirit. Yaloyalo means Shadow. From the possessive pronoun being suffixed we may gather that the mind was regarded as being as intimately connected with a man's body as his arm, but that the spirit could be detached from it." ² Among the Yakuts, "the elementary soul of the object in

¹ F. Boas, "The North-western Tribes of Canada," *Reports of the British Association*, p. 461 (1894).

² B. A. Thompson, "The Ancestor Gods of the Fijians," *J.A.I.*, xxiv. p. 354 (note).

general (*ichchi*) which, it appears, merely expresses the fact of existence, differs from the soul of living things (*sur*). Life begins when respiration begins (*ty*). Living objects have a double soul therefore—*ichchi* and *sur*; animals when dead or even ill lose their *sur* and preserve their *ichchi* alone, and in the case of death this disappears also. Men, and among animals, horses alone, have a triple soul: *ichchi*, *sur*, and the '*kut*.' The human *kut* is small, no larger than a little piece of coal. Sometimes the shaman summons from beneath the earth, in the left or female part of the house, the *kut* of those who are sick. . . . The *kut* sometimes abandons man during his sleep, and wanders afar. If some misfortune befalls it during its travels, its owner falls ill. The *kut* is like a faint picture, like the shadow. As the shadow has three parts, one large and faint, one small and darker, and the centre quite black, so man has three souls. When he loses one, he suffers from a feeling of uneasiness; when he loses two, he becomes ill; and when he loses all three, he dies." ¹ The confusion in this report and the evident impossibility of reconciling the different parts with the definitions given are very significant: they may however help us to understand what this pretended plurality of souls really amounts to.

It is noteworthy that without thinking of a prelogical and mystic mentality, without even having made any research into the problem which occupies my mind, Pechuël-Loesche should have arrived at the same conclusion, touching the plurality of souls, as I do. "If we were generalizing hastily," he says in conclusion, "we might speak of a belief in two souls, or even in three or four. The first would be power (Potenz) the creative principle (the essence of the ancestors passing to their descendants), possibly also part of the universal soul. Then there would be the personal or individual soul; finally the dream-soul, and the wandering or desert-soul (Wildnisseele). But such a conception would be incorrect." ² In my opinion, these various souls express "participations," irreducible to logical intelligibility, but the most natural thing in the world to prelogical mentality. We

¹ Sieroshewski, *Douze Ans chez les Yakoutes*, cited J.A.I., xxxi. p. 108 (note).

² *Die Loango-Expedition*, iii. 2, pp. 296-300.

can find sufficient evidence upon the subject of the desert-soul, which is what Miss Kingsley calls the "bush-soul."

The negroes of Calabar, she says, suppose there to be four souls: "(a) the soul that survives death, (b) the shadow on the path, (c) the dream-soul, and (d) the bush-soul. This bush-soul is always in the form of an animal in the forest—never of a plant. Sometimes when a man sickens it is because his bush-soul is angry at being neglected, and a witch-doctor is called in, who, having diagnosed this as being cause of the complaint, advises the administration of some kind of offering to the offended one. . . . The bush-souls of a family are usually the same for a man and his sons, for a mother and her daughters. . . . Sometimes all the children take the mother's, sometimes all take the father's. . . ." ¹ "This bush-soul may be in only an earth pig, or it may be in a leopard, and . . . no layman can see his own soul. It is not as if it were even connected with all earth pigs or all leopards, as the case may be, but it is in one particular earth pig or leopard or other animal. . . . If his bush-soul dies, the man it is connected with dies. Therefore if the hunter who has killed it can be found out—a thing a witch-doctor cannot do unless he happens by chance to have had his professional eye on that bush-soul at the time of the catastrophe; . . . that hunter has to pay compensation to the family of the deceased. On the other hand, if the man belonging to the bush-soul dies, the bush-soul animal has to die too." ² Miss Kingsley has collected very detailed information about the diseases of this bush-soul, as well as those of the dream-soul, and of the treatment that such diseases require.

There was an exactly similar idea existing in Central America. Of the Guatemaltecs Gage tells the following quaint story: "Many are deluded by the Devil to believe that their life dependeth upon the life of such and such a beast (which they take unto them as their familiar spirit) and think that when that beast dieth they must die; when he is chased, their hearts pant; when he is faint, they are faint. . . ." ³ This evidently refers to a forest-soul.

¹ *Travels in West Africa*, pp. 459-60.

² *West African Studies*, pp. 209-10.

³ Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America*, iii. p. 129.

We accordingly find nothing among primitives which exactly corresponds with the single soul which, according to Tylor, can manifest itself in the double form of vital principle and of phantom. Undoubtedly they everywhere believe in the objective reality of what they see in dreams, and everywhere, too, they are convinced that the ghosts of the dead return, at least for some time, to haunt the places in which they dwelt while living. But what we have just learnt about this proves indeed that their collective representations on this matter do not proceed from any need to account for these apparitions by a uniform concept of the "soul." On the contrary, I should say that originally (to the extent that such a term is permissible) the idea of a soul is not found among primitives. That which takes its place is the representation, usually a very emotional one, of one or more co-existent and intertwined participations, as yet not merged into the distinct consciousness of an individuality which is really one. The member of a tribe, totem, or clan, feels himself mystically united with the animal or vegetable species which is his totem, mystically united with his dream-soul, his forest-soul, and so on.

These communions, the intensity of which is renewed and increased at certain times (the sacred ceremonies, rites of initiation, and so forth), by no means exclude each other. They have no need to be expressed in definite terms to be profoundly felt, and felt by every member of the group. Later, when these rites and ceremonies have gradually ceased to be understood, and then to be practised, such participations retained in customs and myths will fall, so to speak, into the form of "multiple souls," as has happened in the case of the Calabar negroes, so carefully studied by Miss Kingsley. And later still, nearer our own times, as the example of the Greeks show, these multiple souls will in their turn be crystallized into a single soul, not without the distinction between the vital principle and the spiritual inhabitant of the body still remaining apparent. In short, the "soul" properly so called, which serves as the starting-point, of Tylor's theory, and which is, according to him, the object of the savage's primitive philosophy, does not appear, according to my view of the matter, except in peoples of a relatively advanced type. If

he has referred it so far back it is not because he did not know the facts, for Tylor himself quotes a number of cases in which the multiplicity of "souls" is expressly mentioned. But his interpretation of these facts was, as it were, imposed upon him by his postulate, according to which the mentality of lower races obeys the same logical laws as our own thought. Let us abandon this postulate, and at once the mystical and pre-logical nature of this mentality appears, and with it the law of participation which governs its collective representations. From this it follows too that the concept of the soul can no longer be considered save as the product of thought which is already somewhat advanced, and not yet known to primitive peoples.

III

It scarcely ever happens that the primitive mind acquires its collective representations in an isolated state, apart from the connections with which they are usually bound up. The mystic character which attaches to them necessarily involves relations, which are also mystic, between the various objects of their thought. We may then admit *a priori*, as it were, that the same law of participation which governs the formation of the collective representations, rules the connections existing between them. To establish this position, it will be necessary to study the method in which the main inter-relations between persons and things do actually occur in the prelogical mind.

In the first place, the very existence of the social groups, in its relations with that of the individuals which compose them, is most frequently represented (and felt at the same time) as a participation, a communion, or rather, a number of participations and communions. This characteristic is apparent in all the primitive societies about which we have fairly detailed and reliable information. It has been fully demonstrated in the two volumes on the tribes of Central Australia by Spencer and Gillen. Among the Aruntas "each individual is the direct incarnation of an Alcheringa ancestor or of the spirit part of some Alcheringa animal. . . . The totem of any man is regarded . . . as the same thing as him-

self. . . . Each totemic group is supposed to have a direct control over the numbers of the animal or plant the name of which he bears. . . ."¹ Lastly, each totem is mystically bound to a strictly defined locality or portion in space which is always occupied by the spirits of the totemic ancestors, and this is called "local relationship."²

The collective representation in this case is exactly like that which so astonished Von den Steinen when the Bororos "rigidly" maintained that they were araras, and the Trumai that they *were* aquatic animals. Every individual is both such and such a man or woman, alive at present, a certain ancestral individual, who may be human or semi-human, who lived in the fabulous age of the Alcheringa, and at the same time he is his totem, that is, he partakes in mystic fashion of the essence of the animal or vegetable species whose name he bears. The verb "to be" (which moreover is non-existent in most of the languages of undeveloped peoples) has not here the ordinary copulative sense it bears in our languages. It signifies something different, and something more. It encompasses both the collective representation and the collective consciousness in a participation that is actually lived, in a kind of symbiosis effected by identity of essence. This is the reason that the members of a definite totemic group alone have the power to carry out the *intichiuma* ceremonies, the aim of which is to secure a regular reproduction of a certain animal or plant species.³ This explains, too, the performances, ceremonies, dances (with or without masks, painted decorations, costumes, tattooings) which are to be met with in many primitive peoples, and which are designed to attain the same end—the bison dances of the North American Indians, stag dances of the Huichol Mexicans, the serpent dances of the Zúñis and in other *pueblos*, for instance.

With the Australian tribes, we may say that Spencer and Gillen have put a finger on the very spot, not only revealing the mystic and at the same time utilitarian significance of the *intichiuma* ceremonies, but the intimate relation which exists between the individual, his totemic group and his totemic species, a relation which cannot be expressed by a concept,

¹ *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 202-4.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 303, 544.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-70

just because the wholly mystic relation consists of a participation which cannot be comprised within the limits of logical thought. "At the first glance it looks much as if all that they intended to represent was the behaviour of certain animals, but the ceremonies have a much deeper meaning, for each performer represents an ancestral individual who lived in the Alcheringa. . . . It is as a reincarnation of the never-dying spirit part of one of their semi-animal ancestors that every member of the tribe is born, and therefore, when born he, or she, bears of necessity the name of the animal or plant to which the Alcheringa ancestor was a transformation or a descendant."¹ The ceremonies and dances, therefore, are intended to revive and maintain, by means of the nervous exaltation and ecstasy of movement not wholly unlike that seen in more advanced societies, the community of essence in which the actual individual, the ancestral being living again in him, and the animal or plant species that forms his totem, are all mingled. To our minds, there are necessarily three distinct realities here, however close the relationship may be. To the primitive minds, the three make but one, yet at the same time are three.

In this way the influence which the ceremonies exercise over the totemic species is more than direct: it is *immanent*. How can the primitive doubt their effective power? The most invincible logical certitude gives way before the symbiotic feeling which is an accompaniment of collective representations thus lived and translated into action.

Another aspect of this participation or rather communion is revealed by the part played in the life of the individual and of the community among the Aruntas, by the sacred objects known as *churinga*. These things (pieces of wood or stone of an oblong shape, and generally decorated with mystic designs) are most carefully preserved and deposited in a sacred place which women and children dare not approach. Every totemic group has its own, and from the standpoint of logical thought it would be very difficult to define exactly what *churinga* are, or are not. The external souls of individuals; the vehicles of ancestral spirits and possibly the bodies of these ancestors themselves; extracts of totemic essence;

¹ *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 228.

reservoirs of vitality—they are all of these in turn and simultaneously. The recognition of their mystic power attains its highest intensity at the moment of the initiation ceremonies, which we shall examine in detail later.¹ At this stage, however, I may note, on Spencer and Gillen's authority, the deep religious respect which surrounds the *churinga*, the care taken to preserve them, and the veneration and precaution with which they are handled. "During the whole time the presence of the *churinga*" (which had been lent to a neighbouring tribe, and were being examined on their return) "seems to produce a reverent silence as if the natives really believed that the spirits of the dead men to whom they have belonged in times past were present, and no one, while they were being examined, ever spoke in tones louder than a whisper."² Everywhere, the very expressions used by investigators suggest the idea of participation. "A man who possesses such a *churinga* as the *churinga* snake one will constantly rub it with his hand, singing as he does so about the Alcheringa history of the snake, and gradually comes to feel that there is some special association between him and the sacred object—that a virtue of some kind passes from it to him and also from him to it."³ Can we be surprised, therefore, that the *churinga* is represented, or rather, felt, to be a living being? It is something very different from a piece of wood or stone. It is intimately connected with the ancestor; it has emotions as we have, and these can be calmed when it is stroked with the hand, in the same way in which those of living people may be soothed.⁴

From a participation which is directly represented and actually felt, such as described by Von den Steinen and by Spencer and Gillen, it is an easy transition to the belief, which is so common in undeveloped races, in a relationship between men and animals, or rather, between certain groups of men and certain predetermined animals. Such beliefs are often expressed in myths. Among the Aruntas, Spencer and Gillen collected a number of legends relating to semi-human or semi-animal beings, which establish a living transition between

¹ Vide Chap. VIII. pp. 354-8.

² *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 303.

³ *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 277-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 265 (note).

the two classes. Very frequently, too, the expressions used by the observers are significant. Thus, in describing a totemic ceremony, it is said: "The particular rat-man or man-rat—for, as already said, the identity of the human individual is sunk in that of the object with which he is associated, and from which he is supposed to have originated—to whom this ceremony referred, is supposed to have travelled to Walyirra, where he died, and where his spirit remained associated as usual with the *churinga*." ¹ Spencer and Gillen find in these mythical ideas "a crude attempt to describe the origin of human beings out of non-human creatures who were of various forms; some of them were representations of animals, others of plants, but in all cases they were to be regarded as intermediate stages in the transition of an animal or plant ancestor into the human individual who bears its name as that of his or her totem." ²

Among the peoples who are more advanced in development, the idea of these mythical animals is slightly different. The ancestors of the totemic group are not exactly like animals that exist to-day, but they have a mystic share of both the animal and the human nature. The primitives project upon them, as it were, the participation which forms the union between the social group and its totemic animal. In British Columbia, for instance, "I sought to learn from him (i.e. the usual informant) whether his people were known as the otter-people, and whether they looked upon the otter as their relatives, and paid regard to these animals by not killing or hunting them. He smiled at the question and shook his head, and later explained that although they believed their remote ancestor to have been an otter, they did not think it was the same kind of otter as lived now. The otters from which they were descended were otter-people, not animals, who had the power to change from the forms of men and women to those of the otter. All the animals in the old-time were like that, they were not just common animals and nothing else; they were people as well and could take the human or the animal form at will, by putting on or taking off the skin or other natural clothing of the animal. . . . Among the Thompsons they have a distinct term in their

¹ *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 231.

² *Ibid.*, p. 392.

language by which these mystic beings are distinguished from ordinary animals." ¹

Here again mystic participations account for relationships that the lower races consider as natural and evident, however absurd and unimaginable they appear to European investigators. Du Chaillu tells us that the African "king Quengueza refused to eat the meat offered him. 'It is *roondah* for me.' He explained that the meat of the *Bos brachicheros* was forbidden to his family, and was an abomination to them, for the reason that many generations ago one of their women gave birth to a calf instead of a child. I laughed, but the king replied very soberly that he could show me a woman of another family whose grandmother had given birth to a crocodile, for which reason the crocodile was *roondah* to that family. . . . They are religiously scrupulous on this matter . . . scarce a man is to be found to whom some article of food is not *roondah*." ² There is no need to lay stress on such beliefs, for they are excessively general, and experience, in the rare cases in which it can be appealed to, proves powerless against them. Rajah Brooke tells of a man who had had his leg mutilated by an alligator, despite his mystic relationship with that animal. "I asked him if he had since retaliated on the alligator tribe. He replied, 'No; I never wish to kill an alligator, as the dreams of my forefathers have always forbidden such acts; and I can't tell why an alligator should have attacked me, unless he mistook me for a stranger, and that was the reason the spirits saved my life.'" ³

When a social group or an individual thus considers itself solidary with, or related to, a totemic animal, when he or it objectifies this participation in the actual relations with the animal, does it signify the animal species considered in its entirety and, so to speak, in an abstract fashion, or all the members of the species considered collectively, or is it a certain animal in particular? This question presents logical thought with hypotheses which are distinct and mutually exclusive, and we have to choose between them. Prelogical mentality, however, hardly ever separates them (except in the case of the

¹ Hill Tout, "The Halkomelem of British Columbia," *J.A.I.*, xxiv. p. 325.

² *Equatorial Africa*, pp. 308-9; *J.A.I.*, xxiv. p. 325.

³ *Ten Years in Sarawak*, i. p. 235.

"forest-soul" given above) just because the law of participation, which mainly governs them, allows of his thinking of the individual in the collective and the collective in the individual without any difficulty. Between the bear and bears, and the bison and bisons, and one fish and fish in general, such a mentality pictures a mystic participation, and neither the species as a whole nor the individual existence of its representatives means the same to him as it would do to us.

Are the honours so frequently paid in ceremonious style to an animal killed in the chase, meant for that animal in particular, or for the spirit of the genus whose goodwill must be secured? There is no alternative in the case: such honours are paid to both, as one and indivisible. "A Frenchman having one day thrown away a mouse which he had just caught, a little girl picked it up, intending to eat it. The child's father snatched it from her and began to caress the dead animal affectionately. . . . 'I am doing this,' he said, 'so that the spirit of the mouse may not trouble my child when she has eaten it.'"¹ This guardian spirit, interpreted as a concept for rational thought, is a relation which in reality can find no expression in its categories: it is the interpretation of a participating relation between the individual animal and the collective. And this participation does not find its reason and its proof, as it seems to us, in the identity of anatomical structure or physiological function, of external characteristics which are apparent and can be verified by experience: it is conceived and felt "in terms of spirit" like every reality which the prelogical mind perceives. To such a mind that which is of supreme interest in the animal (setting aside the need of obtaining food from it; and even eating the flesh of an animal is above all participating mystically in its nature), is not its visible form or qualities; it is the spirit of which it is the manifestation, upon which the mystic relations of this animal (whether regarded individually or collectively, matters little), with the human groups in question depend. Invisible and intangible, this "spirit" is at once in each and all. Such "multipresence" proves no stumbling-block to prelogical mentality.

¹ Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, iii. pp. 299-300.

Bancroft relates a Californian belief, which seems incredible to him, and which throws strong light upon the mystic participation between the individual and the species. "They called this bird (the buzzard) the *panes*, and once every year they had a festival of the same name, in which the principal ceremony was the killing of a buzzard without losing a drop of its blood. It was next skinned, all possible care being taken to preserve the feathers entire. . . . Last of all the body was buried within the sacred enclosure amid great apparent grief from the old women, they mourning as over the loss of relative or friend. Tradition explained this: the *panes* had indeed been once a woman, whom, wandering in the mountain ways, the great god Chinigchinich had come suddenly upon and changed into a bird. How this was connected with the killing of her every year anew by the people and with certain extraordinary ideas held relative to that killing is, however, by no means clear; for it was believed that as often as the bird was killed it was made alive again, and more, and—faith to move mountains—that the birds killed in one same yearly feast in many separate villages were one and the same bird!"¹

IV

So far we have been considering especially, as far as the collective representations of primitives are concerned, what we might call the participating relations from the static point of view, that is, those which govern the existence of objects, natural phenomena, individuals or species. Let us now pass to the dynamic aspect, and consider the influence and sway which beings and objects mutually exercise. To tell the truth, it is one of the characteristic features of primitive mentality that in very many cases the difference between the two points of view tends to disappear. It is often impossible to decide whether an influence is *transitive* or *immanent*, and in spite of the difficulty which *we* feel in conceiving that which we consider contradictory, it is both at the same time. This is the case with the influence exercised by the totemic group upon the animal or plant which is its totem, by means of the

¹ *The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America*, iii. p. 168.

intichiuma ceremonies. In North America, again, the members of the wind totem are supposed to have a special influence on blizzards, and they are entreated to send a breeze when the mosquitoes become too troublesome.¹ In the Torres Straits, "an Umai man (having the dog as his totem) was credited with understanding the habits of dogs, and with ability to exercise special control over them."² Among the tribes of Central Australia "an euro man gives to a plum-tree man a 'sung-over' *churinga* for the purpose of assisting him to hunt the animal."³ In the Kaitish tribe, the headman of the water totem must religiously refrain from using a pointing stick or bone against an enemy, for if he did so, the water would become foul and infectious.⁴

These facts and many others which might be cited serve to show how insensibly prelogical mentality establishes a connection between the influence exercised upon oneself and the influence exercised on something else. When a certain act of the water totem chief makes the water undrinkable, it is impossible to decide whether the influence exercised is imagined as transient or as immanent: prelogical mentality does not differentiate. But that which we perceive clearly in the relations of the totemic groups with the being or object or species which is their totem, a profound and informed analysis of prelogical mentality would discover among an infinitude of other relations, which this same mentality would also picture as subject to the law of participation. Thus there exists a mystic participation between each totemic group and a certain spot which pertains to it, that is, between this totemic group and a certain point of the compass. The cardinal points, in their turn, are bound up (also by mystic participation) with colours, winds, mythical animals, and these with rivers, or sacred forests, and so on, almost to infinity. The natural environment of a certain group, tribe or family of tribes, for instance, thus appears in their collective representations, not as an object or a system of objects and phenomena governed by fixed laws, according to the laws of rational thought—but as an unstable ensemble of mystic

¹ Dorsey, "Siouan Cults," *E. B. Rept.*, xi. p. 410.

² Haddon, "The West Tribes of Torres Straits," *J.A.I.*, xix. p. 325.

³ Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 202-4.

⁴ *Id.*, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 463.

actions and reactions, of which persons, things, phenomena, are but the vehicles and manifestations, an ensemble which depends upon the group, as the group depends upon it.

Oriented differently from our own, and pre-eminently engaged with mystic qualities and connections, with the law of participation as its supreme guide and control, primitive mentality perforce interprets in a fashion other than ours what *we* call nature and experience. Everywhere it perceives the communication of qualities (through transference, contact, projection, contamination, defilement, possession, in short, through a number of varied operations) which, either instantaneously or in the course of time, bring a person or a thing into participation with a given faculty; and these qualities have the power of consecrating him or it, or the contrary, at the beginning or end of a ceremony.¹ Later on, from a formal point of view, and to demonstrate the actual functioning of prelogical mentality, I shall pass in review a certain number of magical or religious practices derived from these ideas, and they will appear to be inspired and maintained by this belief in a participation. The beliefs relating to the different kinds of taboo fall under this head. When an Australian aboriginal or a Maori, terrified at the idea that he has unconsciously partaken of a food which is forbidden, dies from having infringed his taboo, it is because he feels himself hopelessly impregnated by a death-dealing influence which has entered his body with the food in question. This same influence was imparted to the food through participation: for example, it may have been the remains of a chief's repast which an unfortunate man of the common people has eaten inadvertently.

The same ideas are at the bottom of the universal belief which affirms that certain men become animals—tigers, wolves, bears, etc.—whenever they put on the skins of such. To the primitives, such an idea is wholly mystic. They are not concerned with knowing whether the man, in becoming a tiger, ceases to be a man, and later, when he becomes a man again, is no longer a tiger. That which is of paramount importance to them is the mystic virtue which makes these individuals “participable,” to use Malebranche’s term, of both tiger

¹ Cf. Hubert and Mauss, *Mélanges d'Histoire des Religions*, pp. 22–32, 66–7

and man in certain conditions, and consequently more formidable than men who are never anything but men, and tigers which are always tigers only.

"How is this?" said the worthy Dobrizhoffer to the Abipones, "you daily kill tigers in the plain without dread, why then should you weakly fear a false imaginary tiger in the town?" "You Fathers don't understand these matters," they reply, with a smile. "We never fear, but kill, tigers in the plain, because we can see them. Artificial tigers we do fear, because they can neither be seen or killed by us."¹

So, too, the Huichol who adorns himself with the eagle's feathers does not do so solely, or even mainly, for decoration. He believes that he can, by means of these feathers, transfer to himself some of the acute visual power, strength, and shrewdness of the bird. Again it is participation which is the basis of the collective representation that dictates this action.

As a general rule, the processes employed by primitives to obtain the results they desire afford enlightenment as to their ideas of natural forces, and the manifestation of the living beings and phenomena which surround them; for we may say that they either imitate the manifestation, such as they suppose it to be, or else they imagine it as a symbol of what they do themselves. Now these processes, as we shall see in detail later on, are essentially mystic, and almost always involve the elements of participation. Their idea of the forces of ambient nature, then, presents the same characteristics. This is a fresh reason for abandoning the plausible and seductive, yet incorrect theory according to which, by spontaneous and inevitable application of anthropomorphic analogy, primitives see everywhere in nature wills, spirits, souls like their own. Far from sanctioning our attributing to them previous reflection upon their own activity, or a generalization which is founded on the result of such reflection, the facts forbid of our endowing them with that logical and consistent natural "philosophy" which, at any rate in its origin, animism would be.

We must undoubtedly take into account the stupendous

¹ Dobrizhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones*, ii. pp. 77-8.

number of facts collected and classified by Tylor, Frazer, and their collaborators and disciples, and grant that, according to these facts, we never find in the collective representations of primitives anything that is dead, motionless, without life. There is abundance of evidence that all entities and all objects, even those which are inanimate and inorganic, even things manufactured by men's hands, are imagined capable of exercising and undergoing the most diverse influences. The Malay miner believes that tin ore may have special affinities for certain people and cannot be discovered by others ;¹ and we have noted how very important, according to Cushing's account, is the exact shape to be given to familiar objects of manufacture. But it does not therefore follow that the tin ore or the domestic utensils have a soul conceived by analogy with the human soul. It is only permissible to conclude that the primitive's ideas of entities and objects and all that relates to them are mystic, and governed by the law of participation. It may be that at a certain stage in the development of the mentality, the members of a given social group tend both to acquire a more distinct consciousness of their own personality, and to imagine similar personalities outside themselves in animals, trees, rocks, etc., or in gods and spirits. But neither this representation, nor this generalized analogy, is a natural and original product of this mentality.

Pechuël-Loesche has made a detailed study of this matter, as far as the Bafioti of the east coast of Africa are concerned.² We cannot here reproduce or even summarize his arguments, which are based upon a very meticulous observance of beliefs and customs. His conclusion is that such words as "will" or "soul" or "spirit" should be altogether eliminated. There is indeed something in the beings and the phenomena, but it is neither soul nor spirit nor will. If it be absolutely necessary to give it expression, it would be best to use "dynamism" instead of "animism." Pechuël-Loesche quotes a traveller of the seventeenth century, according to whom "these people know neither God nor devil, for they cannot give either any proper name; but they confine themselves to applying the term 'mokisie' to everything in which they perceive

¹ Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 259.

² *Die Loango-Expedition*, iii. 2, pp. 356-7.

hidden force." He notes too that the wonder-workers have just as much fear of the souls of the dead as the laymen. "If one should ask a celebrated *nganga* by the help of whose soul or spirit he is performing, he will look at you without answering, with a glance full of fear. He has never had any idea of that sort of thing; it is much too dangerous. . . . In short, the Bafioti do not know elementals. According to them there are forces of power and life existing everywhere (and to-day they regard them as proceeding from one supreme god)—then there are themselves, and between the two, the souls of the dead. There is nothing more. It is with these forces, and not with souls or spirits, that the black magic and its opponent, the white magic, operate." ¹

It is the same with the most undeveloped tribes of South America. "The most primitive animist idea consists in regarding nature as animate everywhere (*Allbeseelung*); an idea which is by no means derived as a result of a knowledge of the human soul, but which is formed at the same time as that by means of simple analogy." ² Junod the missionary very aptly expresses the character of this idea of nature. "The Ba-Ronga," he says, "like their allied race, the Bantus, are animists. In their eyes, the world is full of spiritual influences, sometimes favourable but more often formidable, which must be warded off. Do they imagine these clearly? No: their animist ideas are very vague. . . . On the other hand, there are two or three conceptions which are very familiar to them, and these figure more clearly on the vague background of their beliefs. These are their conceptions of *khombo* (misfortune), *nsila* (defilement), and *yila* (that which is forbidden)." ³

Even investigators of the Tylor and Frazer school, in describing what they see, use expressions which tend to modify their masters' theory in the way I have indicated. Thus "the root idea," says Skeat, "seems to be an all-pervading animism, involving a certain common vital principle (*Semangat*) in man and Nature, which, for want of a more suitable word, has been here called the Soul." ⁴ In the island of Borneo,

¹ *Die Loango-Expedition*, pp. 276-7, 313.

² P. Ehrenreich, *Die Mythen und Legenden der Süd-Amerikanischen Urvölker*, p. 19.

³ Junod, *Les Ba-Ronga*, p. 471.

⁴ *Malay Magic*, p. 579.

the natives "may be said to attribute a soul or spirit to almost every natural agent and to all living things." But how are we to understand this animist doctrine? "They feel themselves to be surrounded on every hand by spiritual powers, which appear to them to be concentrated in those objects to which their attention is directed by practical needs. Adapting a mode of expression familiar to psychologists, we may say that they have differentiated from a *continuum* of spiritual powers a number of spiritual agents with very various degrees of definiteness. Of these the less important are extremely vaguely conceived, but are regarded as being able to bring harm to men."¹

This *continuum* of spiritual powers, antecedent to the definite individualities which are the result of differentiation, we find described in North America in almost exactly the same terms by Miss Alice Fletcher. "The Indians," she says, "regarded all animate and inanimate forms, all phenomena as pervaded by a common life, which was continuous and similar to the will power they were conscious of in themselves. This mysterious power in all things they called *Wakonda*, and through it all things were related to man, and to each other. In the idea of the continuity of life, a relation was maintained between the seen and the unseen, the dead and the living, and also between the fragment of anything and its entirety."² Would it be possible to bring more thoroughly home, in terms of animism, the mystic representations governed by the law of participation, which form the basis of prelogical mentality? Finally, in his recent book,³ A. C. Kruijt also admits that, instead of the traditional animism, the mentality of primitives first of all imagines a *continuum* of mystic forces, a principle of continuous life, an *Allbeseelung*, and that individualities or personalities, souls, spirits, only appear in the second place.

It is therefore permissible to believe that, the more carefully one collects data, the more one detaches them from the animist interpretation which observers have only too frequently

¹ Hose and Macdougall, "Men and Animals in Sarawak," *J.A.I.*, xxxi.

P. 174.

² "The Signification of the Scalp-lock (Omaha Ritual)," *J.A.I.*, xxvi.

P. 437.

³ *Het Animisme in den Indischen Archipel*, pp. 1-2 (1906).

incorporated with them, even unconsciously, the more evident it will appear that the mentality of primitives, being mystic, is necessarily prelogical also : which means that, preoccupied above all with the mystic powers and properties of persons and things, it conceives of their relations under the law of participation without troubling about contradictions which rational thought cannot possibly tolerate.