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# THE SAVAGE MIND

(La Pensée Sauvage)

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## TOTEM AND CASTE

Both the exchange of women and the exchange of food are means of securing or of displaying the interlocking of social groups with one another. This being so, we can see why they may be found either together or separately. They are procedures of the same type and are indeed generally thought of as two aspects of the same procedure. They may reinforce each other, both performing the actual function, or one performing it and the other representing it symbolically. Or they may be alternatives, a single one fulfilling the whole function or if that is otherwise discharged, as it can be even in the absence of both procedures, then the symbolic representation of it:

If . . . a people combines exogamy with totemism, this is because it has chosen to reinforce the social cohesion already established by totemism by superimposing on it yet another system which is connected with the first by its reference to physical and social kinship and is distinguished from, though not opposed to it, by its lack of reference to cosmic kinship. Exogamy can play this same part in types of society which are built on foundations other than totemism; and the geographical distribution of the two institutions coincides only at certain points in the world. (Van Gennep, pp. 351).

However exogamy, as we know, is never entirely absent. This is due to the fact that the perpetuation of the group can only be effected by means of women, and although varying degrees of symbolic content can be introduced by the particular way in which a society organizes them or thinks of their operation, marriage exchanges always have real substance, and they are alone in this. The exchange of food is a different matter. Aranda women really bear children. But Aranda men confine themselves to imagining that their rites

result in the increase of totemic species. In the former, although it may be described in conventional terms which impose their own limits on it, what is in question is primarily a way of doing something. In the latter it is only a way of saying something.

Examples of 'accumulation' of some kind have attracted particular attention, no doubt because the repetition of the same scheme on two different planes made them look simpler and more consistent. It is mainly this which has led to the definition of totemism by the parallelism between eating prohibitions and rules of exogamy and to making this supplementary set of customs a special object of study. There are, however, cases in which the relation between marriage and eating customs is one of complementarity and not supplementarity and where they are therefore dialectically related to each other. This form clearly also belongs to the same group. And it is groups in this sense, and not arbitrarily isolated transformations, which are the proper subject of the sciences of man.

In an earlier chapter I quoted a botanist's testimony with regard to the extreme purity of types of seed in the agriculture of so-called primitive peoples, in particular among the Indians of Guatemala. We also know that there is intense fear of agricultural exchanges in this area: a transplanted seedling may take the spirit of the plant with it, with the result that it disappears from its original locality. One may, then, exchange women but refuse to exchange seeds. This is common in Melanesia.

The inhabitants of Dobu, an island to the south-east of New Guinea, are divided into matrilineal lineages called *susu*. Husband and wife, who necessarily come from different *susu*, each bring their own seed yams and cultivate them in separate gardens without ever mixing them. No hope for a person who has not his own seed: a woman who has none will not succeed in marrying and will be reduced to the state of a fisherwoman, thief or beggar. Seed which does not come from the *susu* will not grow, for agriculture is possible only by the use of magic inherited from the maternal uncle: it is ritual which makes the yams swell.

These precautions and scruples rest on the belief that yams are persons: 'Like women, they give birth to children . . .' They go abroad at night and people wait for their return before harvesting. This is the source of the rule that yams may not be dug too early in the morning: they might not yet have returned. It is also the source of the conviction that the fortunate cultivator is a magician

who has known how to persuade his neighbours' yams to move and establish themselves in his garden. A man who has a good harvest is reckoned a lucky thief (Fortune 2).

Beliefs of the same type were to be found even in France until recently. In the middle ages there was a penalty of death for 'the sorceress who defiled and injured crops; who, by reciting the psalm *Super aspidem ambulabis*, emptied the fields of their corn to fill her own granary with this goodly produce'. Not so long ago at Cubjac in the Perigord a magical invocation was supposed to assure the person using it of a good crop of turnips: 'May our neighbours' be as big as millet seed, our relations' as big as grains of corn and our own as big as the head of Fauve the ox!' (Rocal, pp. 164-5).

Apart from the modicum of exogamy resulting from the prohibited degrees, European peasant societies practised strict local endogamy. And it is significant that at Dobu extreme endo-agriculture can act as the symbolic compensation for lineage and village exogamy which is practised with repugnance and even fear. In spite of the fact that endogamy within the locality - which consists of between four and twenty villages - is generally assured, marriage even into the next village is looked on as putting a man at the mercy of assassins and sorcerers and he himself always regards his wife as a powerful magician, ready to deceive him with her childhood friends and to destroy him and his (Fortune 2). In a case like this, endo-agriculture reinforces a latent tendency towards endogamy, if indeed it does not express symbolically the hostility to the unwillingly practised rules of a precarious exogamy. The situation is symmetrically the reverse of that prevailing in Australia where food prohibitions and rules of exogamy reinforce one another, as we have seen in a more symbolic and clearly conceptual way in the patrilineal societies (where the food prohibitions are flexible and tend to be formulated in terms of moieties, that is, at a level which is already abstract and lends itself to a binary coding by pairs of oppositions) and in a more literal and concrete fashion in the matrilineal societies (where the prohibitions are rigid and stated in terms of clans which one might often be hesitant to regard as members of systematic sets, given the determining part of demographic and historic factors in their genesis).

Apart from these cases of positive or negative parallelism, there are others in which reciprocity between social groups is expressed

only on one plane. Omaha rules of marriage are formulated very differently from those of the Aranda. Instead of the class of the spouse being precisely specified, as it is among the Aranda, any clan not expressly forbidden is permitted. On the plane of food, however, the Omaha have rites very similar to the intichiuma:\* the sacred maize is entrusted to particular clans who annually distribute it to the others to vitalize their seeds (Fletcher and La Flesche). The totemic clans of the Nandi of Uganda are not exogamous; but a remarkable development of clan prohibitions, not only on the plane of food but also on those of technical and economic activities, dress and impediments to marriage based on some detail or other of the personal history of the forbidden spouse, compensates for this 'non-functionality' in the sphere of marriage exchanges (Hollis). No system can be constructed from these differences: the distinctions recognized between the groups seem rather to spring from a propensity to accept all statistical fluctuations. In a different form and on a different plane, this is also the method employed by the systems termed 'Crow-Omaha' and by contemporary Western societies to ensure the overall equilibrium of matrimonial exchanges.†

This emergence of methods of articulation more complex than those resulting just from rules of exogamy or food prohibitions, or even of both at once, is particularly striking in the case of the Baganda (who are near the Nandi) because they seem to have accumulated all the forms. The Baganda were divided into forty clans, *kika*, each of which had a common totem, *miziro*, the consumption of which was forbidden by virtue of a rule of food rationing: by depriving itself of the totemic food, each clan leaves more of it available to other clans. This is the modest counterpart of the Australian claim that by refraining from consuming its totem each clan retains the power to increase it.

As in Australia, each clan is characterized by its links with a territory, among the Baganda generally a hill. There is a secondary totem, *kabiro*, as well as the principal totem. Each Baganda clan is thus defined by two totems, food prohibitions and a territory. There are also prerogatives such as eligibility of its members for

\* See below, p. 226.

† Rightly or wrongly, Radcliffe-Brown (3, pp. 32-3) treats the Nandi kinship system as an Omaha system.

the kingship or other honours, the right to provide royal wives, making and caring for the royal emblems or utensils, ritual obligations to provide other clans with certain kinds of food, and technical specializations: the Mushroom clan, for instance, makes all the bark cloth, and all blacksmiths come from the clan of the Tail-less Cow, etc. Finally, we find some prohibitions, such as that the women of a particular clan cannot be the mothers of male children of the blood royal, and restrictions with regard to the bearing of proper names (Roscoe).

In cases like this it is no longer very clear what type of society is in question. There can, for instance, be no doubt that the totemic clans of the Baganda also function as castes. And yet at first sight it seems that nothing could be more different than these two forms of institution. We have become used to associating totemic groups with the most 'primitive' civilizations and thinking of castes as a feature of highly developed, sometimes even literate, societies. Moreover, a strong tradition connects totemic institutions with the strictest exogamy while an anthropologist asked to define the concept of a caste would almost certainly begin by mentioning the rule of endogamy.

It may therefore seem surprising that between about 1830 and 1850, the first investigators of Australian societies often referred to their marriage classes as 'castes' even though they had some idea of their function (Thomas, pp. 34-5). These intuitions which have the freshness and vivacity of a perception of societies which were still intact, and a vision undistorted by theoretical speculation, are not to be despised. Without going to the root of the problem now, it is clear that there are at least superficial analogies between Australian tribes and societies with castes. Each group has a specialized function indispensable to the collectivity as a whole and complementary to the functions assigned to other groups.

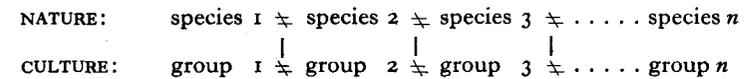
This is particularly clear in the case of tribes whose clans or moieties are bound together by a rule of reciprocity. Among the Kaitish and the Unmatjera, northern neighbours of the Aranda, anyone who gathers wild seeds in the territory of a totemic group named after these seeds must ask the headman's permission before eating them. It is the duty of each totemic group to provide the other groups with the plant or animal for whose 'production' it is specially responsible. Thus a man of the Emu clan out hunting on

his own may not touch an emu. But if, on the other hand, he is in company he is permitted and even supposed to kill it and offer it to hunters of other clans. Conversely, when he is alone a man of the Water clan may drink if he is thirsty but when he is with others he must receive the water from a member of the other moiety, preferably from a brother-in-law (Spencer and Gillen, pp. 159-60). Among the Warramunga each totemic group is responsible for the increase and availability to other groups of a particular plant or animal species: 'The members of one moiety . . . take charge . . . of the ceremonies of the other moiety which are destined to secure the increase of their own food supply'. Among the Walpari as well as the Warramunga the secondary totemic prohibitions (applying to the maternal totem) are waived if the food in question is obtained through the agency of a man of the other moiety. More generally and for any totem, there is a distinction between the groups which never eat it (because it is their own totem), those which eat it only if it is procured through the agency of another group (as in the case of the maternal totems), and those which eat it freely in any circumstances. Similarly in the case of the sacred water-holes, women may never approach them, uninitiated men may approach but not drink from them, while some groups drink from them on the condition that the water is given to them by members of other groups who can themselves drink freely from them (Spencer and Gillen, pp. 164, 167). This mutual interdependence is already to be seen in marriage which, as Radcliffe-Brown has shown in the case of Australia (but the same could equally well be said of other clan societies such as the Iroquois), was based on reciprocal gifts of vegetable food (feminine) and animal food (masculine): the conjugal family in these cases was like a miniature society with two castes.

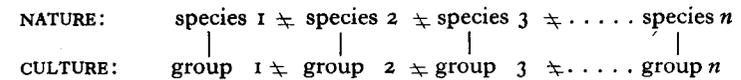
There is thus less difference than would appear between societies which, like some Australian tribes, assign a distinctive magico-economic function to totemic groups and, for instance, the Bororo of Central Brazil, among whom specialists are in charge of the same function of 'liberating' the food production - whether animal or vegetable - for the whole group (Colbacchini). This leads one to doubt whether the opposition between endogamous castes and exogamous totemic groups is really radical. There seem to be connections between these two extreme types, whose nature

would appear more clearly if we could show that intermediate forms exist.

I have drawn attention elsewhere to a feature of so-called totemic institutions which in my own view is fundamental to them. The homology they evoke is not between social groups and natural species but between the differences which manifest themselves on the level of groups on the one hand and on that of species on the other. They are thus based on the postulate of a homology between *two systems of differences*, one of which occurs in nature and the other in culture. Indicating relations of homology by vertical lines, a 'pure totemic structure' could thus be represented in the following way:



This structure would be fundamentally impaired if homologies between the terms themselves were added to those between their relations or if, going one step further, the entire system of homologies were transferred from relations to terms:



In this case the implicit content of the structure would no longer be that clan 1 differs from clan 2 as for instance the eagle differs from the bear but rather that clan 1 is like the eagle and clan 2 like the bear. In other words, the nature of clan 1 and the nature of clan 2 would each be involved separately instead of the formal relation between them.

Now, the transformation whose theoretical possibility has just been considered can sometimes be directly observed. The islanders of the Torres Straits have totemic clans, numbering about thirty at Mabuiag. These exogamous patrilineal clans were grouped into two moieties, one comprising terrestrial and the other marine animals. At Tutu and Saibai this division seems to have corresponded to a territorial division within the village. The structure was already in an advanced state of decay at the time of Haddon's expedition. Nevertheless, the natives had a very strong sense of the physical and psychological affinity between men and their totems and of the corresponding obligation of each group to pursue the

appropriate type of behaviour. Thus the Cassowary, Crocodile, Snake, Shark and Hammer-headed Shark clans were said to love fighting and the Shovel-nosed Skate, Ray and Sucker-Fish clans to be peace loving. The Dog clan was held to be unpredictable, dogs being of a changeable disposition. The members of the Crocodile clan were thought to be strong and ruthless and those of the Cassowary clan to have long legs and to run fast (Frazer, vol. II, pp. 3-9, quoting Haddon and Rivers). It would be interesting to know whether these beliefs are survivals from the old organization or whether they developed as the exogamous rules decayed.

The fact is that similar, though not equally developed, beliefs have been observed among the Menomini of the Great Lakes and among the Chippewa further north. Among the latter, people of the Fish clan were reputed to be long-lived, frequently to go bald or to have thin hair, and all bald people were assumed to come from this clan. Peoples of the Bear clan, on the other hand, had long, thick, coarse hair which never went white and they were said to be ill-tempered and fond of fighting. People of the Crane clan had loud ringing voices and provided the tribe with its orators (Kinietz, pp. 76-7).

Let us pause for a moment to consider the theoretical implications of views like these. When nature and culture are thought of as two systems of differences between which there is a formal analogy, it is the systematic character of each domain which is brought to the fore. Social groups are distinguished from one another but they retain their solidarity as parts of the same whole, and the rule of exogamy furnishes the means of resolving this opposition balanced between diversity and unity. But if social groups are considered not so much from the point of view of their reciprocal relations in social life as each on their own account, in relation to something other than sociological reality, then the idea of diversity is likely to prevail over that of unity. Each social group will tend to form a system no longer with other social groups but with particular differentiating properties regarded as hereditary, and these characteristics exclusive to each group will weaken the framework of their solidarity within the society. The more each group tries to define itself by the image which it draws from a natural model, the more difficult will it become for it to maintain its links with other social groups and, in particular to exchange its

sisters and daughters with them since it will tend to think of them as being of a particular 'species'. Two images, one social and the other natural, and each articulated separately, will be replaced by a socio-natural image, single but fragmented:\*

NATURE:	species 1	species 2	species 3	species n
CULTURE:	group 1	group 2	group 3	group n

It is of course only for purposes of exposition and because they form the subject of this book that I am apparently giving a sort of priority to ideology and superstructures. I do not at all mean to suggest that ideological transformations give rise to social ones. Only the reverse is in fact true. Men's conception of the relations between nature and culture is a function of modifications of their own social relations. But, since my aim here is to outline a theory of superstructures, reasons of method require that they should be singled out for attention and that major phenomena which have no place in this programme should seem to be left in brackets or given second place. We are however merely studying the shadows on the wall of the Cave without forgetting that it is only the attention we give them which lends them a semblance of reality.

This said, to avoid misunderstanding we can summarize what has gone before as an account of the conceptual transformations marking the passage from exogamy to endogamy (or vice versa). Some, at any rate, of the Algonkin tribes, who furnished the last examples, had a hierarchical clan structure which one might suspect would lead to some difficulty in the functioning of exogamous rules formulated in egalitarian terms. But it is in the south-east of the United States, in the tribes of the Muskogi linguistic group, that hybrid institutional forms, half-way between totemic groups and castes, can be seen most clearly; and this also explains the existing uncertainty as to whether they are endogamous or exogamous.

The Chickasaw may perhaps have been exogamous at the clan

\* It will perhaps be objected that in the above mentioned work (6), I denied that totemism can be interpreted on the basis of a direct analogy between human groups and natural species. But this criticism was directed against a theory put forward by ethnologists and what is in question here is an - implicit or explicit - native theory which indeed corresponds to institutions that ethnologists would refuse to class as totemic.

level and endogamous so far as their moieties were concerned. The latter in any case had the feature, highly unusual for structures of this type, of displaying an exclusivism verging on mutual hostility. Illness and death were often attributed to the sorcery of people of the opposite moiety. Each moiety performed its rites in jealous isolation; members of the other moiety who witnessed them were punishable by death. The same attitude existed among the Creek: with regard to moieties it is strikingly reminiscent of that prevailing towards totemic groups among the Aranda. Each performed its rites 'among themselves' although only 'the others' were to benefit from them. And this, it is worth remarking in passing, shows that *endo-praxis* and *exo-praxis* are never definable separately and in absolute terms. As Morgan demonstrated against McLennan, they can only be defined as complementary aspects of an ambiguous relation to self and to others.

The moieties, which probably formed opposite sides in competitive games, were considered to differ in temperament and habitat: one was warlike and preferred open country while the other was pacific and lived in forests. They may also have been ordered hierarchically as is suggested by the terms sometimes applied to them: '[people of the] hickory-choppings' [substantial habitations] and '[people of the] worn-out place' [hovels]. However, these hierarchical, psychical and functional differences were primarily manifested at the level of clans or their subdivisions into hamlets. In native accounts of the past, comments like these about each clan or hamlet constantly occur, like a leit-motiv: 'They were very peculiar people . . . they were not like others . . . they had customs and traditions of their own . . .' These peculiarities were of all sorts of different kinds: place of residence, economic activity, dress, food, talents and tastes.

The Raccoon people were said to live on fish and wild fruit, those of the Puma lived in the mountains, avoided water of which they were very frightened and lived principally on game. The Wild Cat clan slept in the daytime and hunted at night, for they had keen eyes; they were indifferent to women. Members of the Bird clan were up before day-break: 'They were like real birds in that they would not bother anybody . . . The people of this clan have different sorts of minds, just as there are different species of birds'. They were said to live well, to be polygamous, disinclined to work, and prolific.

The people of the Red Fox clan were professional thieves, loving independence and living in the heart of forests. The 'wandering Iksa' were nomadic and improvident but nevertheless enjoyed robust health 'for they did not do anything to run themselves down'. They moved slowly, thinking that they were going to live for ever. The men and women paid little attention to their dress or appearance. They were beggars and lazy. The inhabitants of 'the bending-post-oak' house group lived in the woods. They were of a changeable disposition, not very energetic, given to dancing, always anxious and full of care. They were early risers and clumsy. The High Corncrib house group people were respected in spite of their arrogance: they were good gardeners, very industrious but poor hunters, they bartered their maize for game. They were said to be truthful and stubborn, and skilled at forecasting the weather. As for the Redskunk house group: they lived in dugouts underground (Swanton 2, pp. 190-213).

This material was collected at a time when the traditional institutions no longer existed except in old informants' memories and it is plain that it is partly made up of old wives' tales. No society could allow itself to 'act nature' to this extent or it would split up into a whole lot of independent, hostile bands, each denying that the others were human. The data which Swanton collected consist of sociological myths as well as or rather than ethnographic facts. Nevertheless, their wealth, the resemblances they have among themselves, the unity of the underlying scheme, the existence of similar data for neighbouring groups all suggest that even if the real institutions were different, we have here at least a sort of conceptual model of Chickasaw society which has the extremely interesting feature of recalling a society with castes, even though the attributes of the castes and their relations to each other are coded in terms of natural species, that is, after the manner of totemic groups. Further, the relations held to exist between clans and their eponyms are like those found in classical 'totemic' societies: the clan is descended from the animal or alternatively a human ancestor of the clan contracted a marriage with one in mythical times. Now, these societies, which are at the very least conceived of as if they were composed of 'natural' castes - or, in other words, in which culture is thought of as a projection or reflection of nature - are the link between the societies classical authors used to illustrate their conception of totemism

(the tribes of the plains and of the south west) and societies such as the Natchez which afford one of the rare examples of genuine castes known in North America.

We have thus established that in the two classical territories of so-called totemism, the institutions defined with reference to this misleading notion can either also be characterized from the point of view of their function, as in Australia or, as in America, make way for forms which are still conceived on the model of totemic groups although they operate more like castes.

Let us now turn to India, also classical territory but of castes. I shall try to show that through their influence institutions traditionally thought of as totemic undergo a transformation exactly the reverse of that in America: instead of castes conceived in terms of a natural model we have here totemic groups conceived in terms of a cultural model.

Most of the totemic names found among certain tribes in Bengal derive from animals or plants. This is the case with some sixty-seven totems recorded among the Oraon of Chota Nagpur with the exception of iron which, as there is little point in proscribing its consumption, is forbidden to come into contact with lips or tongue. This prohibition is thus still formulated in terms that make it approximate to an eating prohibition. Among the Munda of the same region, the majority of the three hundred and forty exogamous clans recorded have animal or plant totems, the consumption of which is forbidden. Totems of a different kind are however already noticeable: full moon, moonlight, rainbow, months of the year, days of the week, copper bracelet, verandah, umbrella, professions or castes such as that of basket-maker and torch-bearer (Risley, vol. II and Appendix). Further west, the forty-three names of the Bhil clans are divided into nineteen plant and seventeen animal names and seven relate to objects: dagger, broken pot, village, thorny stick, bracelet, ankle ring, piece of bread (Koppers, pp. 118-19).

It is towards the south that the reversal in the relation of natural species and objects or manufactured goods becomes particularly conspicuous. Few plants and scarcely any animals figure in the names of the clans of the Devanga, a caste of weavers in the Madras area. On the other hand, the following names are found: buttermilk, cattle-pen, money, dam, house, collyrium, knife, scissors, boat, lamp, cloths, female clothing, ropes for hanging pots,

old plough, monastery, funeral pyre, tile. Sixty-seven exogamous clans are recorded among the Kuruba of Mysore. They have animal or plant names or names like the following: cart, cup, silver, flint, roll of woollen thread, bangle, gold, gold ring, pickaxe, coloured border of cloth, stick, blanket, measure, moustache, loom, bamboo tube, etc. (Thurston, vol. II, p. 160 ff., vol. IV, pp. 141-2).

It is possible that this phenomenon is a peripheral rather than a southern one for one is inclined here to recall the mythical role which some south-east Asian tribes ascribe to manufactured objects such as sabre, knife, lance, needle, post, rope, and so on. However this may be, in India the manufactured objects from which clans take their names receive special respect, like totemic plants and animals. Either they constitute the object of a cult at marriages or alternatively the respect paid to them takes a bizarre and specific form. Among the Bhil for example, the clan of the broken pot must collect pieces of a particular kind of pottery and give them burial. At times a certain freedom of invention is perceptible: the Arisana gotram of the Karuba bears the name of turmeric, but as it is held to be inconvenient to be deprived of so essential a condiment, the *Korra* grain replaces it as the forbidden food.

Heterogeneous lists of clan names are known in other parts of the world. Perhaps significantly, they are particularly found in the north of Australia, the part of the continent most subject to outside influences. Individual totems such as a razor blade or money have been noted in Africa:

When I asked [the Dinka] what I myself should invoke as my clan-divinity, it was half-jokingly suggested that I should invoke Typewriter, Paper, and Lorry, for were these not the things which had always helped my people and which were passed on to Europeans by their ancestors? (Lienhardt, p. 110).

But this heterogeneity is most apparent in India where a high proportion of totemic names are names of manufactured objects, that is, of products or symbols of functional activities which – because they are clearly differentiated in a caste system – can serve to express distinction between social groups within the tribe or the caste itself. It is as if in America the rudiments of castes had been contaminated by totemic classifications, while in India the vestiges

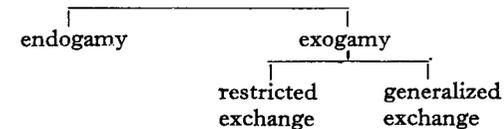
of totemic groups had allowed themselves to be won over by symbolism of technological or occupational origin. These 'chassés-croisés' seem less surprising when one realizes that there is a neater and more direct way of translating Australian institutions into the language of castes than that used above.

I have suggested that since each totemic group makes itself responsible for the control of a species of plant or animal for the benefit of the other groups, these specializations of function are, from one point of view, similar to those assumed by occupational castes since the latter also practise a distinctive activity, indispensable to the life and well-being of the whole group. However, in the first place, a caste of potters really makes pots, a caste of launderers really washes clothes, a caste of barbers really shaves people, while the magical powers of Australian totemic groups are of an imaginary kind. And there is a distinction here even if belief in the efficacy of magical powers is shared by their supposed beneficiaries and by those who, in all good faith, claim to possess them. Secondly, the connection between a sorcerer and the natural species he claims to control cannot be conceived in terms of the same logical model as that between a craftsman and his product. For it was only in mythical times that totemic animals were really begotten by the ancestor. Nowadays it is kangaroos which produce kangaroos, and the sorcerer contents himself with assisting them.

Now, if Australian (and other) institutions are considered from a wider point of view, it becomes possible to distinguish a field in which the parallel with a caste system is very much clearer. We need only turn our attention to social organization instead of religious beliefs and practices. For the early observers of Australian societies were in a sense right to speak of marriage classes as 'castes': an Australian section produces its women for other sections in the same way as an occupational caste produces goods and services which other castes cannot obtain otherwise than through its agency . . . It would therefore be superficial to regard them as opposites simply because one is exogamous and the other endogamous. Occupational castes and totemic groups are really both 'exo-practising', the former in the exchange of goods and services and the latter so far as marriage is concerned.

A coefficient of 'endo-praxis' is however always discernible in either case. Castes are ostensibly endogamous apart from the restrictions on marriage which, as I have shown elsewhere (I, ch.

25), tend to multiply in compensation. The Australian groups are exogamous but their exogamy most commonly takes the form of restricted exchange which is an imitation of endogamy within exogamy itself, for in restricted exchange groups consider themselves as closed to the outside and their internal exchanges double up on each other. It can therefore be contrasted with generalized exchange which is more open to the outside and allows the incorporation of new groups without upsetting the structure. These relations can be shown by means of a diagram:



It will be seen that restricted exchange, the 'closed' form of exogamy is logically closer to endogamy than the 'open' form, generalized exchange.

There is a further point. A fundamental difference exists between the women who are exchanged and the goods and services which are also exchanged. Women are biological individuals, that is, natural products naturally procreated by other biological individuals. Goods and services on the other hand are manufactured objects (or operations performed by means of techniques and manufactured objects), that is, social products culturally manufactured by technical agents. The symmetry between occupational castes and totemic groups is an inverted symmetry. The principle on which they are 'differentiated is taken from culture in one case and from nature in the other.

Nevertheless, this symmetry is present only on an ideological plane. It has no concrete basis. So far as culture is concerned professional specialities are truly different and complementary. The same could not be said, with respect to nature, of the specialization of exogamous groupings in the production of women of different species. For even granting that occupations do constitute distinct 'social species', this does not alter the fact that the women of different sections or sub-sections all belong to the same natural species.

This is the trap reality sets for the imagination and men try to escape it by seeking real diversity in the natural order, which is (if they pay no attention to the division of labour and occupational specialization) the only objective model on which they can draw

for establishing relations of complementarity and co-operation among themselves. In other words, men conceive these relations on the model of their conception of the relations between natural species (and at the same time of their own social relations). There are in fact only two true models of concrete diversity: one on the plane of nature, namely that of the diversity of species, and the other on the cultural plane provided by the diversity of functions. The model illustrated by marriage exchanges lying between these two true models, has an ambiguous and equivocal character. Women are alike so far as nature is concerned and can be regarded as different only from the cultural angle. But if the first point of view is predominant (as is the case when it is the natural model which is chosen as the model of diversity) resemblance outweighs difference. Women certainly have to be exchanged since they have been decreed to be different. But this exchange presupposes that basically they are held to be alike. Conversely, when the other viewpoint is taken and a cultural model of diversity adopted, difference, which corresponds to the cultural aspect, outweighs resemblance. Women are only recognized as alike within the limits of their respective social groups and consequently cannot be exchanged between one caste and another. Castes decree women to be naturally heterogeneous; totemic groups decree them to be culturally heterogeneous. And the final reason for this difference between the two systems is that castes exploit cultural heterogeneity in earnest while totemic groups only create the illusion of exploiting natural heterogeneity.

All this can be expressed in a different way. Castes, which are defined on the basis of a cultural model, really exchange cultural objects. But they have to pay a price for the symmetry they postulate between nature and culture: in that the castes are themselves composed of biological beings, they are constrained to conceive their natural product according to a natural world, since this product consists of women whom they both produce and are produced by. It follows that women are made diverse on the model of natural species and cannot be exchanged any more than species can cross with one another. Totemic groupings make the reverse sacrifice. They are defined on the basis of a natural model and exchange natural objects – the women they produce and are produced by naturally. The symmetry postulated between nature and culture involves in that case the assimilation of natural species on

the cultural plane. In the same way that women who are homogeneous so far as nature is concerned are declared to be heterogeneous from the point of view of culture, so natural species, which are heterogeneous so far as nature is concerned are proclaimed to be homogeneous from the point of view of culture: culture asserts them all to be subject to the same type of beliefs and practices since in the eyes of culture, they have the common feature that man has the power to control and increase them. Consequently, men by cultural means exchange women who perpetuate these same men by natural means and they claim to perpetuate species by cultural means and exchange them *sub specie naturae*: in the form of food-stuffs which are substitutable for each other since they all provide nourishment and since, as with women also, a man can satisfy himself by means of some foods and go without others in so far as any women or any foods are equally suitable to achieve the ends of procreation or subsistence.

We thus arrive at the common properties of which occupational castes and totemic groups provide contrary illustrations. Castes are heterogeneous in function and can therefore be homogeneous in structure: since the diversity of function is real, complementarity is already established on the level of reality and the operation of marriage exchanges – between the same social units – would be a case of 'accumulation' of functions (why this is of no practical value has been shown above [cf. p. 109]). Conversely, totemic groups are homogeneous so far as their function is concerned, for it makes no real yield and amounts to no more than a repetition of the same illusion for all the groups. They therefore have to be heterogeneous in structure, each being destined for the production of women of a different social species.

In totemism, consequently, purported reciprocity is constructed out of modes of behaviour homogeneous with each other and simply juxtaposed. Each group similarly imagines itself to have magical power over a species, but as this illusion has no foundation it is in fact no more than an empty form and as such identical to the other forms. The true reciprocity results from the articulation of two processes: the natural one which comes about by means of women, who procreate both men and women, and the cultural one which men bring about by characterizing these women socially when nature has brought them into existence.

In the caste system reciprocity is manifested by specialization of function and it is practised on the the cultural plane. The valencies of homogeneity are therefore freed; from being formal, the analogy postulated between human groups and natural species becomes substantial (as the example of the Chickasaw and the quotation from the Laws of Manu [cf. p. 106], shows) and true reciprocity being otherwise, secured, endogamy is made available.

There are, however, limits to this symmetry. Totemic groups certainly give an imitation of gift-giving which has a function. But, apart from the fact that it remains imaginary, it is not cultural either since it must be classed, not among the arts of civilization, but as a fake usurpation of natural capacities which man as a biological species lacks. Certainly also the equivalent of food prohibitions are found in caste systems but, significantly enough, they are principally expressed in the reverse form of 'endo-cuisine' and moreover they occur on the level of the preparation, rather than the production of food, in other words, on the cultural plane. They are precise and detailed but mainly with respect to culinary operations and utensils.

Finally, women are naturally interchangeable (from the point of view of their anatomical structure and the physiological functions) and in their case culture finds the field open for the great game of differentiation (whether this is thought of in a positive or a negative way and used therefore as a basis for exogamy on the one hand or endogamy on the other). Foods however are not altogether able to be substituted for each other. The game reaches its limits more quickly in this second domain for one is much less inclined to class all foods as totemic since, as we have seen, it is harder to do without turmeric than *korra*. Now, this applies even more to occupational functions. Because they really are different and complementary, they allow the establishment of reciprocity in its truest form. On the other hand, they exclude negative reciprocity and so set bounds to the logical harmony of caste systems. Each caste remains partly 'endo-functional'; it cannot forbid rendering also to itself the differentiating services it is called on first of all to provide for the other castes, since these have been ruled to be irreplaceable. Or who would shave the barber?

Introducing (socially) instituted diversity into a single natural species, the human species, is not therefore the same as projecting the diversity (naturally) existing between animal and plant

species on to the social plane. Societies with totemic groups and exogamous sections in vain believe that they manage to play the same game with species which are different, and women who are identical. They do not notice that since women are identical, it falls to the social will to make them different, while species being different, no one can make them identical, in the sense of all subjects in the same way to human will. Men produce other men, they do not produce ostriches.

Nevertheless it remains true that we can on a very general plane perceive an equivalence between the two main systems of differences to which men have had recourse for conceptualizing their social relations. Simplifying a great deal, it may be said that castes picture themselves as natural species while totemic groups picture natural species as castes. And this must be refined: castes naturalize a true culture falsely, totemic groups culturalize a false nature truly.

In both views it must be granted that the system of social functions corresponds to the system of natural species, the world of living creatures to the world of objects, and we must therefore recognize the system of natural species and that of manufactured objects as two mediating sets which man employs to overcome the opposition between nature and culture and think of them as a whole. But there is also another means.

Several hunting tribes in North American say that at the beginning of time buffaloes were ferocious beasts and 'all bone'. They were not only inedible to man but also cannibal. Men were thus once the food of the animal which later came to be their prime food but which was at that time the reverse of a food since it was animal food in its inedible form: bone. How is so complete a change to be explained?

It came to pass, according to the myth, that a buffalo fell in love with a girl and wanted to marry her. This girl was the only member of her sex in a community of men, for a man had conceived her after being pricked by a thorny plant. The woman thus appears to be the product of a negative union, between nature hostile to man (the bush of thorns) and human antinature (the pregnant man). In spite of their affection for their daughter and their fear of the buffalo, men thought it wise to agree to the marriage and they collected together presents, each of which was to stand for a part of the buffalo's body: a war-bonnet was to become the backbone, a

But they produce ostrich-meat, don't they?

quiver of otter-skin the skin on its chest, a woven blanket the paunch, a pointed quiver the stomach, moccasins the kidneys, a bow the ribs, etc. Nearly forty correspondences are enumerated in this way (cf. Dorsey and Kroeber, no. 81, for a version of this myth).

The marriage exchange thus functions as a mechanism serving to mediate between nature and culture, which were originally regarded as separate. By substituting a cultural architectonic for a supernatural primitive one, the alliance creates a second nature over which man has a hold, that is a mediatized nature. After these occurrences buffaloes became 'all flesh' instead of 'all bone' and edible instead of cannibal.

The same sequence is sometimes reversed as in the Navaho myth which ends in the transformation of a woman into a cannibal she-bear: exactly the converse of a cannibal buffalo being transformed into a husband. The metamorphosis is extended in a scattered pattern which follows the model of the differences between wild species: the vagina of the ogress turned into a hedgehog, her breasts into pinyon nuts and acorns, her paunch into other seeds ('alkali': *sporobolus cryptandrus*, *airoides*, Torr.), the trachea turned into a medicinal plant and the kidneys into mushrooms, etc. (Haile-Wheelwright, p. 83).

These myths are an admirable expression of the way in which marriage exchanges can furnish a model directly applicable to the mediation between nature and culture among peoples where totemic classifications and functional specialization, if present at all, have only a very limited yield. This confirms what I suggested above, namely, first that the 'system of women' is, as it were, a middle term between the system of (natural) living creatures and the system of (manufactured) objects and secondly that each system is apprehended as a transformation within a single group.

The system of living creatures is the only one of the three systems which has an objective existence outside man and that of functions the only one which has a completely social existence, that is, within man. But the completeness of each on one plane explains why neither is readily handled on the other: a food in general use cannot be wholly 'totemized' at least not without a kind of cheating\* and, equally, castes cannot avoid being

\* We read the following about the 'clan divinities' of the Dinka—which the older authors would have had no hesitation in calling totems: '. . . few are of any dietetic importance, and where they are the respect paid to them may yet permit

endofunctional while they serve to construct a grandiose scheme of reciprocity. Reciprocity is not therefore absolute in either case. It is, as it were, blurred and distorted at the periphery. Logically speaking, the reciprocity of marriage exchanges represents an equally impure form since it lies mid-way between a natural and a cultural model. But it is this hybrid character which allows it to function perfectly. Associated with one or the other form, or with both, or present on its own, as the case may be, the reciprocity of marriage exchanges alone can claim universality.

The first conclusion which emerges from this analysis is that totemism, which has been rendered amply formal in 'primitive language', could at the cost of a very simple transformation equally well be expressed in the language of the regime of castes which is quite the reverse of primitive. This is already sufficient to show that we are here dealing not with an autonomous institution, which can be defined by its distinctive properties and is typical of certain regions of the world and certain forms of civilization but with a *modus operandi* which can be discerned even behind social structures traditionally defined in a way diametrically opposed to totemism.

Secondly, we are in a better position to resolve the difficulty arising from the fact that so-called totemic institutions include not only the conceptual systems we have chosen to consider but also rules of action. For I have tried to show that food prohibitions are not a distinctive feature of totemism; they are also found associated with other systems which they similarly serve to 'stress' and conversely systems of names deriving from the natural kingdoms are not always accompanied by food prohibitions: they can be 'stressed' in diverse fashions.

Further, exogamy and food prohibitions are not objects distinct from the nature of society, which should be studied separately or between which causal relations could be discovered. As language shows almost anywhere, they are two aspects or two modes serving to give concrete expression to a *praxis* which as a social activity can be turned outwards or inwards and which always has these two orientations even although they manifest themselves on different

them to be eaten'. Thus the clan of the Giraffe consider that they can eat the meat of this animal provided only that they do not shed its blood (Lienhardt, pp. 114-15).

planes and by means of different codes. If the relation between totemic institutions and castes can be regarded as superficially identical to one between exogamy and endogamy (we have seen that things are in fact more complex), between species and function, and finally between a natural and cultural model, it is because a similar scheme emerges in all the empirically observable and apparently heterogeneous cases and it is this which furnishes scientific investigation with its true subject of study.

There is an analogy between sexual relations and eating in all societies, but either the man or the woman may occupy the position of eater or eaten according to the case and the level of thought. This can but indicate the common requirement that terms should be differentiated from each other and each identified unequivocally.

Here again I do not mean to suggest that social life, the relations between man and nature, are a projection or even result, of a conceptual game taking place in the mind. 'Ideas', Balzac wrote, 'form a complete system within us, comparable to one of the natural kingdoms, a sort of bloom whose iconography will be traced by a man of genius who will pass perhaps as mad.\*' But more madness than genius would be required for such an enterprise. If, as I have said, the conceptual scheme governs and defines practices, it is because these, which the ethnologist studies as discrete realities placed in time and space and distinctive in their particular modes of life and forms of civilization, are not to be confused with *praxis* which – and here at least I agree with Sartre (p. 181) – constitutes the fundamental totality for the sciences of man. Marxism, if not Marx himself, has too commonly reasoned as though practices followed directly from *praxis*. Without questioning the undoubted primacy of infrastructures, I believe that there is always a mediator between *praxis* and practices, namely the conceptual scheme by the operation of which matter and form, neither with any independent existence, are realized as structures, that is as entities which are both empirical and intelligible. It is to this theory of superstructures, scarcely touched on by Marx, that I hope to make a contribution. The development of the study of infrastructures proper is a task which must be left to history – with the aid of demography, technology, historical geography and ethnography.

\* H. de Balzac, 'Louis Lambert' in: *Oeuvres complètes*, Bibl. de la Pleiade, Vol X, p. 396.

It is not principally the ethnologist's concern, for ethnology is first of all psychology.

All that I claim to have shown so far is, therefore, that the dialectic of superstructures, like that of language, consists in setting up *constitutive units* (which, for this purpose, have to be defined unequivocally, that is by contrasting them in pairs) so as to be able by means of them to elaborate a system which plays the part of a synthesizing operator between ideas and facts, thereby turning the latter into *signs*. The mind thus passes from empirical diversity to conceptual simplicity and then from conceptual simplicity to meaningful synthesis.

The most appropriate conclusion to this chapter is an illustration of this idea by a native theory. The Yoruba myth, a veritable *Totem and Taboo* before the fact, takes the complex edifice of denomination and prohibition to pieces bit by bit.

What is in question is the explanation of the following rules. On the third day after a child is born, a priest is called in to give the child 'its *Orisha* and its *ewaws*'. The *Orisha* is the creature or thing which it worships, and the child may not marry anyone who has the same *Orisha*. This creature or thing becomes the principal *ewaw* of the person in question who passes it on to his descendants for four generations. His son takes as his second *ewaw* his father's wife's animal *ewaw*. The son of this son in turn takes his father's wife's third or vegetable *ewaw*. And the son of the son of this son takes the same relative's fourth *ewaw*, i.e. a rat, bird or snake.

In native thought these complicated rules are based on an original division of people into six groups: that of the fisherman; that of 'omens': fish, snake and bird; that of the hunter; that of quadrupeds; that of the farmer; that of plants. Each group comprises both men and women, giving twelve categories altogether.

To begin with unions were incestuous within each group, brother marrying sister. The same Yoruba term is used for marriage, meal, ownership, merit, gain and earnings or winnings. Marrying and eating are one and the same thing. Using A and B to represent a brother and sister of the first group, C and D a brother and sister of the second group and so on, the initially incestuous position can be summarized in the table:

1	2	3	4	5	6
AB	CD	EF	GH	IJ	KL

Human beings however soon got tired of this monotonous 'diet', so the son of the couple AB took the female product of CD and so on for EF and GH etc.:

ABD CDB EFH GHF IJL KLJ

Even then they were not satisfied and so the fisherman made war on the hunter, the hunter on the farmer and the farmer on the fisherman, and each appropriated the other's product. The result was that from then on the fisherman ate flesh, the hunter the products of the soil and the farmer fish:

ABDF CDBH EFHJ GHFL IJLB KLJD

By way of reprisal, the fisherman demanded the products of the soil, the farmer flesh and the hunter fish:

ABDFJ CDBHL EFHJB GHFLD LJLBF KLJDH

Things could not go on like this, so a great palaver was called and the families agreed that they would give their daughters in marriage to one another; and charged the priests to prevent confusion and disorder by the rule that a wife continues to worship her own *Orisha* after marriage but her children do not inherit it. The *Orisha* represented by the second letter in each series (viz. BD FHJL) thus drop out in the next generation and the systems of *ewaws* becomes:

ADFJ CBHL EHJB GFLD ILBF KJDH

In future each person's *ewaws* were to consist of one *Orisha*, one 'omen', one animal and one plant. Each *ewaw* would continue in the family line for four generations, after which the priest would renew it. So A C E G I K now drop out and a male *Orisha* is needed to complete the *ewaws*. A person whose index is ADFJ (group 1) can marry a child of group 2 whose *ewaws* are all different. A and C are therefore permutable and similarly E and G, I and K:

DFJC BHLA HJBG FLDE LBFK JDHI

In the next generation the letters D B H F L J drop out. Group 1 needs fish and takes B; group 2 also needs fish and takes D; group 3 needs meat and takes F; group 4 also needs meat and

takes H; group 5 needs a plant and takes J; group 6 needs a plant and takes I:

FJCB HLAD JBGF LDEH BFKJ DHIL

The letters F H J L B D now drop out in turn. Being short of meat groups 1 and 2 marry H and F respectively; short of plants, groups 3 and 4 marry L and J; short of fish, groups 5 and 6 marry D and B:

JCBH LADF BGFL DEHJ FKJD HILB

J L B D F H drop out and the male *Orishas* come to the fore again:

CBHL ADFJ GFLD EHJB KJDH ILBF

As there are said to be two hundred and one *Orishas* of which about half are male, and also a considerable number of omens, animals and plants which are used for designating impediments to marriage, the number of possible combinations is very high (Dennett, pp. 176-80).

No doubt, what we have here is just a theory in the form of a fable. The author who recorded it mentions various facts which seem, if not to contradict it, at least to suggest that things did not function with this perfect regularity in his day. But, as theories go, the Yoruba seem to have been able to throw more light than ethnologists on the spirit of institutions and rules which in their society, as in many others, are of an intellectual and deliberate character.\* Sensible images undoubtedly come in, but they do so as symbols: they are counters in a game of combinations which consists in permuting them according to rules without ever losing sight of the empirical significant for which, provisionally, they stand.

\* The example of the Ashanti among whom a boy inherits his father's, and a girl her mother's, food prohibitions, equally suggests that the spirit of such systems is 'logical' rather than 'genealogical'.